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Official Records

President: Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 21 (continued)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/300)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/77, A/57/320, A/57/578)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/613)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/97, A/57/136, A/57/174, A/57/180, A/57/256, A/57/301, A/57/353, A/57/377)

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.33, A/57/L.41, A/57/L.42, A/57/L.43, A/57/L.46, A/57/L.47)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/130)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan, who in the course of the statement will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.42.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a tremendous honour for me to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.42, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". I am pleased to report that the list of delegations that have become sponsors of the draft resolution since after its publication now includes the following: Armenia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Egypt, France, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lithuania, Malta, Morocco, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and Ukraine. That makes a total of 45 sponsors.

For the seventh time, the General Assembly is considering the issue of providing international assistance for Tajikistan. This attests to the great interest of the international community in continuing to strengthen peace and stability in that country.

During this time, the United Nations has not only played an important role in the peace process but is successfully continuing to assist Tajikistan in post-conflict peace-building and sustainable development. Government efforts and United Nations assistance have been critical in meeting immediate emergency needs, mitigating the effects of the two-year drought, strengthening sustainable improvement in food security and improving access to primary health care and other basic social services. Continuing to provide

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international economic assistance to Tajikistan and international financing of humanitarian assistance are critical to assist in the development and to strengthen the achievements of the peace process. In this context, we are gratified to note the efforts of the Secretary-General to draft the regular Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal to provide humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 2003. This resolution in particular welcomes the continued role of the United Nations in post-conflict peace-building in Tajikistan and the efforts of the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building and expresses gratitude to all nations and international organizations for their positive response to Tajikistan's humanitarian needs. It calls for continuing to provide assistance and providing support to Tajikistan for rehabilitation and reconstruction of its economy in the post-conflict period. It welcomes sincerely the intention of the Secretary-General to continue the humanitarian programme of the United Nations in Tajikistan and urges Member States to fully and timely finance programmes that are covered by the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal in order to meet humanitarian needs of vulnerable segments of the population of Tajikistan in the process of moving the country forward toward peace-building and economic development. It calls upon the Secretary-General to continue to review all of the United Nations activities in the area of providing humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan in order to prepare a common humanitarian strategy, and also requests the Secretary-General to provide to the General-Assembly, at its fifty-ninth session, a report on progress made in implementation of this resolution.

In conclusion, let me express heartfelt gratitude to the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Mr. Hubert Worth, for his efforts in coordinating our work, and to all delegations, particularly to the representatives of the European Union, Russia, the United States and Canada, who took part in agreeing upon the text of the resolution and also to all delegations who were sponsors of it.

Mr. Laurin (Canada): Canada welcomes the opportunity to address the General Assembly on item 21, "Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian and disaster assistance".

Over the last several years, it has become almost routine for us to focus our item 21 statement on the numerous challenges facing the international humanitarian system. This is due in large part to the

current environment in which humanitarian action takes place, which is complicated and rife with insecurity — for civilian populations and for the humanitarian staff seeking to protect their rights and meet their needs. Humanitarian access, physical and legal protection for civilian populations and addressing the causes of conflict remain the most pressing issues for war-affected populations. This is true in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Burundi, the Middle East, Colombia, and elsewhere. For natural disaster affected populations, often the victims of unforeseen events, the recent droughts in Southern and Eastern Africa have highlighted the extent to which structural factors, including poor policy decisions, can undermine the coping strategies of populations and increase vulnerability more generally, and in particular to HIV/AIDS.

There is no doubt that these dilemmas impact on the ability of Governments, United Nations agencies, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental actors to carry out effective humanitarian action and to ensure coordination. Our efforts to address these challenges must continue on a priority basis. Indeed, we cannot fail in seeking to respond to the most serious challenges to our common humanity.

While we recognize that there are numerous obstacles to coordination, not all of which are externally driven, we believe it opportune for the General Assembly to take a step back and consider a number of positive developments in the field of coordination over the last year.

First, focusing on Headquarters, we believe the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is coming into its own. The Action Plan developed by the Committee in response to the allegations of sexual violence and exploitation in the context of humanitarian crises was welcome and demonstrated a collective commitment to addressing this issue worldwide. We expect the Committee, under the continued leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to follow through on the Action Plan and enforce a policy of zero tolerance. Agencies delivering assistance must ensure they are accountable to both those they receive support from, as well as those they provide assistance to. We cannot afford to be complacent.

The working groups of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have also been busy in other spheres, including in the context of civil-military coordination.

Canada appreciated the opportunity to feed into the development of the Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in the context of complex emergencies. It was the first time the Committee really reached out to Member States in seeking their views on one of its policy documents. We would also encourage the Committee to consider the review of the Military and Civil Defence Unit completed in June, whose recommendations merit the group's careful consideration.

Canada is pleased with the participation to date of members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the formation and development of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Unit on Internal Displacement. Although it was established only a year ago, the Unit has, in our view, contributed to an improved United Nations response to the internally displaced — both at headquarters and in the field. Clearly considerable work remains to be done if we are to ensure that the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced are integrated into United Nations country team efforts and are not forgotten. Nevertheless, we believe good strides have been made, and we expect United Nations agencies to continue to collaborate with the Unit, particularly through the secondment of staff, and to consider carefully the recommendations outlined in the recent interim review. Indeed, the collective commitment to the Unit, the application of the supplementary guidance by country teams, and follow-up to the recommendations made by the Unit and the Senior Network on Internally Displaced Persons remain important indicators for judging how far agencies have moved towards embracing coordination.

Looking beyond the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to collaboration between the humanitarian, military, political, human rights and development arms of the United Nations, we have begun to see some progress on the follow-up to the Brahimi Report and his emphasis on cross-fertilization and greater integration. The collaboration between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations in addressing protection concerns for refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one solid example, as was the striking example of the Integrated Management Task Force for Afghanistan, which facilitated the development of coherent United Nations approaches.

(spoke in French)

At the field level, we have also seen important examples of enhanced collaboration and joint action.

The inter-agency response to Afghanistan, while not without its setbacks, demonstrated the power of the United Nations system when it comes together with a common purpose. It was clear that lessons learned from previous crises, including in East Timor and Kosovo, influenced approaches to the international response in Afghanistan. This was evident in the appointment of regional focal points; the efforts to maintain operations throughout active hostilities; the establishment of civil-military coordination links and, the setting up of a humanitarian information centre. It was also central in the decision to bring together humanitarian and development actors to form a coherent and coordinated strategy, resulting in the document on the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People 2002. Canada is pleased with the genuine commitment to enhancing coordination among donors, the United Nations and the Afghan Administration in the latter's attempt to build stability.

In Angola, the rapid assessment of critical needs carried out by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations under OCHA's leadership was very impressive and successfully identified critical needs immediately following the ceasefire. Having mapped out areas where respective agencies or non-governmental organizations would take the lead, we are pleased to note that this collaboration has been carried through to the Consolidated Appeal and the identification of joint priority objectives.

In Colombia, we have seen a concerted effort by the United Nations country team, non-governmental organizations and the Government to develop an effective approach to protection concerns and, through the working group on protection, to make certain that the rights of displaced and other affected populations are addressed as part of the common humanitarian action plan.

Taken together, these efforts reflect the strides that are being made to improve coordination efforts, even in the most difficult of circumstances and on the most controversial issues. Canada is pleased by these developments. We note that they are in keeping with the original intentions of the Secretary-General's reform package initiated some five years ago, in particular his focus on enhancing the United Nations

humanitarian response system and on improving advocacy on humanitarian issues. While these accomplishments are the achievements of many, I would like to take this opportunity to express Canada's appreciation for the work of OCHA. OCHA serves an essential function in addressing the need for a focal point within the United Nations system for coordination in crisis management and for advocacy in support of civilian populations during crises. We urge OCHA to pursue its efforts to improve coordination within the humanitarian community and to strive for greater coherence among political, human rights and development actors.

In conclusion, I reiterate my Government's appreciation for the progress that has been achieved to date in improving the overall effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian action. Our efforts continue to be directed at ensuring more effective and efficient responses that place the needs of conflict — and disaster-affected populations at the centre. The humanitarian response system plays a concrete and high-profile role in meeting the demands placed on the United Nations today. Canada will continue to work diligently with members of the General Assembly and with other relevant actors to create the culture of protection called for by the Secretary-General and to develop the strategies necessary to improve the legal and physical protection and material assistance available to populations affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the delegation of Argentina wishes to express its highest appreciation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations agencies and other members of the humanitarian community for their work in the humanitarian field under the guidance of the principles established in resolution 46/182.

The delegation of Argentina wishes to indicate its satisfaction with the negotiated outcome reached at the humanitarian segment of the 2002 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the Council's central role in the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations.

At the same time, we would like to reiterate our concern about the dangerous safety and security conditions that humanitarian personnel continue to face in the field. The Government and people of Argentina

strongly condemn the attacks against humanitarian personnel and wish to extend their condolences to the families and friends of those humanitarian workers who have paid the ultimate tribute of their lives when serving populations affected by humanitarian crisis.

In this regard, Argentina deplores the death on 22 November of Mr. Iain Hook, who had been working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Likewise, we are concerned by the fact that the ambulance that was summoned to assist Mr. Hook was refused immediate access. In addition to this grave incident, vehicles and staff of UNRWA have also been attacked on several occasions in recent months.

My delegation would like to express its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, contained in document A/57/300, which constitutes an excellent basis for the work of the General Assembly on this important issue.

We note with satisfaction the progress achieved in the implementation of initiatives for the 2002-2003 biennium in the field of the safety and security of staff. We are encouraged by the fact that fatalities among United Nations personnel appear to be decreasing as a result of enhanced training and security management, as well as through the implementation of such initiatives as the minimum operational security standards. In this context, we welcome the appointment of a full-time United Nations Security Coordinator at the Assistant Secretary-General level.

We cannot ignore, however, that much remains to be done to mitigate, reduce and manage threats and risks to United Nations personnel. A significant number of personnel employed by the organizations of the United Nations system remain in detention at various locations throughout the world and United Nations personnel continue to experience an unprecedented number of incidents of rape, sexual assault, armed robbery, attacks on humanitarian convoys and operations and harassment.

In order to continue to address these situations, the delegation of Argentina strongly endorses the suggestions presented by the Secretary-General in his report. In this respect, we call upon Member States to take stronger action to fulfil their responsibility to ensure that the perpetrators of attacks against United

Nations personnel are brought to justice; to ensure that any threat or act of violence committed against humanitarian personnel on their territory is fully investigated; and to take all appropriate measures, in accordance with international law and national legislation, to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are duly prosecuted. In this context, we wish to recall the inclusion of attacks intentionally directed against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter as a war crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. At the same time, we appeal to Member States that have implemented restrictions concerning communications equipment to be used by international humanitarian organizations to lift them immediately in the interest of the safety and security of staff.

We believe that the safety of United Nations and associated personnel engaged in United Nations peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations should continue to be an important element in the planning of such operations. In this respect, we call on the Secretary-General and on the host countries to continue to ensure the inclusion of key provisions of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel — *inter alia*, those relating to preventing attacks against mission staff, making such attacks crimes punishable by law, and ensuring the prosecution or extradition of offenders — in future or current status-of-forces, status-of-mission and host country agreements negotiated between the United Nations and such countries.

There is also a need for enhanced cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, within the context of their respective mandates, taking into account the humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions of many armed conflicts.

The delegation of Argentina would like to emphasize the importance of promoting the universality of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and, in that respect, it encourages all States to become parties to, and fully to respect their obligations under, that Convention. We also welcome the progress made in the work accomplished by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Scope of Legal Protection under the Convention and by the Sixth Committee, in order to give further consideration, *inter alia*, to the safety and security of

locally recruited humanitarian personnel, who account for the majority of casualties.

We urge Member States and other parties involved in armed conflicts to ensure, in compliance with international humanitarian law, the security and protection of all humanitarian personnel and of United Nations and associated personnel.

Taking into account the fact that that ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel is an underlying duty of the Organization, we would like to emphasize the need to allocate adequate and predictable resources for that purpose, including through the necessary cost-sharing arrangements with the relevant agencies, funds and programmes within the United Nations system.

In addition to the role played by the Member States and by the United Nations system in recent years, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly been working in the field, in close cooperation with the agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system. The relationship between these various actors, often in crisis situations, has serious security implications, as the actions of one group may have an impact on the operational security of another.

In this respect, the delegation of Argentina welcomes the development of the set of guidelines for United Nations-NGO security collaboration, with a view to providing a framework for such relationships. Those non-binding guidelines, which provide for greater interaction, sharing of resources and training capacities, as well as promote common security standards and ground rules, are consistent with efforts to reinforce the security management system and with the commitment of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations firmly to establish security as an integral aspect of operations.

We therefore welcome the recent resolution adopted by the General Assembly requesting the Secretary-General to prepare model or standardized provisions for incorporation into the agreements concluded between the United Nations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations or agencies, and to make available to Member States the names of organizations or agencies that have concluded such agreements, for the purposes of clarifying the application of the Convention on Safety of United

Nations and Associated Personnel to persons deployed by those organizations or agencies.

It is an agreed principle that the primary responsibility for the protection of, and assistance to, peoples affected by humanitarian crises rests with Governments. At the same time, States are expected to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel, so that they can efficiently perform their task of assisting the affected civilian population, including refugees and internally displaced persons. In this respect, the efforts undertaken by humanitarian actors, or the arrangements negotiated by them, are secondary to the State's responsibility.

However, as we have indicated in the past when addressing the Assembly and other United Nations bodies, we believe that, in cases when States are unwilling or unable to meet their responsibilities, there can be no excuse for remaining indifferent to humanitarian needs. It is the responsibility of all to enable humanitarian assistance to reach and protect those who are vulnerable.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): I should like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the numerous issues that the General Assembly considers and acts upon under this agenda item. They send the clear-cut message that a significant part of humanity needs our unconditional attention and care. They also underscore the point that United Nations humanitarian assistance continues to be indispensable to people who are faced with natural disasters or other emergency situations.

The reports also note the ongoing efforts to ensure the effective and efficient coordination of work among all parts of the United Nations system related to disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. In this regard, I would like to commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations agencies in the field, as well as their partners, for a year of notable accomplishments. Their endeavours, jointly and individually, are particularly commendable against the backdrop of the economic difficulties and political uncertainties of post-11-September developments.

Natural disasters have continued unabated at the beginning of the new century. An analysis of these disasters shows that nature is less to blame than the

accumulated effects of human activities, in the form of urbanization, indiscriminate development, environmental degradation and the resulting climatic changes. Thus, disaster response and recovery programmes must be drawn up and implemented on the basis of their close link to long-term planning for development. Meanwhile, the disaster-reduction principles advocated by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction should be incorporated into sustainable development planning.

Indeed, in all emergencies, natural or man-made, humanitarian assistance must proceed not as a distinct phase in and of itself, but as part of a continuum that includes relief, recovery and development, with the full participation of local communities every step of the way. Otherwise, the result is likely to be a dependency that perpetuates the emergency situation and a vulnerability to future disasters and crises.

In this regard, while noting Timor-Leste's continuing vulnerabilities and need for assistance, I am heartened by the progress being made in its transition from relief and rehabilitation to development. The assistance of the United Nations was instrumental in that transition. But the most important element was the courage and hope of the people of Timor-Leste and their leadership. In May this year, on the occasion of its birth as an independent State, they embarked upon the first national development plan. I wish them every success in implementing the plan, with the ongoing support of neighbouring countries and the United Nations.

Although conditions are very different in other countries that are struggling with humanitarian emergencies and crises, the international community would like to see the successful transition of those countries as well. To that end, it must continue to provide forward-looking assistance to the host Governments and other partners.

In war-torn and drought-stricken Afghanistan, which is still dealing with serious humanitarian difficulties, the international community is facing a unique challenge to its patience and its long-term commitment to humanitarian and development assistance. The United Nations must take the lead in rising to that challenge. The Republic of Korea is committed to doing its share in that process.

Humanitarian assistance begins with access to, and a needs assessment of, vulnerable populations. It is

equally crucial to monitor the situation so as to ensure that the assistance provided actually reaches them. Full cooperation at both ends of the process must be rendered by all the parties concerned.

Another increasingly important element is the safety and security of the humanitarian workers delivering the assistance. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, operational security has become an integral element of humanitarian intervention. In this regard, I welcome the steps that have been taken to strengthen security coordination and management for United Nations personnel. In particular, security training for all field-bound United Nations personnel and the development of minimum operating security standards at all duty stations, as well as guidelines on security collaboration between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, are steps in the right direction.

I would also like to join the call for Member States to strengthen their actions to end impunity for crimes committed against United Nations personnel. At the very least, their sacrifice on behalf of the most noble of causes for the benefit of the international community should be rewarded with honour and justice.

Mr. Lamba (Malawi): My delegation notes with satisfaction the important decision to include as agenda item 21 of the current regular session this topical issue of the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. It is also gratifying that this plenary debate comes barely five months after the high-level humanitarian segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, held in July this year, during which this important matter was accorded broad consideration. The Secretary General's reports in A/57/77, A/57/300, A/57/320, A/57/578, and a few others, provide very important information that is crucial to our appreciation of the magnitude of the humanitarian challenges.

I would like to believe that it is not a mere coincidence that both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council decided to consider this item during their respective sessions this year. Rather, it is my view that that represents a strong indication of the recognition by both organs of the compelling need for enhanced coordination of United Nations activities in the area of humanitarian assistance. The world body's increasing engagement and expanding role in

this area also serves as a barometer of the fast-evolving scope and scale of natural disasters and other emergencies across the globe, particularly in Africa, and especially southern Africa and Malawi.

Malawi is in the grip of unprecedented famine. About 3.3 million Malawian lives are threatened; about 10 per cent of those people will starve if food aid is delayed or is inadequate. The famine crisis now affecting 14 million people in the Southern African Development Community region is exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which to date has infected 16 per cent of Malawi's population of 12 million, thus destroying the productive capacity of the country. Such disasters demand greater efficiency and more coherent responses and interventions, but the resources available and the human and institutional capacities are sufficient to cope with them.

Given the emergency nature and critical importance of timely humanitarian action to alleviate human suffering in times of disaster, the need for regular reviews, comprehensive evaluations and, indeed, coordination of the performance of humanitarian relief cannot be overemphasized. The proliferation of players and other stakeholders on the humanitarian playing field sometimes gives rise to the duplication of efforts and the misallocation of resources. The Secretary-General's report in A/57/77 aptly addresses the issue of coordination.

My delegation is very gratified by the growing interest demonstrated by the United Nations in improving and enhancing coordination of humanitarian assistance, as shown in the Secretary-General's report in A/57/77. The performance of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been extremely commendable, and must be underlined. In the past 11 years or so, the number, frequency and scale of civil wars, natural disasters and other emergencies has quadrupled. The massive movement of populations across international borders and the similarly disruptive phenomenon of internal displacement, as well as the wholesale human casualties caused by the devastation of such disasters and of military conflict have inevitably given rise to the need to explore constructive and ingenious ways of accessing, protecting and looking after the victims by taking a more effective, holistic and coordinated approach.

In many ways, the United Nations has successfully taken centre stage as the foremost provider of emergency relief and long-term assistance. Thanks to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 1991, for example, the United Nations has made wide-ranging concerted efforts to intensify improvements in humanitarian operations through the creation of multilevel, action-oriented operational bodies at Headquarters, as well as an elaborate and visible field-level coordination network under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Programme. Clearly, such a measure has had the positive effect of improving collaboration and consultations between the United Nations system and the Governments of the affected countries in the critical areas of disaster preparedness and forecasting of emergencies that defy the competencies and capacity of Governments and humanitarian actors.

The General Assembly's establishment of the consolidated appeals process for coordinated international interventions, which is a complement to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator's office for humanitarian emergencies, has created a formidable critical mass of technical expertise, capacity and resources from diverse sources to solidify the role and position of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as pivotal in United Nations humanitarian operations.

In order for the United Nations consolidated appeals process to produce the desired results in the coordination of international humanitarian assistance, certain critical steps need to be taken. Among these is assistance to affected Member States in building local technical capacity for reliable weather forecasting, flood and contingency planning. Much of the meteorological equipment in most of the developing countries has been in use for decades and has, therefore, become obsolete, resulting in unreliable data and weather predictions.

Furthermore, the United Nations field disaster management teams might find it operationally expedient to co-opt the participation of State-run agencies charged with disaster preparedness and relief. This would make it easy to mobilize high-level political will for unimpeded distribution of emergency relief when this commodity becomes a national issue on the ground.

For the continued success of the consolidated inter-agency appeals mechanism, it might be useful for the international donor community to channel much of the humanitarian assistance through multilateral frameworks. This would assure transparency and close monitoring in disbursement of funds for the intended purposes. These are but only some of the possible measures that could create a positive incremental impact in the closing of ranks between United Nations relief agencies and the local actors, State and civil alike.

In conclusion, my delegation would also like to urge increased multilateral collective efforts against certain actions, including the illegal exploitation of resources and illicit trade in drugs and small arms, which fan conflicts. The negative effect of these illegal activities on the coordination of humanitarian assistance invariably tends to be wide-ranging, thereby stifling success in relieving human suffering and vulnerability.

Mr. Siv (United States): The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) estimates that more than three million people have lost their lives due to disasters, both human-caused and natural, over the last decade. By the end of the year 2000, there were approximately 14.5 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, and more than 20 million internally displaced, due to persecution or armed conflict. Today, Sudan and Angola have the largest number of internally displaced people in the world, followed by Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Secretary-General's report draws attention to the increasing combination of destructive forces of conflict and natural disaster. To that list, we would add a third force — misrule. Misrule multiplies the adverse effects of natural disasters. Six million people in Zimbabwe are suffering today because of that deadly combination. In other parts of the world, some Governments are engaged in regional or internal conflicts, spending precious money on weapons, while their people suffer from hunger and disease.

Not only are such Governments and non-State actors causing great harm to their citizens, but many of these same Governments are also hindering the access of relief workers. The United States condemns interference with humanitarian relief efforts. We endorse the Secretary-General's call in his report for

countries to remove those barriers and to facilitate humanitarian access.

It is important for the United Nations relief agencies to work together and to work efficiently. We applaud the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA. We support the consolidated appeals process and its attempts to unify and rationalize the requirements of so many organizations. With the assistance of scores of generous countries, United Nations agencies, together with hundreds of non-governmental organizations, are saving lives and reducing suffering around the world. But their efforts to alleviate the pain will never be enough on their own.

The Secretary-General's report this year builds on themes from previous years, showing that the conduct of Governments is critical in mitigating harm for the citizens of each country. It is the primary responsibility of every Government to provide for the safety and well-being of its people. This first requires the allocation of sufficient resources for basic infrastructure, especially water and health, but also education.

The international community is working hard to improve its ability to predict natural disasters and to reduce, through preventive measures, the damage that is done to people and property. The United States salutes the efforts of the United Nations agencies involved in this effort, by means of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The ISDR supports the establishment of national committees and the institution of common standards to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters. We also endorse the Secretary-General's calls for closer ties to non-United Nations entities working in disaster management and the need to bolster national and regional authorities.

Finally, the United States concurs with the Secretary-General on the need to follow emergency relief with a transition to development strategy. Strengthened by transparent and accountable systems on the part of the host country, the international community can accomplish much in this area, as evidenced by the relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. In addition, President Bush and Secretary Powell have stated the commitment of the United States to respond to the Palestinians' economic plight and to address humanitarian needs in the West Bank and Gaza. In the past year, the United States has

refocused its assistance programme for the Palestinians on what is most urgently needed in the current crisis, without losing sight of longer-term infrastructure needs.

We have learned much over the past decade that now serves us in good stead in the work of alleviating human suffering in the wake of disaster. Let us continue to work together towards that end.

Mr. Sale (Liberia): The Liberian delegation is pleased to participate in the discussion on agenda item 21: "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent leadership and for the reform measures introduced by him over the years to enable the United Nations system to meet the growing demands in that vital area. We commend him also for his insightful report on assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia, contained in document A/57/301 of 12 August 2002. The report outlines the difficulties in the areas of security and political and socio-economic developments, and it highlights the Organization's collaborative activities in support of peace-building in Liberia. Similarly, our gratitude goes to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and to the Emergency Relief Coordinator for their invaluable role in those endeavours.

The tragic situation of Liberia has been well documented here and elsewhere. Quite recently, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, His Excellency Monie R. Captan, in his address to the Assembly on 20 September 2002, spoke passionately from this rostrum when he outlined the continuing suffering of the Liberian people and the challenges faced by a weary nation in the post-conflict peace-building era. He called upon the international community to support the Government and the people of Liberia in their relentless effort to rebuild the country.

In that connection, we wish to reiterate that call, and in so doing, wholeheartedly to agree with the Secretary-General, who said in his report mentioned earlier that Liberia was facing daunting problems in the areas of reconciliation, peace-building, reconstruction and recovery. He noted that the Government has not succeeded in generating the required financial resources domestically and internationally to revive the economy to its pre-war level. He cited the selective

sanctions imposed by the Security Council as one of the reasons for the severe decline in international assistance since May 2001.

Another major area of concern in the peace-building process in Liberia is maintaining internal peace and security. Since 1999, the Government, true to its constitutional obligation to defend its territorial boundaries, has been engaged in fighting externally-supported armed non-State actors who are determined to forcibly remove the democratically elected Government of Liberia. That conflict continues to create serious humanitarian crises, including of internally displaced persons and new Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries. Regrettably, that unfortunate situation has reversed any gains realized as a result of the installation of the democratically elected Government in 1997.

Experience has taught us that in a post-conflict era, delays in integration and reconstruction, as well as inadequate external support, usually undermine genuine efforts aimed at peace and recovery. For its part, the Government will continue to take concrete steps that will stimulate economic growth, such as fiscal prudence, public accountability and transparency. The five-year medium-term plan, which was prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is expected to consolidate peace and promote democratization, confidence-building measures and conflict prevention, both in Liberia and throughout the subregion. The Government is committed to the rule of law and welcomes the ongoing peace initiatives within the Mano River Union.

Health and education are also areas that have continued to be seriously affected because of inadequate external support. Notwithstanding this, we wish to thank UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and non-governmental organizations for their collaborative activities in those priority areas.

A draft resolution on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia is currently under consideration by the traditional sponsors and interested delegations. The draft resolution, when submitted, will, among other things, call upon the international community to respond to the humanitarian and development needs of Liberia, which hold serious

implications for security and economic stability within the subregion.

We live in an interesting and complex world. Here I am, addressing the Assembly as an equal member of this great Organization and yet, the subject before us clearly delineates the differences between some of us, especially those of us who are supplicants. Fortunately, there is another important thread, and that is our common humanity.

Members of this Organization, irrespective of national standing, have, in time of peace or conflict, striven collectively to enhance those human qualities that uplift us as human beings, as opposed to those that degrade us. That is why for more than half a century the United Nations has remained the hope of mankind, struggling in most cases to defend the deprived and to build a brighter future for succeeding generations.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): United Nations humanitarian assistance activities are implemented by a number of agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme and so forth. If those activities are to produce effective and mutually reinforcing results, it is essential, in our view, that they are carried out in a coordinated manner. In that context, the Government of Japan is of the view that it is important that the Economic and Social Council at its humanitarian affairs segment and the General Assembly at its plenary session deal with humanitarian affairs in a more systematic way. We believe it is necessary to make it a rule, as far as humanitarian issues are concerned, that first they should be fully discussed in the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council and that the results should then be endorsed by the General Assembly. In that connection, the Government of Japan welcomes the consensus adoption of its resolution 2002/32, on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, as the outcome of the deliberation of the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council in July this year.

Now, let me touch upon four specific areas to which the Japanese Government attaches particular importance.

First, with regard to natural disasters, Japan often suffers from such severe natural disasters as earthquakes, typhoons and volcanic eruptions. Thus, as

both a donor country and a disaster-prone country, Japan has been a serious participant in and a promoter of various forums for the formulation of policies on issues related to natural disasters. A draft resolution on search and rescue operations is now under consideration. In addition, the Government of Japan hopes that the guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) will be continuously improved as a useful reference document for both donors and recipient countries and that they will become the international standard in that area. In that connection, we intend to participate actively in INSARAG activities as Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group meeting to be held next year in Kobe.

In 1995, the region surrounding the city of Kobe was hit by a very severe earthquake. The city was destroyed, and thousands of people lost their lives. Now, Kobe has become a focal point of efforts to combat natural disasters in the Asian region by hosting meetings and seminars in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, which is a network of experts on that subject in the region.

Secondly, one cannot fail to notice that, in almost all armed conflicts, the majority of the victims are civilians. According to OCHA, 10 civilians die for every soldier who is killed in such conflicts. Thus, the Government of Japan appreciates the initiative and the efforts that OCHA has undertaken in the area of protecting civilians in armed conflict. We believe that the relevant parties in various regions of the world need to be informed of the results of United Nations activities undertaken in that area. At the same time, OCHA should take into account the views of the relevant partners in those regions in conducting such activities. Moreover, the Government of Japan, together with other donors, supports OCHA in the convening of a series of regional workshops on this issue. Following the African regional workshop held in South Africa in October 2002, an Asian regional workshop was held in Kobe on 14 and 15 November. That workshop was very successful and productive, with broad participation by people from foreign service agencies, defence departments and non-governmental organizations. I understand that another workshop is to be held this month in the United Kingdom and that additional workshops are scheduled to take place in

other regions next year. Moreover, the Security Council has been considering the subjects of women, peace and security and children and armed conflict. We believe it is important that Council take a comprehensive approach in dealing with those issues, which are related.

Thirdly, the Government of Japan welcomes the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), because it suggests a strategy that the international community should follow in dealing with humanitarian crises. Japan also expects that the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Secretary-General will play a catalytic role by, for example, launching timely appeals with regard to so-called forgotten crises. Having said that, I should like to express our concern about one aspect of the CAP: the situation in which only specific non-governmental organizations are allowed to participate in the CAP, without any clear explanation as to which criteria are used to invite them. We believe it important to have a full discussion among ourselves before we decide to invite certain non-governmental organizations to participate in the CAP, and to further discuss the criteria we use to invite them.

Fourthly, it is regrettable that, despite our tremendous efforts, the need for humanitarian emergency assistance has been on the increase. It is essential that humanitarian agencies, led by OCHA, define their strategies and priorities with a view to making the most effective and efficient use of our limited resources. Generally speaking, we are of the view that proactive prevention efforts, if successful, could be far more cost-effective than reactive emergency relief efforts. The Government of Japan intends to do its utmost to promote the culture of prevention that has been advocated by the Secretary-General.

Needless to say, my Government has been serious in its active support of OCHA. In addition to the financial assistance it has provided to OCHA thus far, the Government of Japan is prepared to provide approximately \$2 million this year, and it is considering an additional grant to OCHA of more than \$3 million in assistance through the Trust Fund for Human Security in order to address the problems of internally displaced persons and information management.

The difficulties that must be overcome by behind-the-scenes efforts to coordinate humanitarian assistance

are not well recognized. But such efforts play an indispensable role in promoting the smooth implementation of humanitarian assistance activities with the limited resources available. I should like to conclude by commending the efforts of all humanitarian personnel who are working tirelessly, risking their lives in the field to protect and assist people in need, as well as the Emergency Relief Coordinator and all the staff of OCHA, who are assisting the international community in reaching out to those people.

Mrs. Izata (Angola): I am taking the floor to thank all Member States that kindly support Angola and are sponsoring draft resolution A/57/L.41, on economic assistance for the economic rehabilitation of the country. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all the delegations that actively participated in the drafting process — namely, Denmark, on behalf of the European Union; the United States; Canada; Norway; Ireland; Japan; Portugal; and particularly our developing-country colleagues — Morocco, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Cape Verde, India and Swaziland — without whose participation we would not be considering this draft resolution for adoption today.

Unfortunately, we are submitting this draft resolution because the humanitarian situation in Angola remains very precarious. The Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on Angola (S/2002/834) considers the situation a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. While expressing our appreciation for the assistance provided thus far, we call on the international community and on the agencies of the United Nations to continue to support the projects foreseen in the mid-term review and to be especially generous in their support for the 2003 Appeal.

It is my wish that draft resolution A/57/L.41 be adopted by consensus.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now give the floor to the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Villettaz (International Committee of the Red Cross): At the launching of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) in Bern on 19 November last, our Director-General made the observation that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

remains firmly convinced that there is hope for the future.

However, it is unfortunate that the humanitarian situation has not registered any significant change for the better. In most conflicts prevailing today, civilians, in particular women and children, continue to bear the brunt of the suffering. Many are exposed to disease and starvation. Others are displaced from their lands and separated from their families. Many die. Children are kidnapped and forcibly recruited, their lives irremediably destroyed. When peace does not prevail, the only way to fundamentally change the situation would be to ensure constant and absolute respect for international humanitarian law in all conflicts. The ICRC tirelessly works towards that goal. It has called and continues to call upon States to spare no effort in abiding by their obligations in that regard under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I.

At the same time, the ICRC fully recognizes that the universal humanitarian effort can indeed be rendered more effective through increased and appropriate coordination. Coordination among humanitarian actors is inevitable, for the dimensions and complexity of humanitarian needs in most conflict situations could not possibly be dealt with by any single organization. For the ICRC, coordination signifies seeking the greatest possible complementarity with United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, within the framework of their respective mandates, operating principles and methods. Such coordination is principally motivated by the desire, shared with other humanitarian organizations, to harmonize efforts and avoid duplication, thereby utilizing the resources and expertise most appropriate for the people in need.

It is in that context that the ICRC, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, cooperates with the United Nations coordination mechanisms and structures, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As an IASC standing invitee, we participate in various meetings of that forum and its subsidiary bodies, sharing information and views on a host of thematic and operational issues. For instance, the ICRC contributed substantially to the preparation of the recent IASC publication entitled "Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights through

Humanitarian Action”, which is a unique collection of practices to serve all humanitarian organizations working in the field. The ICRC also contributes, among other things, to OCHA’s work concerning the elaboration of the common humanitarian action plans in various complex emergencies. Another instance of cooperation is that between the ICRC and OCHA’s Internal Displacement Unit in Geneva in the preparation of the Unit’s field missions.

In parallel, the ICRC maintains a regular bilateral dialogue with a number of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. For instance, its annual high-level meeting with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees this year dealt with the internally displaced persons issue, mainly in the context of Afghanistan. Another example of cooperation with the United Nations Secretariat is the training provided within the framework of courses for civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations offered by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to which the ICRC contributes the module on the special needs of women in conflict.

Mr. Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While on the subject of humanitarian coordination in crisis regions, the ICRC cannot but reiterate its firm position that humanitarian action must be kept distinct from political and military action. Their aims are fundamentally different: the primary goal of military operations should be to establish and maintain peace and security in order to help advance or sustain a political settlement of a conflict. While such settlements are key to ultimately ending suffering engendered by conflicts, it is crucial that, in the meanwhile, humanitarian actors be able to independently assist and protect the victims. Consequently, in its relations with the various armed forces, the Committee always strives to promote a better understanding of and respect for each other’s respective role, constraints and working methods. In this context, the ICRC is concerned by what it perceives as a developing tendency, in particular at the level of policy framework elaboration, to increase military involvement in humanitarian operations. It wishes to stress the absolute need to avoid any blurring of roles that might result from a militarization of humanitarian assistance. This can seriously undermine

perceptions of the latter’s neutrality, with the attendant consequences for the security of humanitarian workers.

In that context, coordination also signifies concerted efforts to safeguard the very independence and strictly humanitarian nature of humanitarian operations. Such efforts are necessary to maintain a working environment in which humanitarian organizations can safely discharge their mandate.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. de Sclabos (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the opportunity for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to share its views on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

The decade since the adoption of resolution 46/182 has seen steady development of the instruments and mechanisms that we, the humanitarian agencies both within and outside the United Nations, need in order to achieve more coherent approaches that better respond to the needs and interests of our beneficiaries, as well as of our supporters. People who are vulnerable to, and victims of, natural disasters and other emergencies are ordinary people with the same rights and obligations as everyone else, including the right to dignity.

The IFRC is a network that can contribute a great deal to Governments and humanitarian organizations with respect to their responsibilities towards beneficiaries. One of the main principal tasks of the Governing Board of the IFRC, of which I have the honour of being a member, is to develop the capacity of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to carry out their responsibilities fully and respectfully, within the context of debates within their respective countries and in United Nations agencies.

That is the context for the participation of the IFRC in several important initiatives since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Those initiatives include the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in disaster relief; the Sphere Project’s Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response; the Better

Programming Initiative, born of the conviction that in communities affected by violence, well planned aid programming with alternative and creative implementation options can support local capacities for recovery and reconciliation.

A consequence of those initiatives is the Humanitarian Accountability Project, an inter-agency initiative which explores the need for a self-regulatory mechanism for all humanitarian operations to ensure accountability to the communities and individuals affected by wars and disasters.

It is from that basis that the International Federation began to examine the framework of international law in the field of international disaster response. The International Federation's delegation has spoken in some detail on this subject in relevant debates during this session of the General Assembly, and I will not now repeat the points we have made. But progress on the work will be brought to the attention of United Nations family bodies on a regular basis, with a view to ensuring that all States and all national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are well briefed when they receive a report with recommendations to be acted upon at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to take place in Geneva in December 2003.

Our own endeavours to stress the importance of emergency intervention units, evaluation and coordination teams on the ground and a reserve fund for disaster relief will be reflected in programmes based on the principles for intervention to which I referred earlier.

One lesson we have learned in the past is that no single agency or organization can or should try to do this alone. This is why the International Federation has significantly increased its focus on building alliances and partnerships with other organizations. Sometimes, for example, when required by a particular situation, such as the tragic situation now confronting Southern Africa, we have built a specific partnership, in that case with the World Food Programme. At other times, partnerships have been strategically designed, as with the United Nations Environmental Programme or the Pan American Health Organization.

We have also established the International Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit in Panama. The Federation intends to broaden its own international representation at the regional United

Nations level, and arrangements are now being considered to develop cooperation with all United Nations regional economic and social commissions. As an example of what this could entail, my own national Red Cross society, the Chilean Red Cross, will assist the International Federation in maintaining its relationship as an international organization with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago.

Similarly, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in small island developing States will have a leading role in the development of IFRC positions for the forthcoming conference to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The International Federation is pleased to be associated with the ProVention Consortium, a group originally created and hosted by the World Bank, but whose secretariat is now housed at IFRC headquarters in Geneva. This is the kind of global coalition which can really bring strength of purpose and action to disaster preparedness and response. It includes Governments, international organizations, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations aimed at reducing disaster impact in developing countries.

The increasing number of actors in emergency assistance and disaster relief underlines the need for coordination and recalls the central role of the public authorities of the country affected. That is why the International Federation continues to call for the establishment of national disaster plans and national coordination mechanisms. As national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies, and as an international organization, we will continue to contribute to the attainment of these goals.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to the Observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Paiva (International Organization for Migration): A decade ago, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was privileged to be one of the three non-United Nations organizations specifically invited to participate in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Since then, the

humanitarian community of which we are a part has grappled with emergencies of sometimes daunting complexity and scales of displacement and human suffering seldom seen or even imagined before.

And just as civilian suffering in complex emergencies has increased, so have the threats to humanitarian aid workers. IOM, which has a formal agreement with the United Nations to participate in the United Nations security management system, is deeply concerned about this trend. We continue to take steps to reinforce our own internal capacity to deal with staff security, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator. As is the case with our United Nations partners in the shared security structures, however, we are struggling to find the additional resources required to upgrade security preparedness, in particular when these are core costs but are not covered by assessed contributions.

In the face of such challenges, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his dedicated staff in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have played a critical role in forging closer collaboration. In IOM's view, the IASC mechanism has contributed directly to marked improvements in information-sharing and coordination among involved international agencies in every phase of humanitarian crises, from contingency planning to operations to drawing lessons learned. We value our participation in the IASC, and we are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Oshima for his committed and inclusive stewardship of it.

For IOM, being part of the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeals process, whose global launch for 2003 took place last week, is a key element of our IASC involvement. Compared to when this process was started, or even compared to last year, the current appeal shows rather striking progress in presenting a more comprehensive and strategic picture of both the needs in a given situation and participating agencies' coordinated plans for dealing with that situation.

Getting to where we are today has taken a lot of effort on the part of all concerned, beginning with OCHA as the coordinator. Indeed, at times, smaller operational agencies such as IOM have found the process quite taxing. Nevertheless, like other IASC partners, we have persevered in recognition of the advantages of such an approach, not only because donors have stressed it but also because it helps us to

crystallize our own role and priorities in a given complex emergency. Indeed, we recognize the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal as a strategic planning and programming process, not just a resource mobilization tool. In all honesty, then, it sometimes puzzles us to see that the pattern of response does not necessarily reflect the real improvements in the process and the end product, nor necessarily the most pressing needs.

Finally, the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement within OCHA is a further example of how coordinated action which combines the strengths of a range of agencies can create stronger response mechanisms. IOM welcomed OCHA's initiative in creating the Unit, as well as the open manner in which OCHA elicited participation from all IASC members. We believe that this is an important inter-agency effort in a field of great complexity, and one that merits the strong support of Member States. For our part, we are pleased to have seconded an experienced IOM staff member to the Unit in response to the Emergency Relief Coordinator's request.

If IOM attaches considerable importance to its participation in IASC processes, it is because we continue to see practical improvements in emergency response capabilities that have come about because IASC exists.

While there is no doubt that the humanitarian community can do better still, it is encouraging that effective mechanisms are in place which have proved their value in helping the IASC partners to achieve better-coordinated, proactive responses to humanitarian emergencies. IOM takes the opportunity today to reaffirm its commitment to that partnership.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 21 and its sub-items (a) to (c).

The General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolutions A/57/L.33, A/57/L.41, A/57/L.42, A/57/L.46 and A/57/L.47.

Draft resolution A/57/L.33 is entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries

have become its co-sponsors: Algeria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.33?

Draft resolution A/57/L.33 was adopted (resolution 57/101).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.41 is entitled "International assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Belgium, China, Cyprus, Eritrea, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Ireland, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.41?

Draft resolution A/57/L.41 was adopted (resolution 57/102).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.42 is entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.42?

Draft resolution A/57/L.42 was adopted (resolution 57/103).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.46 is entitled "Assistance to Mozambique". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Eritrea, France, Guinea, Jamaica, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Spain, the Sudan and Togo.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.46?

Draft resolution A/57/L.46 was adopted (resolution 57/104).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.47 is entitled "Assistance for humanitarian

relief, rehabilitation and development for Timor-Leste". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Belize, Croatia, Eritrea, Guinea, Israel, Malaysia, Philippines, Samoa and Slovakia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.47?

Draft resolution A/57/L.47 was adopted (resolution 57/105).

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/57/L.43 will be taken at a later date.

I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I would like to begin by expressing Israel's profound sorrow over the death of Mr. Ian Hook, who was killed in an exchange of gunfire between Israeli forces and Palestinian gunmen in Jenin on Friday. Israel also extends its sincerest condolences to his family. Mr. Hook, Project Manager of the Jenin Camp Rehabilitation Project of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, was a dedicated humanitarian whose work for others was unselfish and admirable. Israel is continuing to conduct a thorough investigation of the events that led to his death.

Israel supports efforts made by the donor and international community to alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is sensitive to the humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian population and views the addressing of these needs to be a fundamental Israeli interest.

In today's debate, the Palestinian Observer referred extensively to the deteriorating economic and humanitarian condition of the Palestinians, blaming Israel's security measures for this situation. While the increasing hardship of the Palestinians is a sad truth, the presentation of Israel's actions as the cause of this

suffering is disingenuous. It is like beginning a story in the middle.

Following the signing of the 1993 Oslo accords, Israel made substantial efforts to facilitate Palestinian-Israeli economic cooperation in the context of the peace process. As a result, there had been a marked expansion of Palestinian trade and employment in Israel as well as other forms of economic cooperation from 1994 until the outbreak of the present violence.

Israel, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, had taken a broad range of actions since 1994 in order to promote and improve the free movement of goods and labour from the Palestinian Authority areas into Israel. In addition, industrial parks have been set up in the Palestinian Authority involving substantial Israeli investment and economic incentives. These measures have had a significant positive impact on the Palestinian economy.

However, the Palestinian leadership's decision, following the Camp David summit of July 2000, to employ violence as a political tool, sabotaged Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation and left Israel with no choice but to implement essential security measures in order to defend itself against Palestinian terrorism. The acute security threat presented by Palestinian terrorism makes these measures unavoidable if Israel is to fulfil its duty as a sovereign State to safeguard the lives of its citizens. It must be stressed that the purpose of the security precautions is not to unduly burden the Palestinian population but rather to ensure the security of Israeli citizens facing daily threats to their lives.

The donor community recognizes Israel's legitimate concerns, as duly noted in the Secretary-General's report in document A/57/130. The challenge that Israel faces is to do its utmost to protect its citizens while doing as much as it can to minimize the impact of tightened security on the Palestinian population. This is not an easy job, and Israel has taken upon itself calculated risks in order to try to close the gap between security and humanitarian needs. It is therefore Israel's policy to differentiate as much as possible between those perpetrating, aiding and directing terrorist activities and the civilian population which is not involved in terrorism. If calm prevails in particular areas, improvements can be implemented there, independently of other areas.

Unfortunately, terrorists have used every Israeli attempt to ease restrictions on Palestinian daily life as

an opportunity to renew their attacks on Israeli citizens. For example, they have taken advantage of the eased freedom of movement to infiltrate Israeli cities and carry out attacks, and have exploited expedited passage for ambulances to smuggle fugitives and even suicide bombs. A case in point is the attack on an Israeli naval vessel which took place on Saturday off the coast of Gaza. Following an easing of security measures regarding fishing vessels, the Gaza fishing zone was extended out to 12 miles. The terrorists exploited this improvement in order to attempt to dispatch suicide bombers by sea. The boat was intercepted and the terrorists detonated themselves, wounding four Israeli sailors. Needless to say, following that attempted infiltration, Israel was forced to re-apply security restrictions to the Gaza coast.

This shows that the impact of the events on the local civilian population is due, more than to any other factor, to the abuse of the population by the terrorists themselves. This terrorism hurts Israelis and Palestinians alike, and an end to the situation is dependent upon an end to violence and terrorism. Consequently, the Palestinian claim, made here today, that the economic and humanitarian plight of the Palestinians is due to Israeli security measures, ignores the connection between cause and effect. If there were no terrorism, there would be no need for tightened security, with the negative economic and humanitarian effects that it engenders. If the concern of the Palestinian observer for the population in the territories is sincere, she should be confronting the terrorist organizations operating within the Palestinian Authority so as to stop their violence, rather than blaming Israel for having to protect itself.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): Once again we have heard a statement by the Israeli representative that was full of lies and distortion. I will not at this point go into detail about the content of that statement. I want to make just three comments. The Israeli representative endeavoured to accuse our leadership of taking a decision to use violence in the occupied territories. In spite of the Israeli delegation's attempt to distort the facts, the real cause of violence and of the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is Israel's continued military occupation and its escalation of the military campaign against the Palestinian people. That is a fact.

The occupation is the main cause of the deterioration of the situation in the occupied territory.

That is not the claim of my delegation or the Palestinian Authority. I would like the Israeli representative to go and read all the documents and reports from the Secretary-General's envoy and the Special Coordinator relating to the occupied territories. They all indicate that the main cause of the hardship and the deterioration in the economic situation is the Israeli military action.

The Israeli forces have resorted to committing the most heinous war crimes in modern history. Those crimes, which include State terrorism, are committed under the banner of "security". Using excessive force, they have demolished many houses, restricted movement and closed the occupied territory. All of those actions have had a devastating impact on our economic situation.

On the issue of terrorism, it is shameful for the representative of a Government that throughout its history has committed the most heinous crimes and acts of terrorism to talk about terrorism.

The Palestinian Authority has condemned all forms and manifestations of terrorism, by whoever commits them and whether they are against Palestinian civilians or Israeli civilians. But we should not confuse the issue. There must be a difference between terrorism, which is a heinous crime that we condemn officially and in all our statements, and the right of people who live under oppression and foreign occupation to defend themselves and to resist occupation. That right comes not from us, the Palestinian Authority. That right comes from the international community and from international law, which legitimizes the use of any means to resist occupation and oppression.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): In my first reply I addressed most of the issues subsequently raised by the Palestinian observer in her reply. However, since by replying the Palestinian observer has given me an opportunity to speak before the Assembly for five more minutes, I wish to elaborate on one particular issue that was raised in the statement made from the rostrum today, and that is the death and injury of Palestinian children in the violence. A few hours ago, an 8-year-old boy, Jihad al-Faqih, was killed in Nablus while trying to hurl two pipe bombs at Israeli soldiers. That abhorrent use — exploitation — of children in armed conflict is not unique. From the earliest days of the renewed violence, the Palestinian Authority, aware of

the propaganda value to be gained, has actively promoted the participation of children in the anti-Israeli violence. Its schools, summer camps, mosques and official media have engaged in incitement specifically directed at young audiences. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority has trained children in the use of weapons and has created an atmosphere that extols death in battle and encourages children to become suicide bombers. The cynical use of children as pawns in the conflict begins in the Palestinian educational system. Instead of educating children about peace, as Israel does, Palestinian textbooks, many of which have been recently published by the Palestinian Authority itself, openly teach hatred of Israel and Israelis. Materials published and broadcast in the official Palestinian media reinforce these lessons, aiming much of their incitement at children, encouraging them to hate Israelis and to take part in the violence. Children are urged by television advertisements to "drop your toys and take up arms", while Palestinian educational television programming glorifies martyrdom in the struggle against Israel.

Youth groups and official Palestinian Authority summer camps teach children to be holy warriors in the jihad against Israel and the Jews, actually training young people in the use of firearms. Educational facilities are used to inspire hero worship of suicide bombers, psychologically preparing Palestinian children to follow in their footsteps.

With the passage of time, as the Palestinian Authority intensified its incitement and expanded its use of children in the violence, young Palestinian boys and girls were increasingly exploited to be used as suicide bombers. The age of suicide bombers is dropping by the day, and attacks carried out by teenagers have become the norm. In addition, younger children, some no more than toddlers, have been used to provide cover for the transportation of weapons and explosives.

The Palestinian Authority's manipulation of children, which has been extensively documented in the media, constitutes a reprehensible violation of every international treaty and convention meant to protect children in situations of armed conflict. The Palestinian Authority's heinous exploitation of children is both profoundly immoral and fundamentally illegal.

It should also be remembered that hundreds of Israeli children have been killed or wounded in terrorist

attacks. These were not just incidental victims of the violence, but the intended targets of terrorists. They have been deliberately targeted and killed by Palestinian sniper fire and in drive-by machine gun ambushes. Palestinian roadside bombs have maimed children in school buses, and Israeli youngsters were bludgeoned and stoned to death by terrorists while hiking near their homes. Suicide bombers have murdered dozens of Israeli young people, choosing to strike at places where young people are known to congregate: discos, bus stops, fast food restaurants, shopping malls.

Although the suffering of every child is tragic and regrettable, a basic difference exists between the two sides. Most Palestinian children have been hurt due to their direct participation in violent confrontations, while a minority of casualties were the unfortunate result of crossfire or return fire directed towards terrorist targets. By contrast, Israeli child victims were deliberately targeted by their terrorist attackers as the intended and preferred victims of the Palestinian bombers, snipers and gunmen.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): I am sorry to take the floor again, but the statement by the Israeli delegation has compelled me to make a few remarks. This latest statement is, at the very least, a racist remark. It is not only racist, but it is also inaccurate and full of lies.

My delegation regrets the death or injury of any child, let alone Israeli children. We regret the loss of any child, wherever they may be. We condemn their killing, by whoever it may be.

I just want to remind the Israeli delegation that 2,000 Palestinians have been killed since September 2000. One third of them were children. We are talking about 500 Palestinian children. And, according to the

statistics, most of those children died either at home or at school. Only a few died where violence was taking place. I repeat: most of them died either at home, in the streets or in the schoolyard.

In addition, we have more than 35,000 injured. Again, one third of them are children. We are talking about 10,000 injured Palestinian children; many of them have permanent injuries, and they cannot resume their normal lives. And the Israeli delegate dared to talk about children and the love of children?

My second point is that the Palestinian Authority does not exploit children. It does not educate children to hate. Our children can see before their very eyes the destruction, the demolition of houses above their heads. They watch their parents being killed. They see the siege of the occupied territories. This is how the Palestinian children learn to resist occupation. For 35 years under occupation, they have not lived a normal life for a single day. And now he is talking about violence, hatred and educating children? For 35 years those children did not see any kind of normal life. They have not enjoyed a single right that is stipulated in the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Israel has violated every right that the Palestinian children have. They ought not to dare to talk about their care for their children. We love our children as much as anybody else. We love life as much as anybody else. But it is only through the end of occupation and the end of oppression that Palestinian and Israeli children can live in peace and security.

The Acting President: I remind members that action on draft resolution A/57/L.43 will be taken at a later date.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.