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Official Records

President: Mr. Deiss (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 69

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/65/344)

Draft resolution (A/65/L.31)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/65/82, A/65/290 and A/65/356)

Draft resolutions (A/65/L.45, A/65/L.47 and A/65/L.48)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/65/77)

Draft resolution (A/65/L.46)

(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/65/341)

Draft resolution (A/65/L.25)

(d) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/65/335 and A/65/357)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*):

Humanitarian emergencies continue to devastate entire communities. New threats arise that are tied to climate change, pandemics and natural disasters. United Nations humanitarian assistance activities remain, unfortunately, more necessary than ever.

Every year, Member States have reaffirmed their support for the humanitarian activities of the United Nations by adopting by consensus resolutions addressing humanitarian issues. I would highlight that this is an important sign of the international community's solidarity with the victims in such situations. I certainly hope that the same holds true at the end of today's debate. I would like to thank in this respect Ambassador Herman Schaper for having coordinated the work on the draft resolutions that are being presented today.

Before opening the debate, I would like to share a few observations with the Assembly.

First, on the importance of capacity-building, the challenges resulting from the scope of certain emergency humanitarian situations, in particular regarding the capacity of and coordination within the humanitarian assistance system, compound even further the vulnerability of the people affected. The earthquake that devastated Haiti and Hurricane Tomas,

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which affected a great many Caribbean countries, are two recent examples of this. That is why the draft resolutions submitted for our consideration today insist on the pressing need to counter the threat posed by natural disasters and prepare for emergency situations, in particular through capacity-building for local and national authorities and for non-governmental organizations.

The General Assembly will have an opportunity in February 2011 to delve deeper into the issue of the prevention of natural disasters in an informal thematic debate.

Secondly, on the need to improve the safety of humanitarian personnel, in addition to the issue of operational complexity is the fact that humanitarian personnel and facilities increasingly face threats and attacks that are sometimes violent, which can hamper the effectiveness of the aid provided. One priority must therefore be to strengthen security conditions.

Thirdly, on the importance of coordination, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos for the work undertaken by her team, and encourage her to continue her work to enhance the coordination of assistance. I call on all stakeholders — United Nations humanitarian assistance agencies and programmes and intergovernmental organizations and other humanitarian and development actors — to continue to work closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Lastly, I call on Member States to ensure that adequate financial resources are made available to United Nations and other regional and international organizations to allow for an effective response to humanitarian situations. I wish the General Assembly a productive debate.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.25.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report (A/65/341) submitted under sub-item (c) of agenda item 69, entitled “Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”.

United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance has been growing in importance in the light

of an increasing number of humanitarian threats and challenges. The natural disasters that occurred this year have demonstrated that there is a growing need for strengthened humanitarian cooperation and humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

Ukraine has traditionally supported disaster relief efforts for affected countries on a bilateral basis. We also have a strong willingness to enhance our participation in the United Nations responses to emergencies and crisis situations. In 2010, Ukraine became a donor to the Central Emergency Response Fund by contributing more than \$500,000 to the Fund.

We proceed from the necessity of ensuring comprehensive and coordinated responses to humanitarian situations. It is important to preserve the fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance: neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

Ukraine deeply values the important role that the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has played in strengthening international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is essential to ensure that the United Nations strategy for Chernobyl and the United Nations action plan aimed at the implementation of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016) are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

We are grateful to Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, and representatives of civil society, the private sector and the donor community for their contribution towards the development of cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

On behalf of the countries most affected by the Chernobyl disaster and the principal sponsors of the draft resolution — the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — I have the honour of introducing the draft resolution entitled “Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”, contained in document A/65/L.25.

The draft resolution, which is based on previous resolutions and the Secretary-General’s triennial report, takes stock of the progress made so far and seeks to

further map out plans for further assistance. Draft resolution A/65/L.25 welcomes the efforts of the international community to complete the construction of the shelter facility and its transformation into an environmentally safe system. It welcomes the realization of ongoing Chernobyl programmes and the United Nations action plan elaborated by UNDP in accordance with resolution 62/9 on Chernobyl and is aimed at the full implementation of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016).

Next year, the international community will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. In this regard, the draft resolution welcomes the Ukrainian initiative, co-sponsored by Belarus and the Russian Federation, to convene an international conference entitled “Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future” in Kyiv in April 2011. The draft resolution also requests the President of the General Assembly to convene, on 26 April 2011, a special commemorative meeting of the Assembly in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

The draft resolution, when adopted, will become a platform for further action to optimize the international response to the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. I would like to cordially thank the delegations that have participated in the consultations for their constructive engagement. I further thank all the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution and invite others to join the sponsorship. It is our expectation that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium to introduce draft resolutions A/65/L.31 and A/65/L.46.

Mr. Vermaerke (Belgium): It is a great honour to present, on behalf of the European Union (EU), the draft resolution entitled “Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel”, contained in document A/65/L.31.

The European Union; my country, Belgium; and EU Commissioner Georgieva in particular attach great importance to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We are worried by and aghast at the increasing number of casualties and accidents befalling humanitarian personnel in recent years, especially when attacks are deliberately targeted or politically

motivated against United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

This year, we welcome the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which expands the scope of the legal protections provided by the Convention to include the personnel of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies. We hope that more States will become parties to the Convention and the Additional Protocol in the coming years.

The draft resolution and the growing list of sponsors show that all Member States feel concerned about and can come together around the issue of the safety, security and protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. The work, commitment and courage of humanitarian workers, especially locally recruited personnel, are highly valued. This year, we also welcome the contribution of women personnel in humanitarian operations and ask for special attention to be accorded to the specific security threats they face.

Given the high number of casualties and victims among humanitarian workers resulting from road incidents, the issue of road safety is highlighted this year. The Secretariat is requested to take initiatives to promote road safety, strengthen training and report on the steps taken to improve data collection and analysis on road incidents.

Finally, the draft resolution contains an expression of support for the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system, and in particular for the significant change in approach towards security management. The new approach is designed to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance and gives guidance to designated officials on how to stay instead of when to leave in circumstances where the delivery of humanitarian assistance has become more complex.

In closing on this issue, I thank all delegations for their engagement during the negotiations, their openness and frankness of the exchanges, and their willingness to agree upon the important issues addressed in the draft resolution. We look forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus once again.

Allow me now to turn to the introduction of the draft resolution entitled “Assistance to the Palestinian people” contained in document A/65/L.46. It is my

pleasure to also introduce the draft resolution to the General Assembly, which was submitted by the 27 members of the European Union. The draft resolution has been shared with Member States. As in previous years, the European Union expects the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The sustained support of the donors of the international community is essential in order to support State-building efforts, to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

The European Union commends the work of the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of the future State of Palestine and reiterates its full support for their endeavours in that regard and for the Fayyad Plan. We welcome the World Bank's assessment that

“if the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future”.

The European Union remains extremely concerned by the prevailing situation in Gaza. The European Union reiterates its call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of the crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. Despite some progress following the decision of the Israeli Government on 20 June 2010 to ease the closure, changes on the ground have been limited and insufficient so far.

Further efforts and complementary measures are needed to achieve a fundamental change of policy that allows for the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza and that improves the daily lives of the population while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. The European Union calls on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay. The European Union calls for a complete stop of rocket attacks on Israel and all other forms of violence.

Palestinian exports are an essential component of Gaza's recovery. In this respect, the European Union welcomes the recent announcement by the Israeli Government concerning new measures to facilitate exports from Gaza. We encourage a swift

implementation by Israel and are ready to work with Israel towards achieving pre-2007 levels of exports in 2011 to produce real change on the ground.

Increased and accelerated imports of construction materials are another crucial component of Gaza's recovery and also for building schools and health centres. The European Union recalls its readiness to assist in the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza in close partnership with the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. As part of a comprehensive European Union approach, including Common Security and Defence Policy missions, the European Union is ready to extend its support to improvements to crossing infrastructure, to purchase and install the necessary equipment, and to train Palestinian border and crossing management personnel to operate the crossings.

The draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people submitted today embodies the wish of the European Union and the international community as a whole to help the Palestinian people in their State-building efforts. The draft resolution stresses the importance of the work done by the United Nations and its agencies, notably in providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. It also urges all actors of the international community to provide economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people. The draft resolution urges Member States to open their markets to exports of Palestinian products on the most favourable terms. Moreover, the draft resolution stresses the importance of the work carried out by humanitarian personnel and organizations to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, and of free humanitarian access to the Palestinian people.

The European Union wishes to thank the Palestinian and Israeli delegations for their cooperation during the negotiations on the draft resolution. The European Union also wishes to express its gratitude to the delegations that so far have requested to be included in the list of sponsors of the draft text.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.45.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): I have the great honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”, contained in document A/65/L.45.

We would like to thank all delegations for the constructive spirit in which the negotiations were held, and which enabled us once again to reach consensus on this important draft resolution. The established consensus on the humanitarian agenda sends an unequivocal message of our shared and collective responsibilities in responding to humanitarian needs.

The draft resolution before us reaffirms the unique and leading role of the United Nations in responding to humanitarian emergencies. The international emergency humanitarian response capacity has been substantially strengthened over the years. Since the adoption of the original resolution 46/182 in 1991, a number of innovations — such as the establishment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the reformed Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the cluster system and the common needs assessments — have led to a more agile, quick, coordinated and effective system, allowing us to reach more people in need, and doing it faster.

Significant challenges remain, nonetheless. We meet today at a time of increasing humanitarian needs. The large magnitude of some of the most recent natural disasters has stretched our collective capacity to respond to the limit. In addition, in a number of complex emergencies, protracted conflict and insecurity have increased humanitarian needs. In order to meet these and other demands, further strengthening and improvement of the response system is needed, as is a shared understanding of the role of humanitarian assistance in support of affected populations.

The draft resolution before us addresses both our ambition to strengthen the humanitarian response and underlying principles of humanitarian assistance. We express deep concern at the increasing challenges of the consequences of natural disasters, including the impact of climate change. The draft resolution highlights the challenges posed by the magnitude of some of the most recent disasters. The international community is encouraged to provide adequate resources for disaster risk reduction and to work towards building back better in all phases, from relief

to development. The draft resolution recognizes the need to build humanitarian response capacity at the local, national and regional levels, and requests the Secretary-General to assess and report on measures taken by the United Nations in this pursuit.

The draft resolution condemns the increasing number of deliberate violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities in many emergency situations, and highlights their negative implications for the provision of humanitarian assistance to populations in need. This year’s draft resolution supports the approach taken by the Secretary-General to focus the security management system on enabling the United Nations system to deliver on its mandates and manage risks.

In the area of protection, this year’s draft resolution points to the particular needs of internally displaced persons. A grave protection concern relates to gender-based violence, and the draft calls upon Member States to prevent, investigate and prosecute such acts of violence.

Speed and flexibility are essential to an effective response. We request the Secretary-General to report on actions taken to strengthen the ability of the system to recruit and deploy staff quickly and flexibly, and to procure emergency relief materials and services rapidly. Equally important, effective response requires the timely availability of resources. The draft resolution calls upon donors to consider increasing their contributions to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and reiterates that the Office should benefit from more predictable funding.

In a similar vein, we acknowledge the important role and achievements of the Central Emergency Response Fund in ensuring a more timely and predictable response, and look forward to reviewing the five-year evaluation of the Fund next year. During the high-level conference on the CERF, held earlier this week, the Fund’s already wide donor base was expanded to 124 donors. Contributions made at the conference brought the total amount raised for the Fund since its establishment to more than \$2 billion. This year’s draft resolution calls upon Member States to consider increasing their contributions to the CERF.

Before concluding, let me emphasize that the draft once again reaffirms the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and reaffirms the

need for all actors engaged in humanitarian assistance to promote and fully respect these principles. The draft resolution also once again calls upon Governments and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations in order to ensure safe and unhindered access to affected populations.

Next year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of its landmark resolution 46/182. We hope that we shall use this occasion to take stock of progress to date and, more importantly, to look forward and reach agreement on what must be done to meet increasing humanitarian demands.

My delegation and the sponsors look forward to the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution contained in document A/65/L.45, and we encourage more delegations to join in sponsorship.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Brazil to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.47.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): This year has been marked by disasters of great magnitude, such as the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan. Such tragedies have highlighted the tremendous human cost of natural disasters, in particular when they occur in areas where acute poverty and lack of infrastructure render the population defenceless and devoid of the capacity to respond. Such calamities also challenge our ability, as the international community, to effectively support the affected State in providing life-saving assistance. We have learned that we need to respond better and faster. We also need to strengthen the capacity and means of the United Nations to help those in need in a timely manner and to provide leadership and coordination to international efforts.

Brazil is committed to supporting international humanitarian assistance. In 2010, we provided assistance to almost 40 countries through contributions in the amount of \$23 million. For Haiti alone, we have mobilized over \$300 million. We have also more than doubled our contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund for 2011, reaching half a million dollars.

We believe it essential to ensure a mutually supportive relationship between humanitarian

assistance and sustainable development. This can be done, inter alia, by stimulating the domestic economy through local procurement. Through our food aid, for example, Brazil has sought to combine emergency short-term relief with structural policies aimed at creating the conditions for socio-economic development. The Purchase for Progress initiative of the World Food Programme is a good example of such an approach at the multilateral level.

Turning again to Haiti, I would like to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.47, entitled "Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake".

As recently pointed out by the Secretary-General in his briefing to Member States, the humanitarian situation in Haiti is worsening. The destruction caused by the January earthquake has been compounded by the impacts of Hurricane Tomas and the rapidly expanding cholera epidemic. The gravity of the situation requires additional effort on the part of the international community to support the Government and people of Haiti as they confront these mounting problems.

Draft resolution A/65/L.47 affirms the leading role of the Government of Haiti in all aspects of the humanitarian response, rehabilitation, recovery, reconstruction and development plans for the country. It also recognizes the continued need for support from the international community to assist the Government in this endeavour.

The text before the Assembly also recognizes the vulnerabilities of and challenges faced by the Haitian population, in particular internally displaced persons. It urges humanitarian and development actors to support the Government of Haiti, upon request, in addressing issues of land rights, rubble removal and the promotion of livelihoods for the affected population. It also highlights the urgent need for increased support to help the country respond to the cholera epidemic and strengthen its health system and water and sanitation sectors.

In sum, through this draft resolution, the General Assembly reiterates its appeal to all Member States and all relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as the international financial institutions and development agencies, to provide speedy, sustainable and adequate support for the relief,

early recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts of Haiti.

I thank the Permanent Mission of Haiti and all the delegations that participated in and contributed to the drafting and to the negotiation of the draft resolution. We also express our sincere appreciation to all sponsors. Brazil looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus. Haiti needs our continued and increased support. We must renew our commitment and resolve to stand by the Haitian people and help them overcome these trying times.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Lucia to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.48.

Mrs. Flood-Beaubrun (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the main sponsors, draft resolution A/65/L.48, entitled "Emergency and reconstruction assistance to Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas".

Today's meeting of the General Assembly is a manifestation of solidarity by Member States for all those countries in the Caribbean subregion affected by Hurricane Tomas. The hurricane has caused disruption to the economies of Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries in our subregion. It also resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and caused widespread damage to the infrastructure of these States.

The international community is presented with an opportunity to provide humanitarian and other assistance to the Government and peoples of our sister Caribbean States. Through the adoption of draft resolution A/65/L.48, the General Assembly would acknowledge the efforts made by the Governments of Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries in the region to alleviate the suffering of the victims of the hurricane.

The draft resolution highlights, among other things, the vulnerability of Caribbean States, based on their geographical location, to cyclical weather patterns, which impose additional challenges to their ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, the draft resolution underscores the grave consequences posed by natural disasters to the economic and social development of these small island

developing States and the considerable amount of resources required to overcome the resulting damage.

The draft resolution appeals to all Member States, specialized agencies and other organizations and organs of the United Nations system, together with international financial institutions, to continue to offer speedy support to the relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and assistance efforts.

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General, organs of the United Nations system and the international financial institutions and development agencies to assist the affected States, to the extent possible, in overcoming the emergency and in achieving the rehabilitation and recovery of the economy and the affected population.

Finally, the draft resolution also calls for all reconstruction and disaster risk reduction efforts to take into consideration the impacts of climate change and to support the efforts of the Governments of Haiti, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries affected by Hurricane Tomas.

It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge the prompt response of members of the international community, the United Nations system, regional organizations, international agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations in the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas.

On behalf of the sponsors, I would like to thank all delegations for their constructive engagement on this matter, which took place in a spirit of compromise and in keeping with the finest traditions of multilateral diplomacy. It is for these reasons that the sponsors hope that draft resolution A/65/L.48 will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen): Let me first express my pleasure in seeing you, Madame President, preside over our deliberations today. I know you as a friend and a skilful diplomat.

It is indeed an honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in today's debate on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance.

Over the years, the humanitarian challenges resulting from complex emergencies and natural disasters have continued to increase, especially in

developing countries, and this year has been unprecedented in that regard. As a result, millions of people have been killed and millions displaced. Thousands of houses and acres of farmland have been destroyed. A large number of people are suffering from disease and living with unmet health needs. Moreover, these challenges have been compounded by the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, the world food crisis and continuing food insecurity, the energy crisis and the challenges posed by climate change. In the light of these challenges, it is essential to redouble our efforts to alleviate the suffering of millions around the world.

The Group of 77 and China reiterates its commitment to the guiding principles contained in the annex of resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 as the framework for the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance. Those principles, including neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence, should remain the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergencies and guide the efficiency and coordination of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations and other relevant organizations. In this regard, we also emphasize the primary role of the concerned State in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance.

The Group of 77 and China expresses its appreciation to the United Nations for its role in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and the progress made in humanitarian reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian responses. In this regard, the Group emphasizes the importance of enhancing the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of such responses. The Group of 77 and China urges the international community to support the efforts of developing countries in building humanitarian capacities through, among other things, the transfer of technology and expertise and by extending multisectoral cooperation.

We reaffirm that Member States must comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, to protect and assist civilians in occupied territories, and we call on the United Nations system and the international community to strengthen their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to those civilians.

As at previous sessions, the Group of 77 and China will submit a draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development. In introducing the draft resolution, the Group wants to reaffirm that humanitarian assistance should transcend the concept of relief and be linked with national priorities and particularities. Humanitarian assistance should be provided within a holistic approach, understanding that such assistance should contribute to rebuilding the social fabric of affected populations and to the development of economic structures, and ensure their sustainability after the emergency.

Moreover, efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction and supported through bilateral, regional and international cooperation. Adequate disaster risk reduction and early recovery activities should enable countries to effectively address the underlying risk drivers and contribute towards poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As a consequence, the Group of 77 and China is convinced that strengthened coordination among United Nations agencies and Governments is needed to achieve more efficient response, care and coverage, without duplication of efforts. We are pleased at the growing consensus for this annual draft resolution, and we look forward to the continued support of our partners in that initiative.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed increased acts of violence against humanitarian workers. The Group of 77 and China condemns all attacks against humanitarian workers, who render invaluable services to peoples in need of humanitarian assistance. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number and scale of United Nations commitments in the field of humanitarian assistance. That has led to the increased exposure of United Nations personnel to varied challenges.

The United Nations security system should also take into account the increasing number of humanitarian operations by providing the necessary training opportunities, capacity-building and cultural awareness to United Nations personnel in order for them to perform effectively and efficiently at their duty stations, including through enhanced coordination with host Governments. We welcome the new security system and expect it to help improve the safety and

security of United Nations personnel. We also appreciate the efforts made by Member States in providing safety and security to United Nations and other personnel, and urge them to continue to take all possible measures in that regard.

The Group would like to emphasize the importance of the principle of equitable geographical representation in the recruitment of staff, especially senior staff, to the United Nations humanitarian system. There is no doubt that funding is the backbone of humanitarian work. Therefore, strengthening the financial mechanism for humanitarian assistance and ensuring timely, predictable, adequate and flexible funding for both complex emergencies and natural disasters is essential to an effective response to emergencies. In that regard, we welcome the financial pledges made to the Central Emergency Response Fund during the high-level conference that was held over the past two days.

The Group of 77 and China engaged actively and constructively in the negotiations on the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/65/L.45), and looks forward to its adoption. The Group also looks forward to the adoption of the other draft resolutions before us, which will undoubtedly contribute to coping with the humanitarian challenges that we face.

Finally, on behalf of the Group, allow me to congratulate Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, on her assumption of that important position. We are confident that her Office will continue to do its notable work under her able leadership. We would also like to express our appreciation to her predecessor, Mr. John Holmes, for his tireless work during the past years.

The Group looks forward to a constructive and fruitful discussion on this important issue.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank you, Madame Vice-President, for your opening remarks. The coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance are at the core of the activities carried out by the United Nations. The European Union reiterates its strong support for the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator. We wish Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos the best in that interesting and challenging position.

As always, the debate on this agenda item provides an excellent opportunity to bring together the humanitarian community and to reflect upon our collective performance. Despite the extremely hard work in humanitarian emergencies, for instance in Haiti and Pakistan, and many positive developments over the past year, challenges remain. In a growing number of countries, access to beneficiaries has become more difficult and the security situation for beneficiaries and aid workers alike gets worse.

In the light of climate change, the magnitude and frequency of natural hazards, such as floods, droughts and cyclones, are predicted to increase. The poorest and most vulnerable in the poorest countries will be the most affected. Building resilience through disaster risk reduction can combat the effects of natural disasters in the short and medium term. Also, as the lessons learned from large-scale disasters have shown, involving development actors earlier and linking short-term humanitarian aid to longer-term development cooperation activities remain issues to be tackled in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The humanitarian reform agenda is now in its consolidating phase, and we welcome the positive effects of the humanitarian reforms to date. The cluster approach has contributed to the reduction of gaps in unmet needs in the field, as well as to improving accountability towards stakeholders and the inclusiveness of the actors involved. Further efforts to continue to ensure its positive impact, including through enhanced inter-cluster coordination and cooperation by all cluster lead agencies, are important. In addition, humanitarian leadership is essential to ensuring the coordination and coherence of international humanitarian assistance. More efforts to further empower and strengthen the capacity of humanitarian coordinators are imperative. Finally, pooled funding has helped to improve the predictability of humanitarian aid and, when combined with strong

leadership, transparency and accountability, contributes to effective prioritization and coordination. Pooled funding has also facilitated additional funding to the humanitarian system and encouraged diverse Member State participation.

The European Union supports the continued work towards developing a framework for common needs assessments. Such assessments, particularly in the early phases of a disaster, along with consolidated core and common information on humanitarian crises, are crucial to bringing about a shared understanding of humanitarian needs and to informing decision makers. That should contribute to a more optimal allocation of resources, to a response that is more effective and better targeted on the affected population and the most vulnerable, and to the provision of a baseline and framework for ensuring the performance of the humanitarian system.

An effective humanitarian response addresses the needs and concerns of all groups in an affected population. Understanding how conflicts and disasters affect women, girls, boys and men differently, and basing programming and implementation on their differential needs and capacities is critical. That includes specific attention to needs assessment processes, gender sensitivity and gender markers in the allocation of resources and further gender mainstreaming, including a better gender balance of humanitarian workers in the field. The ability of women and girls to be active partners in emergency response and rehabilitation should be reinforced.

Effective humanitarian response is also dependent on adequate, predictable, equitable and timely funding. The European Union, which is the largest humanitarian donor, reiterates the importance of a range of efficient and complementary financing mechanisms, including humanitarian pooled funds, bilateral and core funding, and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The European Union congratulates the United Nations on having organized another successful high-level CERF meeting. We welcome the expanding number of donors that are contributing to CERF. We urge all donors to apply the principles of good humanitarian donorship and to promote fundamental humanitarian principles.

Displacement and the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons remain among the greatest challenges in humanitarian responses. The

estimated number of people displaced by armed conflicts and violence stands at over 27 million. It is also estimated that each year approximately 50 million people are displaced due to natural disasters. The displaced are often forced to flee instantaneously, losing their possessions and land, and separated from family and communities. Millions are left destitute with little or no access to basic services, food, water, adequate shelter or livelihoods. We call upon all States, in their role as primary duty-bearers, to provide durable solutions for internally displaced persons in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. We welcome the adoption and the ongoing ratification process of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

International humanitarian response is often essential to supporting and supplementing national efforts to protect and meet the needs of affected populations. Unfortunately, humanitarian access to populations in need is still too often restricted by ongoing violent conflict, bureaucratic constraints or attacks on humanitarian personnel. The European Union is concerned that, particularly in situations of complex emergencies, the preservation of humanitarian space continues to be a challenge.

The European Union urges all States and all parties to a conflict to ensure the timely, safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected populations, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The European Union will continue to strongly advocate for international humanitarian law and respect for and adherence to the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. These principles constitute the core of humanitarian assistance and must be respected by all parties at all times.

The European Union calls for urgent efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians. Action on the ground has not yet matched the development of international norms and standards. Action is particularly needed for the effective prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. We call for the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. The Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo is a good example of action at the national level and should be replicated in similar situations.

Reports of a dramatic escalation of attacks, threats and incidents against United Nations and humanitarian workers, including politically motivated attacks, are of grave concern. Humanitarian emblems and flags, which traditionally provided a shield for humanitarian workers, have now, unfortunately, often become deliberately selected targets. This is highly alarming. Only last year, more than 100 humanitarian workers were killed and around 90 kidnapped, which is respectively three and four times more than 10 years ago. It is unacceptable that exactly those people who are there to assist people in need should become the targets of attacks, often by being perceived as associated with a political agenda. The European Union condemns in the strongest terms deliberate attacks on aid organizations and their personnel. The consequence of these aggressions is ultimately that the people in need do not receive the assistance they are entitled to.

We need concerted international action now. The safety and security of all humanitarian workers are an issue of interest to all stakeholders: humanitarian organizations, affected populations, host Governments and donors alike. All States and all actors must take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel and maintain a humanitarian presence and operations in high-risk environments. This includes the promotion of the understanding of and support for independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors need the trust of the local population and the respect of all parties to a conflict. In this context, the European Union encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and its partners to pursue its initiatives to promote acceptance of humanitarian actors and support for humanitarian action.

In closing, the European Union remains committed to continuing to engage with all Member States in strengthening the humanitarian partnership. Next year, 20 years will have passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, which led to the creation of OCHA. We have come a long way since then. Together, we need to ensure that the humanitarian response is strengthened, well-coordinated at all levels and fit for its purpose. This year we also celebrate the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Central

Emergency Response Fund. These events provide a good opportunity to take stock of the evolution of the humanitarian response and, even more importantly, to look to the future.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): The issue of international assistance is of vital significance to the Palestinian people. Over the decades, the generous, principled assistance of countries and international organizations has enabled the Palestinian people to remain steadfast in their determined effort to achieve their inalienable, legitimate national rights, including their right to self-determination and freedom in their independent State.

This assistance has also helped to alleviate the grave socio-economic hardships and humanitarian suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, over many years. It has empowered them to build strong national foundations and institutions for their State. It was and remains the lifeline to a brighter and more stable and secure Palestinian future, free of the occupation and the indignities of its aggressive, oppressive and racist policies.

Since the launch of the Palestinian Government's two-year programme, "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", in August 2009, international assistance has focused primarily on State-building. Much of the aid given is now clearly centred not on easing the pain of the Israeli occupation, but rather on helping the Palestinian people and their leadership to prepare for the inevitable end of that illegitimate occupation and to build and strengthen functional, transparent and accountable institutions of a sovereign and viable State. The unanimous international support given to the plan is reflective of this objective, and we are most grateful for the constant and strong support that continues to be given.

Together with our partners in the international community, we have stayed the course despite the countless obstacles that continue to be imposed and the deliberate acts of sabotage committed by Israel, the occupying Power. Despite serious difficulties on the ground, we have implemented important reforms in the areas of social welfare, economic policy, governance and security for our people, all of which have been recognized by the international community. Moreover, the Palestinian Government has made progress in reducing the level of dependence on international aid

in the area of Government running costs. In fact, by 2013, it is envisaged that the Palestinian budget will not need outside assistance, thanks to our persistent reforms in finance and other areas.

In September, the World Bank acknowledged these remarkable Palestinian achievements, all accomplished while we have been under a 43-year-long military occupation. In its report, the World Bank stated that this economic growth, along with implemented reforms, have well positioned the Palestinians for the independence of their State at any time in the near future. However, the World Bank also determined that the only remaining obstacle to this independence becoming a reality continues to be Israel, the occupying Power, and its destructive policies.

This conclusion is shared by the international community, which has first-hand knowledge of the devastating impact of the occupying Power's illegal and debilitating policies. That is why the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, meeting in September, also recognized that the only remaining obstacle to Palestinian independence and true growth was the continued Israeli occupation and Israel's repressive policies.

The road ahead remains difficult. While in the past year, the Palestinian Government has implemented over 1,000 development and other projects across the occupied Palestinian territory, the response of the occupying Power has been escalation of its campaign of destruction with the aim of undermining these positive, constructive efforts of our people in partnership with the international community. Recent examples include the repeated destruction of Freedom Road in the village of Qarawat Bani Hassan and an agricultural project in the Jordan Valley. In fact, the United Nations Development Programme has reported this year a significant increase in destruction of Palestinian structures and buildings in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by Israel in comparison with 2009.

In addition, the report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) states clearly that the continued practices of the occupation have forced the Palestinian economy to continue to perform well under its potential. In its latest report, UNCTAD states that "[u]nder this institutionalized restrictive and distorting mechanism, economic recovery and poverty reduction will remain

elusive". UNCTAD points to the continued reduced productivity base of the Palestinian economy, which has translated into continued unacceptably high unemployment rates — now at 33.3 per cent, the highest in the region.

The picture is most bleak in the Gaza Strip, where Israel's crippling illegal blockade has gravely impacted all aspects of life in Gaza, including socially, economically and medically, while reconstruction and development continue to be severely obstructed as Israel continues to block the implementation of the billions of dollars of international donor pledges made at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. While we recognize the latest increase in the number of products allowed to be exported from Gaza, we reiterate that these measures fall far short of what is required from the occupying Power. This most brutal form of collective punishment by the occupying Power against the Palestinian civilian population, which undoubtedly amounts to a war crime, must come to an end with a complete lifting of the blockade.

At the same time, Israel continues its destructive settlement and wall colonization campaign in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel appears to have made the dangerous choice of illegal settlements and entrenchment of occupation at the expense of and instead of peace. The international community has unanimously condemned Israel's open defiance of international law and numerous United Nations resolutions that call on the occupying Power to cease its illegal settlement activity and all other measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the territory.

Yet Israel continues to pursue these illegal policies and is expanding its illegal settlements at an unprecedented rate, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem, where it continues its campaign of dispossession, expulsion and depopulation, as it is also doing in areas of the Jordan Valley. In East Jerusalem, in particular, entire neighbourhoods are at risk of demolition, and scores of Palestinians, including elected representatives, continue to lose their residency rights in the city. All of these illegal practices gravely threaten the viability of the two-State solution.

In addition, Israel continues to impose more than 500 checkpoints and roadblocks throughout the West Bank that continue to impede the movement of persons and goods and access to services, to greatly undermine

all aid and efforts aimed at economic recovery and development, and to hamper the assistance work of United Nations agencies on the ground, including in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Restrictions imposed on access to occupied East Jerusalem are most severe, and we caution that even further restrictions will be imposed by the occupying Power, which will greatly impair access to the city, the socio-economic, political and cultural heart of the Palestinian land.

The illegal Israeli policies and practices I have just outlined continue to cost the Palestinian economy billions of dollars in potential income. In fact, over the past six years, the Palestinian economy has lost \$9 billion dollars in potential income — more than twice the size of the economy today. This reality puts international conclusions into perspective and explains the continued decline of socio-economic indicators.

Accordingly, it is unrealistic to discuss assistance without addressing the drain on international resources that the Israeli occupation has caused over the years, and continues to cause. We therefore ask once more: How many more internationally funded projects and efforts are we willing to allow the occupying Power to undermine and destroy while it continues its illegal policies? Why should we allow these practices to derail focused international assistance that could be used for development and State-building rather than for relief and crisis management? How much longer is the international community willing to pay for the illegal acts of the occupying Power by relieving it of responsibility for the consequences of its actions, rather than persuading it to act with responsibility to bring them to an end?

We are here today to say that it is time for the international community to put an end to this tragic and unnecessary drain of resources and Palestinian potential. International assistance must be protected and its main objective — helping Palestinians to build the institutions of a viable State and prepare for independence — must be safeguarded and advanced. This partnership must not continue to be victimized by a persistent and costly policy of sabotage. That will require political will as much as assistance.

As indicated in Prime Minister Fayyad's "Homestretch to Freedom", the update and follow-up to the August 2009 plan of the Palestinian Authority, we are taking the final, critical steps towards realizing

our legitimate national goals. We are unwavering in our commitment to rebuilding where the occupier destroys and to nurturing hope where the indignities of occupation attempt to dash it. In short, our commitment to exercising our inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and full sovereignty over our land and natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is rock solid. We will not waver in our pursuit of the two-State solution for peace and justice on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map.

As we persevere on this course, we call on all Member States to step up their valuable support and to live true to the principles that the Assembly stands for. The international community must exercise its moral and legal authority by compelling the occupying Power to cease its violations and end its siege and colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The world has unanimously identified the problem at hand; the continued Israeli military occupation is impeding Palestinian development, self-determination and peace. The solution — a quick, final end to this grave injustice — is therefore clear. Any other formula would derail the goals driving international assistance to the Palestinian people.

Finally, the Palestinian people and their leadership are grateful for the invaluable assistance extended to them from all corners of the globe. But we neither plan nor wish for permanent dependence. International assistance is a means to an end for Palestinians; it is not an end in itself. Our goal is to stand before the Assembly, soon, to announce that, through the achievement of the sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, we have overcome dependence and that any assistance we might seek would be to complete our recovery from the occupation, rather than to continue coping with its devastation. But to do that, we need the international community's assistance. We ask that it help protect its investment in peace and make sure that it is not in vain.

Mr. Barton (United States of America): In the past year, the world has suffered some immense tragedies, from Haiti's earthquake to Pakistan's floods. Thousands of our fellow human beings have died or been injured, and lost loved ones or their homes, and

Governments have been overwhelmed by these disasters. At the same time, our citizens have shown that we do care for each other, especially when the needs are great. That is why we thank the Secretary-General for his forward-looking report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/65/82). We are doing our best, and yet we can do better.

In that regard, the report makes clear that threats and attacks against humanitarian workers continue to pose dangerous and unacceptable impediments to the delivery of critical relief assistance. The United States deeply regrets the loss of life and injuries to those who offer help. We condemn the vile attacks against aid workers that hinder the delivery of assistance.

How should we continue to deliver assistance in high-risk environments to populations in need? The United States applauds the "Saving Lives Together" framework, which is an effort to strengthen coordination between the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations on security matters in order to improve the safety of aid workers in humanitarian operations. We also look forward to the results of the independent review commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on responding to emergencies in high-risk environments.

Getting the right people to the right place at the right time is vital to meeting the urgent needs of those affected by disasters. The United States believes that the United Nations should make every effort to ensure that resident coordinators in disaster-prone countries have the necessary background, experience and training to coordinate a complicated humanitarian response while advocating for historical principles, including access.

The United States remains gravely concerned about gender-based violence and its global prevalence. We support the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative and the development of a coordinator's handbook and other guidance. This is a wrong we must right.

We welcome the leadership of the new Under-Secretary-General, Valerie Amos, and thank her for her energetic start. In three months, she has catalysed efforts to improve the coordination of international relief efforts in a number of major crises. The United States is committed to the Under-Secretary-General's

efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance. We believe that human suffering can be reduced, especially if we combine our best efforts. The United States is pleased to co-sponsor several of the humanitarian draft resolutions.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The number of persons in need of immediate relief and long-term humanitarian assistance continues to rise, especially in developing and poor countries, which lack the necessary national preparedness capacities and the inability to respond effectively to sudden disasters. The international community recently witnessed a scenario where urgent humanitarian assistance was delayed in reaching affected people due to the vulnerability of infrastructure and the weakness of national capacities to deliver logistical services and equipment to persons in stricken areas.

The catastrophic earthquake that hit Haiti in January and the floods in Pakistan both resulted in unprecedented loss of life and property. Therefore, we stress the need to implement United Nations recommendations and resolutions on national and international strategies for disaster risk reduction. In this respect, we emphasize the essential and major role the United Nations plays in this field and we urge all Member States to support the efforts of the Organization, to strengthen and finance its humanitarian agencies, and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected areas.

The United Arab Emirates believes that building and strengthening effective response and disaster reduction capacities of developing countries is strongly linked to the achievement of all aspects of sustainable development, including national capacity-building to respond quickly and effectively to disasters. We stress here the importance of international cooperation in helping affected developing countries in their transition from relief to development. The United Arab Emirates is a major partner in international development and assistance partnerships with countries affected by natural disasters, climate change and armed conflicts.

In addition to providing direct humanitarian relief and emergency assistance for affected countries and through the United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process, the United Arab Emirates contributes to the financing of humanitarian relief and long-term development activities carried out by United Nations agencies and other regional and international

organizations. These contributions complement other humanitarian and development projects and initiatives, many of which we implement in collaboration with the relevant United Nations bodies and other international partners.

Moreover, we are a leading member of a number of international groups concerned with the rebuilding and reconstruction of countries affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters, supporting their economic, security and social institutions and enabling them to achieve security and stability. Such groups include the Group of Friends of Yemen, the Group of Friends of Pakistan, and the international partnership to help Afghanistan. Our humanitarian and relief contributions in 2009 and 2010, including emergency donations to help the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan, amounted to \$2 billion.

The United Arab Emirates plays an important role in coordinating and strengthening the efficiency of international emergency humanitarian activities through local specialized centres, such as the Dubai International Humanitarian City, the Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aid — the first of its kind in the region — and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent, all of which provide essential logistical services to United Nations and other international humanitarian bodies in order to enhance the scope and speed of response to emergencies and emerging conditions in affected areas.

The humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular the Gaza Strip, continue to deteriorate owing to the siege imposed by Israeli occupying forces for the past three years. The United Arab Emirates remains committed to providing humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority until the liberation of their land from Israeli occupation. The United Arab Emirates is one of the main contributors to emergency humanitarian assistance and development projects and directly supports the Palestinian Authority. Our contribution to the Palestinian Government and people in 2009 alone amounted to \$262.7 million, earmarked to support the Government, civil society, infrastructure, the education and health sectors, food, social development and the reconstruction of Gaza.

In that regard, we demand that the international community compel Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip, open all

crossing points to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people, end its occupation of Arab territory, and resume peace negotiations, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We further urge donor countries to continue their assistance to the Palestinian people and Government in anticipation of an end to the Israeli occupation of their land and the establishment of their independent State.

We reaffirm our support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and underscore the vitality of its role in helping the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We demand that UNRWA staff and assistance enjoy unhindered access to Palestinian refugees in all areas of the Agency's operations, and we emphasize the need to provide UNRWA with the financial support necessary for it to continue its humanitarian and development activities. On its part, the United Arab Emirates has doubled its annual donations to UNRWA in order to enable the Agency to meet its responsibilities towards Palestinian refugees.

Ms. Flores (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Secretary-General's reports on the issue of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance clearly show us the problems and challenges that we all must face individually and jointly.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to all humanitarian workers, men and women of extraordinary self-sacrifice and exceptional courage, who are called upon to respond quickly, effectively and in a coordinated way by identifying emergencies, resolving problems and protecting populations affected by natural disasters. It is a timely call for those who dedicate their time to saving lives and dealing with the effects of such dreadful calamities to be equipped with the best tools and resources available so that they can effectively carry out their sensitive tasks.

We express our shared solidarity as an affected region with Haiti, Pakistan, Chile, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, China, Indonesia, New Zealand, Colombia and other countries that have recently suffered the blows of an unforgiving nature.

My delegation acknowledges the invaluable work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC), which works in coordination with specialized agencies of the

system — such as UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme — as well as with such mechanisms as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

The establishment of CERF was an outcome of the Millennium Summit and was the Secretariat's first concrete step in the reform process launched in 2006. The Fund represents an important multilateral contribution and one of the most effective instruments for saving human lives in the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian crisis. The possibility of sending UNDAC staff hours after an incident to prepare a speedy assessment of a situation, including an indication of priorities and needs, while gaining the trust of national authorities and resident coordinators, makes it possible to provide the appropriate relief and necessary assistance to affected communities.

The shameful vulnerability of a large part of the most fragile sectors of our societies, the belts of poverty that encircle cities in deplorable conditions, settlers who inhabit high-risk areas in unsafe and unhealthy environments that lack basic services, the merciless degradation of the ecosystem, the wholesale plundering of food and livelihood resources, and humankind's role in the conspiracy to destroy the environment constitute both the fuel and the fuse that ignite the humanitarian crises of our time.

From that arises the urgent duty to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the undeniable need and intrinsic responsibility to look after the planet's rich heritage in order to prevent its deterioration and avert, wherever possible, sudden blows of nature that show humankind's irrelevance and lack of awareness in preserving their heritage and caring for their surroundings.

Like armed conflicts, natural disasters destroy without mercy. They claim innocent lives, affect health, have an impact on the environment, damage resources essential for survival and, in many cases, jeopardize national, regional and international security. Honduras knows only too well the terrifying presence of that painful reality and the shock of seeing more than half a century of modest material and social progress disappear before the fearless gaze of a defenceless people in its struggle to mitigate the effects of economic backwardness.

The devastating winds and incessant rains that caused rivers to overflow and submerged entire areas under the waters of a hurricane that was deemed as one of the most violent natural disasters of the late twentieth century rocked our country, snuffing out lives and fragmenting our national landscape into hundreds of pieces like a huge jigsaw puzzle. The raging waters swept away family assets and a good part of our fragile infrastructure, leaving our country prostrate and more than a third of the people victims.

The flood not only left mourning and desolation, but also stole the enthusiasm of a hopeful nation that had wagered on an optimistic future at the advent of a new millennium. However, despite the lasting consequences of a nightmare we cannot erase, thanks to strength of unity in our country, effective leadership and international solidarity, for which we are eternally indebted, we were able to emerge from the emergency, quickly recover and rebuild swiftly while overcoming the vexation of pressing needs, which experts feared would take an eternity.

We should take something on board from that harsh test in order to improve early warning systems, train emergency teams, redefine response systems with a view to strengthening them in order to assist communities and, while still lagging behind owing to economic limitations, be better prepared to address future difficulties. I am pleased to report that we have today adopted a national programme to reduce the threat of disasters in my country.

I would like to conclude by saying that my delegation shares the optimism over the outcome of the Cancún summit and the belief that it restored the world community's confidence in multilateralism. The conference managed to salvage the multilateral process of combating climate change with an agreement that once again places the efforts of the most polluting countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the umbrella of the United Nations. It is heartening that countries party to the Kyoto Protocol have agreed to resume negotiations for a second commitment period before the binding treaty expires at the end of 2012. We commend the establishment of the Green Fund to administer the \$100 billion in yearly assistance to developing countries that industrialized economies have pledged to provide beginning in 2020.

That is clearly an encouraging note to restore hope. Aware of the heavy burden that this generation shoulders not to limit the prospects for our children and grandchildren to be able to live, coexist and prosper in confidence, security and peace, the commitment to leave them a better world than the one we received from our worthy predecessors must not fall short of their dreams.

May the lights of the Christmas celebrations light up the spirits of all participants and fill them with love and affection. May peace and well-being radiate in them all and their loved ones.

Mr. Savostianov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In the light of the negative consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, the increase in the number and scale of natural disasters and continuing armed conflict mean that the international community needs the humanitarian services of the United Nations more than ever.

Russia supports the consistent comprehensive strengthening of the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to guarantee the continuation of civilian humanitarian assistance on the basis of the agreed guiding principles enshrined in the annex to the founding resolution 46/182. In spite of the difficult internal financial situation, in general OCHA has successfully performed the functions mandated to it to coordinate United Nations humanitarian operations, in particular in Haiti and Pakistan.

Owing to the impact of complex crises, the entire concept of the kind of humanitarian assistance rendered is beginning to change. Instead of individual emergency response operations, the need for an ongoing response to chronic humanitarian requirements arising from cyclical crises could start to become clear. To date, discussions on that issue have not produced consensus on how to react to those new challenges. However, there is clearly a need to define appropriate benchmarks. For us, it is important that, in the end, new areas of humanitarian response do not undermine the basis for providing humanitarian assistance, which has been defined over the course of the past decade of dialogue on humanitarian issues at the United Nations. We need to find means that do not contradict the guiding principles based on respect for the sovereignty of affected countries and their territorial integrity,

Government authorization of humanitarian operations and the facilitation of humanitarian access.

We believe that the basis for enhancing the effective provision of humanitarian assistance is the overall strengthening of humanitarian capacities, in particular at the national and local levels. We support areas of work of the United Nations humanitarian sector geared towards strengthening countries' capacities to provide response preparedness for natural disasters, mitigate their consequences and develop early warning systems, including enhancing assessment and forecasting means. In that context, it is important to ensure effective cooperation between United Nations humanitarian bodies and organizations specialized in development assistance.

Considerable progress was made recently with regard to the safety and security of United Nations humanitarian personnel, which we ascribe primarily to the establishment and positive experience of the early work of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. However, such issues remain on the United Nations humanitarian agenda.

Turning to the deterioration in certain emergency situations, the Secretariat has proposed a concept for the provision of humanitarian assistance in the face of the increasingly difficult security situation. Such proposals should not undermine the guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations. We are ready to actively participate in preparing approaches to that issue. The use of military resources is a significant factor in today's United Nations emergency response operations, given their effectiveness in such work. However, the practice of providing humanitarian assistance was conceived first and foremost as a civilian activity. We continue to support maintaining its civilian nature. Military resources should only be used as a last resort when there is no alternative to undertaking appropriate humanitarian operations in the given time frame. The participation of troops in such operations should uphold the principle of independence, with overall coordination remaining the responsibility of civilian structures.

Russia supports and actively facilitates the sustainable financing of the United Nations humanitarian sector. For us, both the continuing activities of the Secretariat's humanitarian bodies and the mechanism to provide United Nations humanitarian

emergency assistance are important. We believe that the United Nations consolidated appeals process is an important tool for funding assistance. It includes assessing humanitarian needs on the basis of coordinated actions by all United Nations agencies of the humanitarian cluster system. One of the most remarkable results of our common efforts to strengthen the humanitarian response mechanism is the successful operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). We commend the activities of CERF, which has asserted its role as an important instrument for providing predictable, appropriate and timely funding of international humanitarian operations.

In 2011, we will mark a tragic date, namely, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident. The capital of Ukraine will host an international conference on the theme "Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future". Commemorative events are also planned within the United Nations.

We would like to reiterate our gratitude to the entire international humanitarian community, donors and agencies of the United Nations system for their assistance to affected countries over the years. We believe that the draft resolution (A/65/L.25) on Chernobyl before the Assembly today should strengthen international cooperation in implementing the United Nations action plan within the framework of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): Let me express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative report (A/65/344) on the item under discussion, which clearly spells out the enormity of the challenges that the international humanitarian community faces today.

South Africa wishes to commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the wonderful job it has done in coordinating international humanitarian assistance to address the needs of affected communities around the world. Of course, there is always room for improvement, as affected communities will always expect timelier and stronger humanitarian responses to their plight. We are also aware that, in many cases, OCHA and other humanitarian workers operate under very difficult circumstances.

At the outset, therefore, allow me to say that South Africa condemns the increasing attacks on humanitarian personnel. We would like to urge all Governments to bring perpetrators to book and to allow the law to take its course. Such attacks should not distract us from our goal. As members of the international humanitarian community, we should continue to strive to assist those in need to the best of our ability. We therefore welcome the initiatives to provide counselling and other services to humanitarian workers who are affected by such unfortunate incidents.

This year, we have again witnessed major challenges in the humanitarian field, as we have seen from the effects of the devastating earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and China, a catastrophic natural disaster in Pakistan and the food crisis and malnutrition in the Sahel region, especially in the Niger and Chad, to mention but a few. Those major incidents led to massive losses of life and immense destruction of infrastructure and disrupted the development prospects of affected countries. While saluting the international community for its positive and swift response on behalf of affected populations, we all know that more needs to be done.

Our discussions here today are part of a process to determine what we, as the international community, could do better. We believe that global partnerships and cooperation remain very important. In that regard, South Africa welcomes the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the African Union Commission and OCHA, which will enhance their existing good relationship and contribute to a better understanding of what could be done better in a regional context. We look forward to the implementation of this important tool, especially in the area of capacity-building, which is greatly needed by many. South Africa invites the private sector and financial institutions to play a role in those initiatives. Partnerships between humanitarian and development actors need further strengthening in the light of the existing gap between the early recovery phase and the development phase.

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is also an important instrument for responding better and more quickly to the needs of vulnerable communities. CERF has contributed valuable funding to save lives, both in emergencies and in the so-called forgotten crises. South Africa therefore wishes to call

upon all Member States to continue to show their support for CERF, and even to consider increasing their voluntary contributions, so that affected communities can be given an opportunity to normalize their critical situations after being affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies.

In line with previous resolutions adopted under this item, my delegation would again appeal that increased funding for humanitarian assistance should not come at the cost of funding to development aid. In the same vein, my delegation would again like to support the call for timely and predictable funding for United Nations humanitarian agencies, as alluded to in the Secretary-General's report before us. We also look forward to the five-year review of the Fund in 2011.

Let us continue to use resolution 46/182 and its annexes as our guide for providing a humanitarian response. The core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence require humanitarian actors to provide humanitarian assistance not in accordance with nationality, race, religion or political point of view, but based on need alone.

It is therefore critical that support from the international humanitarian community should be based on needs. It should therefore respond not only to the CNN media effect, but also to slow-onset disasters. That would also include people living under foreign occupation, whose access to humanitarian aid should not be hindered or limited. We wish to stress that greater adherence to, and strict observance of, those fundamental humanitarian assistance principles are of paramount importance, not only in selected areas of the globe but also around the world. It is therefore South Africa's view that the 2010 World Humanitarian Day was commemorated with an appropriate and relevant theme, namely, "I am a humanitarian".

The issue of sexual exploitation and abuse remains a concern for my delegation. It is known that in emergencies women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. The humanitarian community should therefore work together to address this situation and take measures to prevent sexual abuse. We have taken note of the various initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system to address gender equality and to prevent gender-based violence in humanitarian action. My delegation will continue to monitor those developments with interest.

My delegation also looks forward to receiving information on the independent review of good practices and lessons learned with regard to the safety of humanitarian workers, based on which recommendations are expected by the end of this year on strategic approaches to safeguard the ability of humanitarian operations to continue wherever they are needed. It is important to find a balance between sufficient funding for security arrangements and well-funded responses to humanitarian emergencies.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate the need for humanitarian agencies to increase their use of local resources and capacities as much as possible in order to encourage the participation of beneficiaries and for emergency response to reduce future vulnerabilities. Let us all join hands and recommit ourselves to saving lives and alleviating the suffering of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The consequences of climate change and environmental imbalance, which are the direct result of the predatory actions of humankind and of the lack of commitment by some States to address the situation, have led to a sustained increase in natural disasters. The economic cost of such disasters is rising, while the measures adopted to confront them are inadequate. Developing countries are hit the hardest, in spite of the fact that they have contributed the least to the current situation.

Humanitarian assistance must be provided in full observance of the principles recognized in resolution 46/182. Cuba rejects the imposition, under the pretext of providing humanitarian assistance, of ambiguous and non-agreed concepts to justify actions that violate the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. The request and consent of the State in need of humanitarian assistance is an essential prerequisite for the provision of aid. The United Nations Charter must be respected, and its purposes and principles cannot be undermined, distorted, restricted or made subject to conditions.

Cuba has achieved significant progress with respect to many of the goals set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action, in particular those regarding natural disaster preparedness. The Cuban Government's role and experience are well known when it comes to initiating, organizing, coordinating

and providing humanitarian assistance in our country when it has been struck by natural disasters, thereby considerably mitigating the devastating human and material damage caused by such events. We have an effective civil defence system charged with overseeing compliance with civil defence measures and the international norms and conventions on protection to which Cuba is a party. The lessons learned throughout the years have allowed Cuba to strengthen its normative, legislative and institutional frameworks for disaster risk reduction. Preventive efforts and awareness-raising campaigns targeting civil society have been key to achieving those results.

The protection of human life is at the centre of all of our efforts. We therefore adopt all the necessary measures to that end. Furthermore, through preventive measures, we are working to minimize the material damage caused by such phenomena. All those efforts are carried out in a coordinated manner, on the basis of close cooperation between all Government institutions, non-governmental organizations and Cuban society as a whole, with an active role played by the media.

Despite all those efforts, the forces of nature have made themselves felt in all their fury as a result of the irreversible changes of man-made origin that are taking place around the world. Over the past four years, Cuba has been struck by numerous extreme-weather events that have had a serious impact on our economy.

The United Nations system and the international community have a crucial responsibility towards developing countries to help them to improve their capacity to respond to natural disasters. The most direct means of accomplishing this would be for developed countries to meet their official development assistance commitments.

In addition to the human and material damage caused by natural disasters, there are other types of damage, such as those caused by hunger and poverty, which place billions of people around the world in exceedingly precarious positions. That is the direct result of an unjust international economic order.

The United Nations must continue to coordinate humanitarian efforts at the international level and promote programmes that allow for effective support to be provided to countries with the greatest need. It is important that we continue to develop humanitarian capacity and strengthen the institutions directly linked to humanitarian assistance on the ground. Among other

things, it is important to give them greater access to new technologies, financial resources and the necessary scientific and technological knowledge.

With regard to Cuba's contributions to international humanitarian efforts, I would like to highlight the recent holding of the eighth International Congress on Disasters, which took place in Havana in June. Among others, the meeting brought together officials, staff, scientists and professionals who work to protect people and their property, the economy and the environment from the destructive effects of natural disasters. This allowed for an exchange of know-how, results, outcomes, experiences and prospects for risk reduction strategies. The meeting also encouraged programmes and projects for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this area.

Cuba reiterates its willingness to continue to provide support, with solidarity and without self-interest, to those countries affected by natural disasters that need aid, in line with our capacity to do so. An example of that is the work undertaken by the international contingent of doctors specialized in disaster situations and serious epidemics, which is known as the Henry Reeve Brigade. The Brigade has been widely deployed in disaster areas in the countries in which it has worked. It has established comprehensive field hospitals capable of providing a broad-ranging response to the needs of affected populations. The work of the Brigade in the sister Republic of Haiti has been widely recognized.

Cuba will continue to decisively promote humanitarian assistance for all those who need it in every corner of the world, as a matter of ethics and principles. We will reject all attempts to manipulate these matters for political ends or monetary gain.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): It is my proud privilege to participate in this important debate. At the outset, we would like to align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Earlier this year, a large part of my country was submerged under water by unprecedented floods that affected more than 20 million people, destroyed over 1.9 million homes, rendered 10 million people homeless, damaged 2 million hectares of crops, destroyed 1.3 million hectares of standing crops and resulted in the loss of millions of jobs and livelihoods. As of now, the water has receded in most of the

country. Unfortunately, however, in my province of Sindh we are still under many feet of water. But we are not alone. While we ourselves strive, I take great pleasure in informing the Assembly that, to keep the effort alive, the United Nations Development Programme has called an international donors conference in Pakistan for the province, to be held in January 2011.

As for the floods, our Government mobilized all its resources to provide rescue and relief to affected people. Vital support by the international community played an important role in helping us through the rescue and relief phase. No matter how much we express our thanks to the United Nations and the international community for their help, it will not be adequate. I give full kudos to the Secretary-General, the first world leader to visit Pakistan in the wake of floods, who drew the conscience of the world to the scale of calamity and guided the United Nations system in coordinating its response to what he called one of the biggest and most complex natural disasters we have faced in the history of the United Nations — a slowly unfolding tsunami.

The people of Pakistan have led the massive relief and recovery efforts in the wake of floods, and I send them full salutations. That is yet another indication of our nation's enduring resilience.

The focus is now on early recovery. The revised Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan involves a total expenditure by the United Nations of \$1.94 billion to undertake 397 projects that have been launched by the Government of Pakistan jointly with the United Nations. Those projects focus on early recovery for a period lasting until September 2011. The Plan appeals for a total of \$1.94 billion. As of today, 51 per cent has not yet been funded.

To assess the damage and losses caused by the floods, World Bank and Asian Development Bank teams have completed a damage and needs assessment. This was raised by the Secretary-General some months back in this very Hall, where it was decided that those teams would play a singular role under the guidance of the United Nations, in collaboration with Pakistan. The Assembly will be astounded to learn that the overall damage is estimated at 6 per cent of Pakistan's 2009-2010 gross domestic product. That amounts to more than \$10 billion in damage to infrastructure, farms and houses, as well as other direct and indirect losses —

double the amount of damage caused by the 2005 earthquake.

Our experience of the 2005 earthquake has helped to create the necessary institutional, infrastructural and legislative framework. One newly created institution is the National Disaster Management Authority, which is leading the response to the floods. The Government of Pakistan has taken some important steps, which I will now share with the Assembly.

First, to ensure accountability, we have appointed a national oversight disaster management council, which was necessary to bring together all relevant actors on a national scale. Secondly, we have created a social protection scheme called the national card, which would provide a compensation package of 100,000 rupees to every affected household to help generate economic activity. Thirdly, we have established an early recovery plan based on coverage of worst-affected areas, mapping of partners and activities to avoid duplication, identifying key performance indicators to measure aid effectiveness and enhancing service delivery through the diversity of partners. Fourthly, with regard to reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, the Government has undertaken to spend the kind of moneys that will be able to cover the huge cost involved, primarily through re-prioritizing our federal public sector development programme and our provincial annual development programme. As the Assembly is aware, if \$10 billion has been assessed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and \$2 billion is forthcoming from the international community — 50 per cent having been funded so far — Pakistan itself will have to take responsibility for providing at least \$8 billion to cover the remainder.

Of late, Pakistan has suffered from humanitarian emergencies of varying nature. I am not going to name all of them; the Assembly is aware of them. The earthquakes and current floods have displaced many people. Close to 20 million people have been internally displaced due to the floods, with perhaps 10 million more having been displaced over a period of three years. That amounts to about 30 million people.

Let me share with the Assembly some important aspects of coordination. First, the primary role of a State concerned remains central in the initiation, identification, coordination and delivery of

humanitarian assistance. Respect for sovereignty and national unity must remain the overarching parameter in all coordination. Secondly, an improved coordination mechanism by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations is needed. Thirdly, we have to have a more methodical process for preparing needs assessments, and we must create a strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Fourthly, we must tap into alternate means such as increased local procurement of material resources and hiring of local expertise, which not only save funds but, importantly, shorten the time frame, which is helpful in these matters. The trust between donors, international humanitarian actors and affected States is most important. Last but not least, there is a need for accountability on the part of all humanitarian actors, especially in the area of delivery on the ground.

In that respect, I must say that we ourselves must have remained somewhat inadequate in this area after suffering such a huge calamity. But the United Nations also needs to require that a very clear indication of what it spends be readily available, not just to the country concerned but also to those at the United Nations that can then monitor where their money is being used, beneficially or otherwise. Of course, the reporting mechanism should follow facts and remain cognizant of the different situations, which are not comparable. The Assembly will be aware that, often, we want to say that because something happened one way somewhere, it will happen like that elsewhere. But it does not work that way.

We have witnessed acts of increased violence against humanitarian workers. Pakistan would like, on the record, to condemn attacks against all humanitarian actors who render invaluable services to people in dire need of humanitarian assistance. For our part at least, we would also like to place on record before the entire Assembly that we must remember those who have suffered the consequences of working in this field.

In conclusion, the varying focus on whether the humanitarian challenges resulting from complex emergencies are more compounded than those stemming from natural disasters, or vice versa, need to be avoided. The subject of humanitarian assistance should be kept above board and need not be wrapped up in political nuances and expediencies. The successful provision of principled humanitarian assistance requires sensitivity to specific situations. In responding to the needs of specific situations, such

sensitivity will not be possible unless we do away with the one-size-fits-all approach to humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Menez (Philippines): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Philippines on agenda item 69, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance".

Allow me first to thank the Secretary-General for the series of reports prepared under this agenda item, as well as to express the Philippines support for the draft resolutions that have been introduced today in the General Assembly. I would also like to express my personal appreciation at seeing you, Madame President, seated behind me, as your experience as former President of the Economic and Social Council and your continued active involvement in discussions during the Council's humanitarian affairs segment make you eminently qualified to preside over today's meeting. We would also like to align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As a country that, unfortunately, is subject to conditions that require the provision of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, the Philippines considers this agenda item to be of particular importance in the work of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other actors in this vital area of support for developing countries. We share the grief and understand the difficulties faced by our brothers and sisters in the countries that are subject of the reports and draft resolutions before us today.

It must also be said that the Philippines is also directly involved in delivering humanitarian assistance through its support for countries that have suffered natural disasters, such as Haiti, where the Philippines sent a disaster relief team to assist in recovery efforts. Philippine involvement is also seen through our numerous Filipino nationals who are working in the United Nations, its specialized agencies or other humanitarian relief organizations. Filipino peacekeepers have been in Liberia since 2003 and can be found working throughout the world in dedication to the ideals of our United Nations assisting nations recover from conflict. It is for these reasons that the Philippines is affected and concerned by the

developments described in the Secretary-General's reports.

On the issue of the safety and security of United Nations personnel, a considerable number of Filipino nationals are employed by the United Nations, as I already mentioned, and some have paid the supreme sacrifice in the performance of their duties. We therefore strongly support the calls for Governments to ensure as far as possible that these staff members are provided the protection necessary for them to render much-needed assistance without hindrance.

We also recognize that there have been security concerns regarding the safety of humanitarian workers in the Philippines, and these are of paramount importance to the Government. One positive development in this regard was the action taken in response to the request voiced by none other than the Secretary-General for consolidation of the main offices of the various United Nations agencies into one site in Manila. The premises have been identified and the process of relocation is under way.

Let it be said that the culture of hospitality of the Filipino people makes it extremely unlikely that any untoward incident or harm that may befall humanitarian workers in the Philippines is due to the fact that they are targeted because of their work; it would be more likely due to the statistical chance of criminality mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. However, let me stress that even this latter possibility must not be countenanced as we seek to secure the safety of everyone within our national borders.

It is significant that we are deliberating this agenda item following the two-day activities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) culminating in yesterday's pledges to the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF). As has been pointed out by many delegations, CERF has proven in its five years of existence to be a lifeline that has provided quick, impartial and broad assistance in all types of emergencies.

The Philippines has benefited from CERF, most significantly as part of the United Nations flash appeal in late 2009, when \$7 million was allocated to address the effects of Typhoons Ketsana and Parma. We have supported the Fund through modest contributions since its inception, and we hope that more countries and non-

governmental organizations and the private sector will also recognize the good work supported by CERF.

We would also like to recognize and thank OCHA, through former Emergency Relief Coordinator Sir John Holmes and current Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos, for the more focused work they are doing in the Philippines now that more personnel have been assigned not only to Manila but also to a sub-office set up in Cotabato City, in the southern part of the country. These on-the-ground personnel will definitely provide swifter and better informed assistance as needs arise.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/65/82 provides us with important information on trends and challenges in the delivery of humanitarian assistance around the world. As mentioned previously, the Philippines is no stranger to the conditions described in the report, and, based on our experience, we support the document's conclusions and recommendations.

On the whole, the humanitarian operations of the United Nations system in the Philippines have been running smoothly under the guidance of Resident Coordinator Jacqueline Badcock, as the next cycle of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is currently being negotiated in conjunction with the Government's next six-year Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, which is also being finalized. The coordinated action being taken on these important planning tools is a positive sign of the close cooperation between the United Nations system and the Administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III.

The Philippines remains a steadfast supporter of United Nations activities in the area of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. The Assembly can rest assured of our continued cooperation and coordination here in New York as we strive to improve our understanding of changing conditions and guide policy through the draft resolutions we are considering today.

Mr. Sumi (Japan): My delegation is grateful for the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/65/82). Because of the priority it attaches to human security, Japan has a special interest in the protection and empowerment of vulnerable people who desperately need such assistance. We therefore commend Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos and the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the work they and their humanitarian partners have done in this important field.

Japan also would like to offer its congratulations to Baroness Amos on her appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. We hope that she will address the challenges that arise in this area in an effective manner. We wish to assure her that Japan will extend her all possible support.

This year, the world again experienced a series of natural disasters, including the earthquake in Haiti and floods in Pakistan. For its part, the Government of Japan, in addition to providing emergency assistance that included dispatching a disaster relief team, pledged \$500 million in financial assistance in response to the floods in Pakistan in the middle of November, of which \$267 million will be disbursed through international organizations which contribute to the revised appeal. It also made a new contribution of \$30 million to the Haiti Reconstruction Fund later in November.

Japan also wishes to highly commend the Central Emergency Response Fund for the role it is playing in allocating funding to countries in need of emergency assistance when natural disasters strike. I would like to note that my Government has doubled its contribution to the Fund this year.

Importance must be attached to disaster risk reduction and preparedness, as well as to how we respond when a disaster actually occurs. As far as possible, we should adapt our responses in the light of lessons learned from previous disasters. As Japan is among those countries most frequently affected by natural disasters, it has expertise in preparedness in many different fields. This extends from knowing how to make buildings earthquake-proof to raising popular awareness about the importance of disaster reduction. We would like to continue to cooperate with the international community in this area by contributing that expertise and experience.

We should bear in mind that the Hyogo Framework for Action provides us with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), which should be fully utilized. For its part, Japan values the work of the ISDR, which contributes to our efforts through worldwide advocacy. We continue to support it. We also would like to commend Under-

Secretary-General Amos for stressing the importance of response preparedness, and express the hope that she will further develop the relationship between OCHA and ISDR.

In this regard, my delegation would like to mention that the Government of Japan co-sponsored, with OCHA, the first Global Meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, held in Kobe in September. More than 200 experts participated in the meeting and discussed the search and rescue activities that are carried out in urban areas in the aftermath of disasters. They also discussed cooperation related to strengthening the capacity of developing countries, cooperation in the process extending from search and rescue to early recovery, cooperation with humanitarian organizations, and the promotion of cooperation at the regional and global levels. At the end of the Meeting, we adopted the Advisory Group's Hyogo Declaration as the outcome document. We expect the Declaration to serve as a set of guidelines for the implementation of cooperation in this field, and we hope that it will enable us to engage in search-and-rescue operations in a more effective manner.

As always, my delegation would like to express its great respect and gratitude for the invaluable work of humanitarian workers over the past year, almost always in high-risk environments. I would like to note that we are extremely concerned about the attacks that continue to be made against those personnel around the world. It is of paramount importance that there be strict compliance with all international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws. Every country is responsible for ensuring security within its own borders.

In order to guarantee humanitarian access, humanitarian activities should be governed by the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. Long-term efforts to build confidence among the relevant local populations are also necessary. It is essential to maintain accountability and take action against impunity, especially in conflict situations. Every country in which a conflict occurs must therefore have the capacity to establish and preserve the rule of law. The United Nations can play an important role in efforts to spread the culture of the rule of law.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that the Government of Japan co-organized, with the

International Committee of the Red Cross, a symposium entitled “Challenges to humanitarian space”, held at the beginning of November, which we hope will contribute to finding a way to secure humanitarian space and extend humanitarian assistance in a safe and effective manner.

Japan has called for efficient and effective humanitarian assistance. To this end, we are gratified that the cluster approach is working effectively. However, some have said that coordination with the existing domestic mechanism for coordination in the affected country is not what it should be. Accordingly, continuing reform of the system for humanitarian assistance is essential.

The ultimate goal of humanitarian assistance is to enable affected people to stand on their own feet once again and to be independent and no longer in need of assistance. The concept of human security, in which great importance is attached to responding to the needs of the individual, can be very useful in this regard. Japan also believes that a seamless transition from emergency humanitarian aid to reconstruction and development assistance is crucial if the results of humanitarian assistance are not to be lost. We should implement protection and empowerment at the individual and community levels in multisectoral fields. It is for this reason that Japan has been providing support for the vulnerable people of the world, including through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which contributes to promoting the concept of human security, and it is committed to continuing to do so.

Mr. Tashibayev (Kazakhstan): Strengthening cooperation to confront natural disasters and destruction, under the overall leadership of the United Nations, in line with the Hyogo Declaration and Framework for Action 2005-2015 and in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (A/65/356), under the agenda item entitled “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance”, should remain a priority for the international community.

We note with deep regret that a number of the difficult situations that have recently emerged in the

world have occurred as a result of climate change. According to the specific data cited in the report, in 2009 more than 300 cases of natural disasters resulted in the suffering of some 113 million people and the deaths of more than 10,000. According to United Nations experts, the economic damage caused by natural disasters is, on average, from \$35 billion to \$50 billion. It should be noted that the Asian countries were the most affected by natural calamities. In particular, Asia accounted for 40 per cent of reported disasters, 68 per cent of deaths from disasters and 34 per cent of economic losses.

As an Asian country, Kazakhstan places particular emphasis on cooperation with the United Nations and its subdivisions in the area of humanitarian emergency assistance in cases of natural disasters, primarily through two major projects: first, the creation in Kazakhstan of the Central Asian Centre for Disaster Response and Risk Reduction; and second, the relocation of a sub-office of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan’s initiative, with the assistance of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to establish the Central Asian Centre has been supported by the emergency departments of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. In particular, on 15 October this year, in Almaty, the heads of the emergency departments of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Centre and the creation of its Organizing Committee. The memorandum was signed in the framework of a new United Nations Development Programme project entitled “Capacity-building for disaster risk reduction in Central Asia”, which will be implemented with financial support from the European Union. It is expected that, in the long term, the Centre will strengthen the national platforms of member countries and other cross-sectoral mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, in accordance with the Hyogo Framework for Action.

In response to the recent disasters that have occurred, Kazakhstan has provided, through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), \$100,000 to assist Pakistan and \$100,000 to Haiti, two countries that were terribly affected by devastating disasters. In 2010, the Government of Kazakhstan has provided official humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and

Moldova. This year, we provided assistance to Kyrgyzstan four times and to Tajikistan twice. Beginning in January 2010, we delivered priority shipments of humanitarian aid by railroad. These goods included tents, bed liners, food, petroleum, construction materials, detergent, coal, fuel, field kitchens and water supply systems.

As a permanent member of CERF, Kazakhstan calls on Member States to make voluntary contributions, both within the Central Emergency Response Fund to respond to emergencies and through other humanitarian structures to ensure predictable and timely access to resources, in order to counter the consequences of natural disasters. We believe that only by combining our efforts can we eliminate the terrible consequences of such disasters and ensure real relief for the millions of people affected.

Ms. Wang Hongbo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Madame President, for your statement.

China endorses the statement made by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and takes this opportunity to commend the hard work and remarkable performance of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos and her predecessor, Mr. John Holmes, over the past year.

This year has been an eventful one for the global humanitarian community. The global humanitarian landscape has changed dramatically since we adopted the landmark resolution 46/182 in this Hall almost 20 years ago. What remains unchanged is the humanity shown by people when a massive disaster occurs. This year, we have once again witnessed the courage, resilience and unity of the international community, especially the Governments and peoples of the affected countries, in the face of earthquakes, floods and epidemics.

The Chinese Government consistently attaches great importance to humanitarian affairs. In recent decades, the Chinese Government has gradually put in place an effective humanitarian crisis response mechanism to save lives and protect property. It has fully assumed its primary responsibility in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. It has also accumulated valuable experience in disaster prevention and post-disaster reconstruction.

China is a developing country prone to such natural disasters as earthquakes, floods and drought. Disaster reduction, preparedness, emergency relief and post-disaster reconstruction have been arduous tasks facing the Chinese Governments at all levels every year. Following the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan in 2008, this year a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Yushu, Qinghai province, a severe mudslide took place in Zhouqu, Gansu province, and over 30 provinces were devastated by massive floods, affecting about 210 million people in total.

While going all out to cope with these frequent natural disasters, the Chinese Government also succeeded in post-disaster reconstruction in the Wenchuan quake zone. Over the past two years, the Chinese Government invested a total of \$130 billion in the reconstruction of Wenchuan, enabling the affected area to reach its rebuilding targets one year ahead of schedule. With the strong support of the international community, China has achieved continuous success in dealing with massive disasters within its territory, which in itself is a great contribution to global humanitarian relief efforts.

The Chinese Government consistently advocates the strengthening of international humanitarian cooperation and mutual trust among the various parties. While receiving international humanitarian assistance, China has also done what it can to actively engage in multilateral and bilateral humanitarian relief activities at the request of the Governments of the affected countries and upon the appeal of the international community. China is also extensively sharing its experience in disaster management and humanitarian relief within the framework of South-South cooperation and regional cooperation.

China's humanitarian relief practices once again prove that the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance set forth in the annex to resolution 46/182 are an effective prerequisite for the implementation of humanitarian assistance and the basis for the strengthening of international cooperation and mutual trust. Parties involved in humanitarian efforts must abide by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality; respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the affected countries; comply with international humanitarian law and the laws of host countries; and respect local cultures and traditions. Only with the consent of the Governments of the affected countries and the trust and support of

the affected people can humanitarian relief be carried out smoothly.

The Chinese Government views insufficient capacity as one of the most important factors constraining affected countries from effectively tackling humanitarian crises. Since the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, relevant United Nations resolutions have reiterated the importance of supporting developing countries in building their capacity for disaster reduction, preparedness and relief.

In accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the United Nations system should strengthen its existing humanitarian responsiveness, knowledge and institutions, urge the parties concerned to fulfil in good faith their commitment to transferring disaster relief and reduction technologies and expertise to developing countries, and help the affected countries to achieve a smooth transition from relief to development. China calls on the United Nations humanitarian system and the international community to make it a top priority for humanitarian assistance to help the affected countries strengthen their disaster reduction and relief capacities.

The Chinese delegation would like to see the United Nations play a greater role in global humanitarian assistance. Over the past two decades, with mounting global humanitarian needs, humanitarian actors have proliferated. The strong trend towards the fragmentation of humanitarian relief activities has added to the difficulty of coordinating humanitarian assistance. In the area of coordination, the United Nations has not only the mandate entrusted to it by Member States, but also marked strengths in terms of knowledge, capacity and mechanisms. In this connection, China supports the strengthening of the central coordinating role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The Chinese delegation calls on OCHA to continue to improve its coordination mechanisms and strengthen the linkages between needs assessment, programme planning, resource allocation, and programme implementation and evaluation. OCHA could further improve its fund-raising and partnership-building and enhance its communications and cooperation with Member States. OCHA should respond in a practical and effective manner to the most recent calls of developing countries by paying due regard to the principle of equitable geographical

distribution established by the Charter of the United Nations, and by increasing the share of procurement from local and neighbouring markets when purchasing relief supplies.

The Chinese delegation congratulates the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) on setting a solid foundation for achieving the goal of raising \$450 million for 2011 at yesterday's high-level meeting. That success once again shows that, with its outstanding work, CERF has gained significant political and financial support from the international community. As one of the most predictable contributors to CERF, China supports maintaining the size of the Fund, or even appropriately enlarging it, as well as improving its management performance and resource allocation on the basis of next year's five-year review so as to make it a true focus of United Nations humanitarian reform.

Next year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. The Chinese Government commends the tireless efforts of the Governments and people of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine to completely eradicate the consequences of the disaster, and calls on the international community to continue to provide generous assistance to people in the affected areas.

The Group of 77 and China will submit to the current session of the General Assembly a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". The Chinese delegation calls on all Member States to actively participate in the discussions to reach consensus at an early date.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mitigating of one of the greatest man-made disasters remains an urgent issue almost 25 years after it occurred. Belarus was one of the countries most affected by the Chernobyl disaster. Two-thirds of the radioactive waste fell on Belarus, with 23 per cent of my country's territory contaminated. Experts have estimated the economic damage to Belarus at \$235 billion.

Given the serious consequences of Chernobyl on an economy in transition, the Government of Belarus has had to address numerous complex issues, including providing social security and health care to its people, radio-ecological rehabilitation and the socio-economic

development of the affected territories, where 1.7 million Belarusian people now live.

Belarus has implemented several State recovery programmes to address the aftermath of the accident. The 2006-2010 State programme budget for mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster amounts to \$1.5 billion. Under the programme, particular emphasis has been placed on a phased rehabilitation of the affected population and contaminated areas and on measures to decrease radiation levels and support the production of goods from local materials that meet relevant radiological requirements.

The assistance and support of the international community, including entities of the United Nations system, continue to be of great significance for the success of national measures. In that regard, we commend the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on United Nations work on Chernobyl (A/65/341). We share the Secretary-General's conclusion in paragraph 64 of his report that, while making further steps to bring life in the Chernobyl-affected communities back to normal, "Subregional cooperation should be continued and synergies obtained from knowledge sharing and best practices."

I would like to point out that, on the initiative of Belarus, in December 2010, the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States adopted an appeal on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster. The appeal states the resolve to establish conditions conducive to providing social protection for workers who helped to mitigate the Chernobyl disaster. It also urges the international community to continue to help to overcome the consequences of that disaster as a complement to the extensive efforts of States to rehabilitate affected regions. The document also indicates that addressing the issues of radiation and the socio-economic recovery of contaminated territory, as well as developing the social and economic capacity of affected regions, are essential to overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Addressing those tasks will require that we continue to update and implement scientific approaches and methods, which will in turn require considerable resources and financial, scientific and technical assistance from the international community. We believe that fruitful cooperation between Belarus, as a

full-fledged Member State, and the relevant international organizations and bodies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, is particularly important for the success of the recovery measures being taken by the Republic of Belarus.

We also share the Secretary-General's view, in paragraph 65 of his report, that major pending issues include

"the mobilization of more donor resources to support the local initiatives, helping the most vulnerable and ensuring the long-term sustainable development of the Chernobyl-affected territories".

A broad international and national discussion on the sustainable development of the affected territories could help mobilize the necessary resources. Belarus will actively participate in the preparation and holding of the international Chernobyl conference to be held in Kyiv in April 2011. At the same time, Belarus plans to hold a number of international commemorative events to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the disaster.

Belarus attributes great importance to the 2006-2016 Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions in increasing assistance to affected countries. Under the coordination of the United Nations Development Programme, the action plan on Chernobyl and the participation in its implementation of agencies and entities of the United Nations system give hope for success in the commitment of all stakeholders, including private-sector and charity initiatives, to Chernobyl-related activities.

We are grateful to Member States for their constructive position and broad support for draft resolution A/65/L.25, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". The implementation of the draft resolution will facilitate the further strengthening of measures for the recovery of affected areas.

We believe that, at its sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly should undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of all aspects of the current draft resolution, in particular, the action plan on Chernobyl covering the period to 2016. Such

consideration will provide the appropriate level of attention to this complex issue.

Chernobyl is our shared tragedy. The people of Belarus, like those of Russia and Ukraine, have confronted the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster with courage, stoicism and hard work. The General

Assembly, given its political authority and effective decision-making, now has the unique opportunity to facilitate the rehabilitation of Chernobyl-affected regions. Today, the future of many hundreds of thousands of people depends on each and every one of us.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.