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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Child Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



In May 2018, the United States of America withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and implemented new sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran. These and earlier sanctions have had a severe effect on the economy and the health sector, disproportionately impacting the vulnerable portions of the population, including children. Since 2018 has only recently ended, most of the economic and health data has not been officially released, but eyewitness reports and the numbers available suggest the effects of the embargo have been devastating. As these sanctions violate international law and constitute human rights violations, we encourage them to be lifted.

Since 1984, a litany of bureaucratic hurdle and sanctions that hinder aid and economic development has put in place. Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies are limited in what they can do in the country. America-based non-governmental organizations can only transfer \$500,000 per year through an Office of Foreign Assets Control's exemption along with lots of paperwork and stipulations. Foreign non-governmental organizations as well go through a number of restrictions.

The latest sanctions target the energy, shipping and financial sectors. While not directly sanctioning trades of consumer goods, the result of these sanctions in the financial sector is a freeze of money for trade, including humanitarian supplies such as food or medicine. As the United States of America (U.S.) is the epicenter of the world economy, most firms trade in the American market and almost all financial firms have American ties. These firms risk running afoul of U.S. sanctions and thus must avoid the Iranian banks and use complicated backdoor routes to trade into the country. The announcement of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges by the European Union is a good step and must be upheld for the sake of the country's people. We must work to clarify the rules of this and create protections for companies who partake in the exchange.

The economy has faced hardships with each round of sanctions causing capital and investment to flee, limiting people's ability to support themselves or their children. According to the International Monetary Fund, the GDP per capita shrank by 30% between 2011 and 2018 and it is predicted to contract more. With employment and wages low, families are increasingly sending their children to work. Estimates from the Statistical Center of Iran show the number of children working has more than doubled since the 1990's according many in ventures with unique health risks such as manufacturing or street vending.

The trade restrictions make Iranian currency heavily undesirable, causing severe inflation. The Central Bank of Islamic Republic of Iran listed the official rate at 39.9% in November 2018, compared to 8% in April. Forbes reports that the black market rate is greater than 150% of the actual inflation rate. This hyperinflation has incinerated the savings and spending capability of everyday Iranians, putting many into poverty.

The sanctions on financial institutions have caused imports to decrease and goods to become prohibitively expensive. The Consumer Price Index, according to the Central Bank of Islamic Republic of Iran, has increased 40% since the beginning of 2018, hurting people's ability to provide food or support for their children. The result has been children hungry or left on the streets.

The sanctions have hit the health sector, inflating the costs by over half. While the sanctions do not target the health industry directly, the financial ban has had the effect of freezing money for pharmaceutical supplies. The combination of decreasing paychecks combined with rapidly inflating health costs has resulted in an ever-decreasing ability to pay for hospital bills. It is estimated now that 1% of the population annually falls into poverty due to paying for cost-intensive treatment, even with the government paying for 90% of most health care bills. According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Health, the number of scarce medicines increased by 45 temporarily in 2018 as health imports crashed with the restrictions. This jeopardized the lives of 6 million Iranians, both young and old. This mirrors when new sanctions were implemented in 2012, when the number of scarce medicines increased by 80 before stabilizing over time as Iran developed its own generic brands and ways around the sanctions. With all these medicines scarce at a fair market price, the black market has exploded in Iran, forcing people to pay out of pocket exorbitant fees for medicines to keep them alive or healthy.

We must work at this session to support the Iranian people with humanitarian relief efforts. We must clarify the rules of the sanctions so that food, medicine, and humanitarian goods are accessible for the country and support the right of countries to perform necessary trade. We ask UN Human Rights Council and the international community to uphold human rights for Iranians to live in health and free of poverty due to the embargo. The Humanitarian Consequences of the Iran Sanctions
