



General Assembly

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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Kamara (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 70 and 71

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/345)

Draft resolutions (A/66/L.26 and A/66/L.29)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/81, A/66/332, A/66/339 and A/66/357)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.28)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/80)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.27)

(c) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/331)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland to introduce draft resolutions A/66/L.26 and A/66/L.27.

Mr. Sobków (Poland): On behalf of the European Union and its member States, it is my honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.26, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", and the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.27, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

Let me first turn to the draft resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations personnel. The European Union and its member States attach great importance to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. Last year, Commissioner Georgieva launched a large-scale campaign called "Don't Shoot! I'm a humanitarian worker", which advocated for the safest conditions possible for humanitarian workers and respect for the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. We continue to be worried by the number of casualties and accidents involving humanitarian personnel in recent years, especially when attacks are deliberately targeted against United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

The draft resolution, with its increasingly numerous and diverse list of sponsors, shows that all Member States are concerned about, and can unite around, the issue of the safety, security and protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We

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highly value the work and commitment of humanitarian personnel — including thousands of locally recruited personnel — who often put their lives at risk to provide humanitarian assistance.

We note with satisfaction that this year's draft resolution includes reinforced language on kidnapping and hostage-taking, of both local and international humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

The United Nations and aid organizations have realized that they must manage risk in order to continue to operate in the most complex emergencies. Building good relations and trust with Governments, as well as with affected populations, should be an integral part of humanitarian risk management strategies, as is now recognized in the draft resolution.

We welcome the measures taken by the Department of Safety and Security and by the United Nations security management system to continue to advance the strategic vision of a modern, professional security management system that enables the United Nations to fulfil its mandate. Building on those positive developments, the United Nations must continue to adapt its security policies to enable its humanitarian workers to respond at the onset of emergencies. We cannot be late in the work of saving lives.

Given the number of casualties and victims among humanitarian workers resulting from road accidents, the issue of road safety has been further discussed this year. We welcome the Secretariat's initiatives to continue to promote road safety and training on this issue.

In concluding my introduction of this draft resolution, I would like to thank all delegations for their engagement in the negotiations and for their frankness and willingness to agree upon the important issues addressed by the draft resolution. We warmly thank the numerous Member States that have sponsored the draft resolution and look forward to its adoption by consensus once again.

Let me now introduce the draft resolution presented by the 27 members of the European Union on assistance to the Palestinian people, which 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 provide assistance to the Palestinian people. Sustained support from donors of the international community is essential to assist Palestinian State-building efforts, to strengthen the Palestinian economy and to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

The draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people that I am introducing today embodies the wish of the European Union, and of the international community as a whole, to help the Palestinian people. The draft resolution stresses the importance of the work of the United Nations and its agencies, notably in providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

The draft resolution urges all actors of the international community to provide economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people. It also urges Member States to open their markets to exports of Palestinian products based 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 stresses the importance of unhindered humanitarian access to the Palestinian people.

The European Union wishes to express its gratitude to the delegations that requested inclusion on the list of sponsors of the draft text.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.28.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): It is my great pleasure to introduce this year's draft resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, as contained in document A/66/L.28. Twenty years have passed since this body adopted resolution 46/182, which laid the foundation for our current humanitarian response system. Today, a strong United Nations coordinating role has never been more important.

By adopting this resolution annually, the General Assembly reaffirms the unique and leading role of the United Nations in responding to growing humanitarian needs around the globe. We reaffirm the principles underlying humanitarian action, in a statement that symbolizes our shared commitment to saving lives and

alleviating suffering around the world. I wish to thank all of the delegations that took part in the negotiations this year for their engagement and constructive contributions, allowing us to once again reach consensus on this important resolution.

Allow me now, as a contribution to the debate of the General Assembly, to make a few remarks on behalf of the Governments of India and Sweden. Our joint statement should be seen as a symbol of our common strong belief in the need for broadened humanitarian dialogue and partnership.

At the outset, we would like to commend the Secretary-General for highlighting the need to improve the response to major humanitarian crises as one of the strategic priorities for the Organization for 2011. Going forward, the role of the United Nations and its agencies, particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in strengthening the humanitarian response is critical.

The magnitude and scale of some of the unprecedented natural disasters that the world witnessed during the past couple of years, together with a number of complex emergencies, continue to exert pressure on the humanitarian response system and to disrupt progress in countries striving for development. Those most severely affected are often the most vulnerable segments of populations.

India and Sweden are committed to preserving respect for, and adherence to, the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence contained in the annex to resolution 46/182. We must also, at all times, respect the primary role of the affected State when providing protection and humanitarian assistance, with due respect to sovereignty, territorial integrity and the national unity of States.

Affected populations are at the centre of all humanitarian action. We encourage the international community and the United Nations to continue to enhance their accountability to, and to work closely with, affected people in order to ensure an inclusive process and evoke a sense of ownership. Lessons learned from recent disasters confirm the need for closer consultations and collaboration with beneficiaries. We also welcome efforts under way to develop internal accountability mechanisms within the United Nations system.

In a globalized world, each nation has capabilities, resources, experiences and knowledge that can be used in partnership by all nations and the international community, to mutual benefit. Mechanisms that tap those capacities and disseminate best practices and knowledge must therefore be given high priority by the United Nations.

The alarming protracted situation in the Horn of Africa is of the utmost concern. We believe that continued support by the international community is needed in combating the devastating consequences of violent conflict, food insecurity and spiking food prices, as well as to assist the thousands of internally displaced people. The continuing political instability continues also to play its part in exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the region. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the international community, particularly the United Nations, towards durable political stability.

Crises such as the current one in the Horn of Africa remind us of the need to step up our efforts in the area of disaster risk reduction. A coordinated and effective approach will contribute to minimizing the devastating effects of global disasters. In order to maintain and secure developmental progress and to respond more rapidly to crisis, India and Sweden recognize the importance of innovative measures and of ensuring predictable and efficient financing for preparedness, capacity-building and strengthened resilience in disaster-prone nations. We must therefore devote greater attention and resources to disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness.

By intensifying efforts to strengthen resilience and support national recovery processes, the United Nations should strive to minimize the existing gap between humanitarian relief and development programming. Furthermore, India and Sweden are gravely concerned about the many humanitarian crises that receive little international attention but nevertheless pose significant threats to the affected populations.

Effective humanitarian action must take into account the concerns of all groups of society, irrespective of gender and age. While women, the elderly and children, particularly the girl child, are often disproportionately hit by disasters, enough care should be taken to immediately address the needs of those sectors and engage them as active partners in

emergency response and rehabilitation. Ensuring gender equality in humanitarian assistance will help to increase effective response and have lasting impact on the affected population.

In order for the United Nations system and the international community to carry out their responsibility in conflict areas, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel is of critical importance. We are concerned about recent security incidents and deliberate targeting of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, hindering them in their indispensable efforts to assist those in need.

Delivery on the ground saves lives, and coordination makes delivery more effective, especially in a time of increasing international solidarity and where we find new emerging humanitarian actors on the scene. India and Sweden deeply value the coordinating capacities of the United Nations system, through the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We encourage all actors to continue to enhance their support of OCHA.

As strong supporters of the Central Emergency Response Fund, India and Sweden welcome its continued achievements in providing timely and predictable response to humanitarian emergencies. We look forward to the high-level conference that commences tomorrow, and note with appreciation that this year's draft resolution would help to free up additional resources for disbursement.

In conclusion, as we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 46/182 and reflect on the achievements made to improve the humanitarian response system, we recognize the challenges. We are confident that we will be able to tackle them through enhanced cooperation and broad consensus among Member States. India and Sweden look forward to engaging actively in that endeavour.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.29.

Mr. Mosoti (Kenya): On behalf of the States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Poland and other main sponsors, I have the pleasure to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.29, entitled "Strengthening humanitarian assistance, emergency

relief and rehabilitation in response to the severe drought in the Horn of Africa region".

At the outset, I would like to thank all delegations for their active participation throughout the negotiation on the draft resolution. Constructive engagement on the part of delegations allowed us to reach consensus on this important issue and ensure the strong support of Member States. The draft resolution also sends a strong message of unity in support of the commitments made by IGAD and individual Member States in addressing the debilitating drought and famine in the region of the Horn of Africa.

As a result of rain failure in the past two seasons, the Horn of Africa is currently experiencing its worst drought and famine in 60 years. As a consequence, there has been a severe food crisis and high rates of malnutrition in several parts of the region. Food prices have increased substantially, making it difficult for poor households to sustain themselves and leading to loss of life, suffering and successive crop failures. At the peak of this disaster, nearly 13 million people in the region had to depend on humanitarian assistance.

The draft resolution expresses deep concern about the critical humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa caused by the continuing drought and exacerbated by the protracted armed conflict in Somalia. It also expresses deep concern about that conflict, particularly the heinous acts of armed groups that have prevented the affected population from receiving or, where necessary, seeking humanitarian assistance, and that have obstructed humanitarian personnel or prevented them from discharging their humanitarian functions.

Over the past few years, there has been a dramatic escalation of threats and deliberate attacks by armed groups against humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Such groups have threatened, abducted and expelled humanitarian personnel, disrupting and stopping their operations and thus putting many lives at risk. That is unacceptable. The draft resolution strongly condemns such abhorrent acts and calls on all parties, particularly the armed groups, to adhere to humanitarian principles.

The draft resolution also expresses gratitude to Member States, the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations for their commitment and assistance to the region, and urges all States to maintain the political commitment shown in the adoption of the Nairobi Strategy in order to address the

underlying causes of vulnerability in drought-prone areas and build resilience, including by finding long-term solutions to the cyclical drought in the region.

Finally, the draft resolution urges the countries of the Horn of Africa to provide humanitarian assistance, build resilience and undertake measures aimed at preventing the adverse impact of drought. It further underlines the need for the international community to continue to provide technical and financial assistance to overcome humanitarian disaster situations, in particular the food insecurity and chronic water deficiency in the Horn of Africa region.

In conclusion, I would particularly like to thank the delegation of Poland for the co-sponsorship, support and partnership it extended to the countries of the Horn of Africa during the negotiations of the draft resolution, and for coordinating the support of the European Union and other partners during the course of the negotiations. It is little wonder that most of the countries of the European Union are sponsors of the draft resolution. We are grateful to Poland, and we look forward to the adoption of draft resolution A/66/L.29 by consensus.

Ms. Larsen (Norway): More people are better off today than ever before. Many developing countries, not least the largest among them, have experienced a decade or more of impressive growth. People have not only been lifted out of poverty; fortunes have been made.

Despite such progress, too many people have been left behind at the margins of human existence. Some of them live in countries in conflict, others in areas prone to natural disasters. Increasing vulnerability is common to all those poor people. Climate change and environmental degradation, the economic and financial crises, and high and fluctuating food prices all expose the poorest of the world to a permanent humanitarian crisis. Extreme weather events come not only with greater frequency and intensity; their cost in human lives and suffering continues to be unacceptably high. The special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, adopted on 18 November in Kampala, informs us about how to reduce and manage those risks.

Despite all our accomplishments, humanitarian needs are increasing, while the international humanitarian response is becoming increasingly complex. We therefore need more and better

humanitarian aid. We need stronger leadership and coordination. We must look outside the box to better integrate emergency relief and humanitarian assistance with early recovery and development policies. All of that will require that we improve dialogue and mutual understanding between everyone involved in humanitarian assistance. In short, we need to forge new partnerships. We need better ideas.

Earlier this year, Norway, together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, invited a number of Member States to join us on a humanitarian partnership field mission to Panama and Haiti. The participants came from a wide range of countries and from various parts of the world. The purpose was to learn, both together and from one another, in order to improve the quality of international humanitarian cooperation, coordination and response. A joint report is being prepared and will be made public and available to all Member States shortly; a short version prepared by Norway is available at the back of the Hall. In the meantime, on Norway's behalf, I will highlight three important observations and recommendations, all aimed at making international humanitarian assistance and coordination more effective and sustainable.

First, whenever possible, the international community must strengthen the capacity of national Governments and local authorities and work more directly with the people in need. Secondly, in most humanitarian crises and protracted emergencies, the humanitarian and development communities must work better together and reassess their traditional way of thinking about each other as separate operations. That also implies more flexible funding. Thirdly, we should all get better at promoting the regional dimension of humanitarian aid and coordination, including by promoting South-South cooperation. Developing countries could take the lead in that regard by increasing their involvement in humanitarian affairs at the global level, particularly through the United Nations.

Finally, let me underscore the following. While the United Nations has a leading role to play in coordinating international humanitarian assistance, the primary responsibility for the protection of people in need rests with their own States and Governments. The best that countries can do to meet that responsibility is to invest in preparedness and resilience. This is

ultimately a question of political priorities: investing for the good of all, including the poor.

Mr. Cesa (Argentina): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at this plenary meeting of the General Assembly on sub-item (a) of agenda item 70, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

Member States and the international humanitarian community are being challenged by humanitarian needs that continue to grow over the years owing to new and ongoing conflicts and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters. It is necessary to keep working together in order to address this challenging situation and to step up efforts to alleviate the suffering of tens of millions of people across the world.

Bearing in mind the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 46/182 on 19 December 1991, the Group of 77 and China reaffirms the guiding principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, the Group of 77 and China emphasizes the primary role of the affected State in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.

While recognizing the responsibility of Member States to undertake disaster risk reduction, the Group of 77 and China urges the international community to continue to support the efforts of developing countries in building their national and local capacities for preparedness, response and early recovery through the transfer of technology and expertise.

We reaffirm that Member States must fully comply 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 such civilians.

The Group wishes to express its appreciation for the role of the United Nations in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and for the progress already

made in humanitarian reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

With a view to achieving further progress in this regard, the Group of 77 and China supports the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution upon the recruitment of staff in the United Nations humanitarian system.

In the context of the increasing number of humanitarian emergencies, funding remains a challenge to Member States, in particular developing countries, and to the international humanitarian response system. In the view of the Group, it is necessary to promote and achieve effective, predictable, flexible and adequate funding through enhanced partnerships and strengthened financial mechanisms for humanitarian assistance.

The Group of 77 and China has engaged constructively during the negotiations on the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" and looks forward to its adoption.

In addition, as at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Group of 77 and China will be submitting a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". By introducing the draft resolution, the Group aims to mainstream a holistic approach to humanitarian assistance, which would promote a better articulation of humanitarian and developmental efforts in the fields of disaster risk reduction and disaster recovery. The Group looks forward to the continued support of its partners for this important initiative.

In closing, I would like to state that the Group of 77 and China is confident that this debate and the adoption of these important draft resolutions will contribute to a more effective coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance by the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential

candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this declaration.

This year we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the current humanitarian architecture of the United Nations. Against that background, today's debate on humanitarian affairs provides an excellent opportunity to reflect upon our collective performance and identify the challenges ahead.

The coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance is at the core of the activities carried out by the United Nations. We reiterate our strong support to the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and commend Ms. Valerie Amos for her leadership and commitment to our common humanitarian cause.

Since the establishment of OCHA 20 years ago, we have come a long way; however, challenges remain, and we face pressure to adapt and strengthen the response system in the light of the new ones.

In a growing number of countries, access to victims has become more difficult, and the security situation for both beneficiaries and aid workers is worsening. In the past year, climate-related, environmental and other disasters, including floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes, have again claimed a very high number of victims, and the risk of exposure will continue to rise. Too often, conflicts add to the complexity of the situation.

The most vulnerable in the poorest countries, in particular children, the elderly and disabled people, are often the most affected. Preparedness, resilience-building and disaster risk reduction strategies can mitigate the effects of natural disasters in the short and medium term. Also, involving development actors earlier and linking short-term humanitarian aid to longer-term development cooperation activities remains crucial in order to ensure a smooth transition.

Displacement and the protection of and assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain among the greatest challenges to humanitarian response. The displaced are often forced to flee instantaneously, thereby losing their possessions and land, and becoming separated from family and communities. Millions are left destitute, with little or

no access to basic necessities such as food, water, adequate shelter and means of livelihood. A very disturbing fact is that displacements are tending to become more protracted. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation to those States that host refugees, despite the already difficult situation in some of those countries. We also call upon the international community to continue working on providing durable solutions in connection with displaced persons and encourage all Member States to adhere to the relevant legal instruments pertaining to IDPs and refugees.

An international humanitarian response is often essential to support and supplement national efforts to protect and meet the needs of affected populations. Unfortunately, humanitarian access to such populations is still too often restricted by ongoing violent conflict, bureaucratic constraints, attacks on humanitarian personnel or deliberate bans on humanitarian organizations. The European Union is concerned that particularly in situations of complex emergencies, the preservation of humanitarian space is becoming increasingly difficult.

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 advocate strongly for respect for international humanitarian law as well as respect for and adherence to the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Those principles constitute the core of humanitarian assistance and must be respected by all parties at all times.

Humanitarian emblems and flags, which traditionally provided a shield for humanitarian workers, have now unfortunately become deliberately selected targets. That is highly alarming. 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 being associated with a political agenda. The European Union condemns, in the strongest terms, deliberate attacks on aid organizations and their personnel. The consequence of those acts of aggression is that the people in need ultimately do not receive the assistance to which they are entitled.

We need concerted international action now. The safety and security of all humanitarian workers is 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, particularly in high risk environments. That includes the promotion of, and support for, impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors need the trust of the local population and the respect of all parties to a conflict. In that context, the European Union encourages the United Nations system to continue to pursue initiatives to build trust and promote acceptance of humanitarian action by host communities and all other relevant actors.

We welcome the transformative agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, launched last year by the Emergency Relief Coordinator with a view to further reinforcing the humanitarian response system. It is now crucial to take further steps to ensure that the humanitarian system is equipped to meet the vast scale of humanitarian needs in the world. 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 humanitarian actors. More efforts to further ensure its positive impact, including through enhanced and more strategic inter-cluster coordination and cooperation by all cluster lead agencies, are important. Also, the active participation of non-governmental organizations in clusters should be further encouraged. In addition, humanitarian leadership is essential to ensuring the greater coordination and coherence of international humanitarian assistance. More efforts to further empower and strengthen the capacity of resident and humanitarian coordinators are imperative, as is the rapid, effective and efficient deployment of appropriately trained and experienced personnel.

We support the continued work towards developing a framework for common needs assessments. Such assessments are crucial to bringing about a shared understanding of humanitarian needs, which would better inform decision makers. That should contribute to a more optimal allocation of resources, to a response that is more effective and

better tailored to the affected population and the most vulnerable, and to the improved measurement of humanitarian system performance. Increased accountability for results is also required.

Effective humanitarian response is also dependent on adequate, predictable, equitable and timely funding. However, the adverse impacts of the global economic and financial crisis are placing unprecedented pressure on public budgets, and funding for humanitarian assistance is facing increased scrutiny. We need to demonstrate that our funds are working towards the same objectives and produce clear results: adequate, speedy and cost-effective humanitarian delivery. As the largest humanitarian donor, the European Union 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. We welcome the expanding number of donors that are contributing to the humanitarian response.

In recent crises, we have realized that the growing number of humanitarian actors can provide us with new and unique possibilities for humanitarian access and response. In that regard, we welcome the increased efforts by Under-Secretary-General Amos to reach out to those actors in order to enhance effective coordination and encourage all Member States and other humanitarian actors to cooperate with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In conclusion, the European Union remains committed to continuing its engagement with all Member States in strengthening the humanitarian partnership. We are hopeful and confident that our debate today will contribute to the further strengthening of the humanitarian system in the future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Cooperation and assistance among nations is one of the main human values that must be preserved in the world, in which many peoples are facing serious and fateful challenges.

Like many peoples, the Palestinian people have received a substantial amount of aid in recent years, which has helped to ease some of the difficulties, hardships of life and suffering that they endure under

the yoke of Israeli occupation, and provided them with a minimum level of decent living. We express once again the gratitude of the Palestinian people and their leadership to all peoples, countries and international organizations that have provided such assistance. We affirm that the objectives of that assistance have almost fully been met. That, in turn, is helping us to see the light of hope at the end of the tunnel of the gloomy Israeli occupation. It is the hope of realizing the Palestinian dream of achieving the independence of a free and sovereign State, on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and of building a prosperous and bright future for our people and the peoples of the region as a whole.

As the international community is fulfilling its obligations in providing assistance to the Palestinian people, the Palestinian people and their leadership are fulfilling their own commitments by utilizing that assistance to the fullest possible extent and with the highest degree of professionalism and transparency. Those cumulative efforts have brought us to where we are today. The international community is witnessing our able performance and is stressing the readiness of Palestinian national institutions to effectively work in the independent State of Palestine. We are proud of that testimony, because it shows that we have indeed achieved those goals in cooperation with our partners. It reasserts our determination to control our destiny, as we have continued to build in spite of the continued Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories, its violations of international law and its attacks on all aspects of our lives.

The reports submitted by the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund during the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians and other donor countries, which was held at Headquarters in New York on 18 September, commended the performance of Palestinian national institutions and their achievements in the implementation of the Palestinian Government's programme, entitled "Palestine: ending the occupation, establishing the State", from August 2009 to August 2011. During that period, the Palestinian National Authority, under the auspices of the Palestine Liberation Organization, made significant progress in the construction and development of vital sectors such as governance, economic development, infrastructure and social development. Assessments by the heads of

the sectoral working groups of donor countries have also confirmed those achievements.

The international community has recognized that the main obstacle to achieving stability and development in Palestine is the continuation of the Israeli military occupation. Palestinian achievements and the positive international assessments were accompanied by an accurate reading of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as indicated by the title of the United Nations report presented at the meeting of donor countries, namely, "Palestinian state-building: an achievement at risk".

In addition, a report by the World Bank concluded that it was impossible to sustain achievements in State-building and economic growth under the continued Israeli occupation and its practices, which are destroying the prospects for development in all sectors. Indicators clearly show, for example, that the growth of gross domestic product decreased to 7 per cent, as opposed to the 9 per cent expected in 2011, and that the unemployment rate rose again to more than 27 per cent. The percentage of Palestinians living below the poverty line, especially in the Gaza Strip, increased to almost 38 per cent.

The International Monetary Fund has recognized that Palestinian fiscal policy has made significant progress in the management of the public funds sector; for example, the Palestinian Government was able to increase the proportion of self-reliance and decrease the budget deficit by increasing local revenues and reducing the need for external assistance for current expenditures from \$1.8 billion to \$1.1 billion.

However, we now face a stifling financial crisis. On the one hand, that is due to the reluctance of some donor countries to fulfil their financial obligations towards the Palestinian National Authority in the time frame specified. On the other hand, it is also due to the Israeli Government's repeated illegal practice of withholding taxes and customs revenues owed to the Palestinian people. That situation not only constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and international conventions, but is also a form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and undermines the ability of the Palestinian National Authority to meet its obligations to public sector employees as well as to the private sector.

The report submitted by the Palestinian National Authority at the meeting of donor countries in September affirms that, despite our attempts to invest in development programmes and to strengthen the trend to move from the stage of receiving aid for relief to a stage of development and self-reliance, our efforts, made in cooperation with our partners, are constrained because of the continuing Israeli occupation of our land. The transition from relief to development requires us to be able to have control over our natural resources and to ensure freedom of movement for people and goods, as well as to be in charge of our international outlets. All of that, in other words, requires us to achieve our independence.

Yet Israel, the occupying Power, remains determined to deprive us of achieving our independence, and daily defies the international community and international laws and resolutions by continuing its occupation of Palestinian territory, confiscating our lands and building illegal settlements, along with the apartheid annexation wall in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Israel also continues to control our natural resources and to exploit them illegally, depriving us of access to them, as well as to impose restrictions on the movement of people and goods, both internally and externally. The imposition by the Israeli occupation of more than 500 military checkpoints fragments the West Bank and isolates it from occupied East Jerusalem.

Israel also continues to impose its illegal and inhumane siege on the Gaza Strip, deepening the poverty and suffering of our people there, 75 per cent of who now survive on aid. Moreover, Israel, the occupying Power, continues its policy of preventing the fulfilment of the pledges made by the international community at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference for the reconstruction of what Israel destroyed in its brutal military aggression against the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009.

Today more than ever before, the international community is called upon to generate real political will that can be translated into effective action to put an end to this odious occupation and its criminal practices, which undermine our collective effort to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, within the 4 June 1967 borders and with East

Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace with its neighbours, including Israel.

The Palestinian leadership, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority, is working tirelessly to fulfil its commitments, first towards its people and secondly towards the international community. We would like to reaffirm that we will continue our hard work to build upon our achievements of recent years, during which we have completed the readiness stage of our institutions. We will spare no effort to remove the main obstacle before us, which is the ruthless Israeli occupation, with a view to enabling those institutions to function effectively in the sovereign and independent State of Palestine, where the Palestinian people can live in freedom and dignity.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): As we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of resolution 46/182, it is important to recall the achievements that have been made in international humanitarian assistance.

Good progress has been made over two decades in the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance. The cluster approach has expanded coverage and increased efficiencies in delivery. United Nations appeals and new financing mechanisms, including, above all, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), have increased the amount, predictability and flexibility of funding. Assistance is more responsive to the varying needs of those affected by crises and to local contexts.

Obviously, those are all important steps forward, but we must also do more to meet the challenges involved in providing support to the world's most vulnerable populations. The principles underpinning resolution 46/182 remain as relevant today as they did in 1991. We must collectively uphold the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in humanitarian action. We must also remember that affected States have the primary role to provide the assistance and protect civilians. International assistance should be delivered in a way that supports the priorities and capacities of Government and civil society to the fullest extent possible. Member States, United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations need to take further steps to support those national capacities.

Timely access to affected populations continues to be a challenge for humanitarian actors. Too often,

humanitarian assistance cannot reach those who need it the most. A new approach based on innovative risk management strategies and long-term investment in building relationships with local communities is required.

The crises of 2011 have again demonstrated that civilians bear the brunt of conflict. Millions of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict have faced the threats of physical and sexual violence, family separation and exploitation. The protection of affected populations, in particular women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, must be given priority in a humanitarian response. We must also do more to assure the safety and security of the many courageous humanitarian actors working in hostile environments.

As humanitarian needs increase — and they will continue to do so — we must move away from humanitarian and development silos to a sustained and integrated approach that builds community resilience. Nowhere is that clearer than in the Horn of Africa. The crisis affecting millions of people there is the result of fragility of livelihoods for communities affected by, among other factors, poor productive infrastructure, inadequate food supplies, climate change and protracted conflict.

This year's session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted that while progress has been made to reduce disaster risk, sufficient action has not been taken to reduce risk at the local level. Local Governments and communities must be given a greater role in decision-making and in implementing disaster risk reduction activities.

Australia is committed to appropriate and effective international humanitarian assistance. Our new humanitarian action policy, to be launched this Friday here in New York, is a clear expression of the principles and practical actions we will follow to help those affected by crises. We commit to increasing our funding for humanitarian assistance. We will respond within 48 hours of a country making a request for assistance. By 2016, we will provide lifesaving assistance to more than 25 million people in crisis situations, through disaster risk reduction, mine action, conflict prevention and humanitarian action.

We will continue to integrate disaster risk reduction approaches into our development and humanitarian programmes, including through the

\$96 million we are investing in disaster risk reduction activities this year. We will continue to invest in humanitarian action through United Nations and multilateral agencies, including, importantly, through our multi-year, multimillion dollar partnerships with the CERF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

We will continue to provide humanitarian funding for urgent appeals. As the third largest donor to the Libyan humanitarian effort, with a commitment of over \$40 million, and the fifth largest bilateral donor to the Horn of Africa crisis, with a commitment of \$130 million so far, our track record of timely funding is good. If, however, we need to do better, of course we will.

Australia is very pleased to have co-sponsored each of the draft resolutions to be adopted today (A/66/L.26, A/66/L.27, A/66/L.28 and A/66/L.29). In terms of the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/66/L.27), we have a long history of providing timely humanitarian and development assistance. We are continuing that support through a new five-year partnership from 2012 with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The partnership will provide an increased amount of money and predictable and unearmarked financial assistance designed to allow UNRWA to deliver more effective results for Palestinian refugees. We have also increased our direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority through a new partnership agreement signed in September.

In conclusion, I want to say that Australia admires the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Amos and the OCHA team in their work to build a more effective and accountable humanitarian system. It is not easy work, but it is decisive work. Humanitarian assistance, together with peacekeeping and development, is how the most vulnerable people in the world measure the United Nations — how they measure each and every one of us in the Hall today. We must meet their needs.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba reaffirms that humanitarian assistance should be carried out in full respect for the principles recognized in resolution 46/182 and the principles of humanity,

impartiality and neutrality. The request and consent of States in need of humanitarian assistance are essential for the implementation thereof. The United Nations Charter must be respected, and the purposes and principles cannot be undermined, manipulated, restricted or made subject to conditions. In that regard, we reject the imposition of ambiguous and non-agreed upon concepts to justify actions that go against the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference into the internal affairs of States.

Cuba has vast experience in national preparedness and organization when it comes to facing natural phenomena, which has led to substantive progress in many of the goals set forth in the Hyogo Framework for Action. It is known that the Cuban Government has a great deal of experience and plays a central role in the launching, organization, coordination and provision of humanitarian assistance when our country has been affected by natural disasters. That has allowed us to considerably reduce the devastating human and collateral damage.

We have an effective civil defence system that is charged with ensuring compliance with international measures, norms and agreements in the area of civil protection to which Cuba is a party. The lessons learned over many years have allowed Cuba to strengthen its normative, legislative and institutional frameworks for the reduction of disaster risks.

Similarly, we have strengthened local capacity for evaluating and monitoring risks, as well as the efficacy of our early warning systems locally and countrywide. Also key has been the inclusion of risk reduction instruction in the school curriculums through the country.

All of those actions are executed in a coordinated manner and are based on close cooperation with Government institutions, non-governmental organizations and Cuban society as a whole, with the media playing an active role. Furthermore, the results and knowledge that have come about in research in our academic and scientific institutions are available for use in our civil defence system.

Cuba has undertaken vulnerability studies on natural dangers, including droughts and floods. In the eastern part of our country, we have launched a project to improve monitoring of watershed basins. We have installed equipment for monitoring rainfall and the water flow levels in rivers and reservoirs. That data

will assist in foreseeing flood conditions and the conditions of reservoirs in determining threats to populations living downstream. Those populations can thereby be evacuated if water levels rise above a set level.

Despite all those efforts, nature's power has been felt in full force owing to the changes taking place across the world. Over the past five years, Cuba has been affected by numerous high-intensity meteorological events that have severely harmed our economy. In the future, we will place greater emphasis on tsunami and climate change modelling programmes. My country is also planning to expand risk reduction management centres throughout the country and to increase the number of early warning stations in vulnerable communities through our own efforts as well as international support.

The United Nations system and the international community have a crucial responsibility to help developing countries to improve our response capacity in the face of natural disasters. The most direct manner to do so would be for developed countries to meet their commitments of official development assistance.

It is important to continue to develop humanitarian capacity-building and to strengthen the institutions directly linked to humanitarian assistance on the ground. Among other things, it is important that we endow those institutions with greater access to new technology, financial resources and the necessary scientific knowledge. Cuba believes that it is necessary to continue to strengthen the mobilizing and leadership capacity of the international strategy for disaster relief response to serve as the coordinating body for international efforts in that area.

With respect to Cuba's contribution to international humanitarian efforts, we underscore that a Cuban expert is part of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team. We also participated actively in the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in May in Geneva.

Cuba reiterates its willingness to continue to support, with solidarity and selflessly, countries in need affected by natural disasters. An example of that is the work undertaken by the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics. It has seen extensive territorial deployment in disaster zones and

established comprehensive field hospitals capable of responding broadly to the needs of affected populations.

With regard to risk reduction management, our country has cooperation agreements with numerous countries. We work together with sister nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Cuba will continue decisively to promote humanitarian assistance for all who need it, anywhere in the world. That is a matter of ethics and principles. We reject any attempt to manipulate this with political ends or for profit.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): At the outset, I would like to commend Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos for her leadership in strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. I also praise the efforts to that end made by humanitarian agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 46/182. We fully support the continuous improvement in the system of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. This has been a year of extraordinary challenges for Japan. An unprecedented earthquake and tsunami struck Japan in March. Nearly 20,000 people were killed or remain missing, and numerous evacuees still cannot return home to this day and continue to endure inconveniences in their daily lives.

On behalf of my Government and the people of Japan, I express my heartfelt gratitude for the friendship and solidarity shown by people from all over the world and for the helping hand extended in the aftermath of the disaster. I also thank the assistance provided by the United Nations, including OCHA, international organizations and many Member States. We intend to accelerate our efforts for recovery and reconstruction.

This year witnessed many humanitarian crises caused by conflicts and natural disasters. Japan immediately extended emergency relief in connection with serious crises, such as those in Libya, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa, Thailand and Turkey. Today, I welcome the upcoming adoption of a series of draft resolutions for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. On the basis of those resolutions, Japan will continue its efforts to facilitate the effective delivery of the relief that we provide.

Japan would like to reiterate the importance of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles such as humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Japan has continued its active efforts to spread the understanding and application of international humanitarian law. An example is the international conference held in Kyoto in November, which was jointly held by the Government of Japan and the International Committee of the Red Cross. At the conference, we held meaningful discussions with participants from Asian countries on the current challenges in ensuring the implementation of the 1977 Protocols Additional to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. We intend to participate actively in the discussion on strengthening legal protections for victims of armed conflict.

Japan recognizes the importance of the role of senior and well-experienced humanitarian leadership to further strengthen coordination. It is important to ensure the availability of personnel who are able to demonstrate leadership and respond to the situation on the ground. In that light, we applaud the efforts made by United Nations organizations to ensure leadership, as demonstrated when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees established a roster system for senior staff. Also in responding to natural disasters, we would like to point out that the primary responsibility for response lies with the affected States. Their ownership should be respected. We also note that cooperation with the national Governments of affected States, as well as with local actors, must be strengthened.

My Government would like to emphasize the importance of a smooth transition from humanitarian assistance to development assistance, in accordance with the idea of human security. It is important to swiftly establish policies and projects towards future reconstruction and development while implementing the emergency relief response, so that affected people can stand on their own feet as quickly as possible. It is also essential to engage local people and to strengthen their capacity.

Japan welcomes the widespread acknowledgement of the importance of preparedness in the context of natural disasters. We also welcome the recent efforts made by United Nations organizations in enhancing preparedness. I would like to recall that many lives were saved at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake as a result of the handing down of lessons

from the past and disaster training and disaster education. It was proved that improving our own behaviour is a very effective way to mitigate damage without major financial investment.

Japan intends to organize a high-level international conference in the disaster-stricken region in Japan in 2012, in order to share lessons learned by participating countries from recent large-scale natural disasters. We hope that the occasion will boost international cooperation. To build on the outcome of that conference, Japan would like to call for the third World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Japan in 2015. Such a conference would contribute to establishing a society with strong resilience to natural disasters.

Japan welcomes the fact that not only traditional donors but also emerging donors and non-governmental organizations are becoming more involved in humanitarian response. On the other hand, that means that the coordination of humanitarian assistance becomes more important. We note the important role OCHA can play in maintaining a high level of quality and transparency in assistance, including by promoting understanding of humanitarian principles.

Japan would like to reiterate the importance of cooperation with regional organizations, including the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Japan commends the initiative taken by the relevant regional organizations in response to the crises in the Horn of Africa. We expect further cooperation between OCHA and regional and subregional organizations. In addition, we praise the efforts made by OCHA to broaden the involvement of the private sector in humanitarian response. We believe that we could further cooperate with the private sector, whose expertise could be utilized in such areas as logistics, transportation and telecommunications. It is important to accumulate and share good practices in this area.

The world is witnessing large-scale natural disasters, including in the Horn of Africa. We are also facing various challenges in the provision of relief assistance in volatile regions. Under those circumstances, Japan would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for the efforts of humanitarian organizations and their personnel, who are working tirelessly under difficult conditions for the effective provision of relief assistance.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): During the past two years, the international community has witnessed a significant increase in the incidence of devastating natural disasters, along with ongoing and emerging conflicts. Together, that has resulted in the doubling of the number of displaced persons and people needing immediate and long-term humanitarian assistance. Despite the solidarity shown by the international community in quickly responding to disasters, the challenges facing international humanitarian efforts remain considerable and numerous and require still more effort, resources and international cooperation.

In that connection, we commend the essential partnership role played by the United Nations in financing and coordinating international humanitarian activities to deliver immediate humanitarian response in affected developing countries, which do not have the national capacities to respond effectively to emergencies.

The United Arab Emirates believes that there is a strong link between building the national capacities of countries and providing the necessary resources for sustainable development in those countries. We therefore attach high priority to contributing significantly to the international partnership for development, in addition to offering emergency humanitarian assistance directly to countries affected by natural disasters, climate change and armed conflict.

The United Arab Emirates makes its contribution through a number of channels, including direct bilateral contributions, financing long-term humanitarian and development activities and projects implemented by the United Nations and regional organizations, and global humanitarian and development initiatives in partnership with various United Nations bodies and other international partners. The United Arab Emirates is committed to adhering to the principles of neutrality, humanity and non-discrimination in providing humanitarian assistance.

In 2010, the United Arab Emirates contributed 0.33 per cent of its gross domestic income for official development assistance, ranking fourteenth in the world, measured in comparison to its gross domestic product. Of the total amount of our official development assistance, 14.3 per cent was earmarked for humanitarian development assistance to affected countries. The total assistance pledged and provided by

the Government of the United Arab Emirates and other humanitarian and development institutions in our country from 2010 to 2011 is estimated at \$2 billion in grants and loans for humanitarian and development projects and programmes around the world. Those contributions financed a wide range of projects, including providing food shelter for the displaced, the digging of wells, the promotion of conflict resolution and the construction of dams, highways, schools and hospitals.

Moreover, the United Arab Emirates is a member of, and major contributor to, a number of international partnerships for long-term development assistance to countries affected by disasters, such as the Group of Friends of Yemen, the Group of Friends for a Democratic Pakistan and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, as well as being a contributor to international efforts to rebuild Afghanistan.

The Palestinian people continue to suffer from difficult economic and humanitarian conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, which has been subjected to the blockade imposed by the Israeli occupying forces for the past four years. In that connection, we call upon the international community to insist that Israel, the occupying Power, lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip, open all the crossings immediately to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people, end its occupation of Arab territories and resume the peace negotiations, in accordance with relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We also urge donor countries to continue their assistance to the Palestinian people and Government in anticipation of the end of the Israeli occupation of their land and the establishment of their independent State.

The United Arab Emirates is committed to continue to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority until the liberation of their land from the Israeli occupation. The United Arab Emirates is one of the major contributors to emergency humanitarian assistance and development projects, as well as directly to the budget of the Palestinian Authority. Our contribution in 2010 alone amounted to \$98.6 million earmarked to support the Palestinian Government and its development projects.

We reaffirm our support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East (UNRWA) and stress the importance of its role in assisting the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We demand ease of access for UNRWA workers and aid to Palestinian refugees in all areas of its operations. Furthermore, we underscore the need to provide UNRWA with sufficient financial support so it can continue its humanitarian and developmental activities in the region.

Mr. Madonsela (South Africa): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the subject of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations (A/66/345).

My delegation recognizes the achievements of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in helping to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos. We are also pleased to note that the United Nations system is working to increase support to Governments and regional organizations for improving their state of preparedness and strengthening their resilience. The support rendered to the Southern African Development Community secretariat is particularly welcome. I would also like to express our deep appreciation of the OCHA regional office based in Johannesburg for its regular support.

South Africa is very encouraged to note that funding provided by the Central Emergency Response Fund has saved many lives. We take this opportunity to appeal to the donor community to continue its support so as to ensure that the Fund's real response to humanitarian emergencies is timely and predictable. We believe that the evaluation of the Fund's work over the past five years has provided important information on lessons learned and has provided the Fund an opportunity to improve on the delivery of its mandate. We have also observed that the cluster approach is a positive way to ensure an effective response to the many humanitarian emergencies confronting the world today. We encourage continued reform of the system in order to ensure a timely response.

The increased frequency, complexity and scale of natural disasters in recent years have resulted in enormous, tragic loss of life. We are profoundly concerned that such natural disasters, which are often

associated with unabated conditions of climate change, bring with them long-term negative social and economic consequences, as well as widespread environmental degradation, which afflicts many developing countries. Such humanitarian emergencies are disrupting the development progress of many poor nations. In that context, we remind the Assembly that the plight of the poorest and most vulnerable population groups, such as women, girls, children and people with disabilities, who remain the most affected, must be a priority.

Such humanitarian emergencies require coordinated efforts on the part of the international community, for we believe there is not a country in the world today that can effectively and single-handedly deal with the magnitude of the human calamity those emergencies continue to cause. In that regard, my delegation reiterates South Africa's commitment to contributing to the effective functioning of the humanitarian system. That includes promoting partnerships with regional organizations as well as improving needs-based assessment.

We believe that mobilizing adequate, predictable, timely and flexible resources is also critical. At the same time, we once again take this opportunity to appeal to all stakeholders and actors to adhere to the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence, which should remain the basis for all responses to the emergencies confronting humankind.

Due to drought and famine, the Horn of Africa is currently experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in 60 years. We express our thanks to the international community for its current response, and urge it to continue to cooperate with countries in that region to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected.

With regard to disaster risk reduction, we urge the international community to support developing countries and to empower their national capacities for disaster relief and reduction, as well as to improve their state of preparedness for providing effective responses when humanitarian emergencies strike. The Hyogo Framework for Action, as an international strategy agreed by Member States, remains a critical guide to action in that regard. To that end, we believe that the transfer of disaster relief and reduction technologies and expertise to developing countries remains paramount.

My delegation continues to harbour the gravest concerns about the continuing deliberate threats and violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities around the world. We believe that humanitarian personnel should be permitted to reach vulnerable populations and those already affected by humanitarian emergencies without any restrictions. A critical factor in providing such an enabling environment would be ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian emergency personnel in accordance with the principles of humanitarian and international law.

In conclusion, we believe that as humanitarian actors we can improve our efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in a manner that is faster, more predictable and better coordinated, and eventually to alleviate the suffering of millions of people affected by such humanitarian emergencies the world over. The millions of people affected by humanitarian emergencies are not mere statistics; they are our very own flesh and blood. We urge that we always remember that the humanitarian emergencies we speak of can easily affect every one of us sitting in the Hall today. Accordingly, cooperation and solidarity among the nations of the world must be preserved and promoted at all times.

Mr. Guerber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks the Secretary-General for his excellent reports on strengthening the coordination of the emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/66/81, A/66/332, A/66/339 and A/66/357). In particular, we applaud his conclusions and recommendations, and would like to focus on three points.

First, Switzerland is concerned that swift and unimpeded access to populations affected by humanitarian emergencies is in many cases still not guaranteed. As the Secretary-General emphasizes in paragraph 71 of the report contained in document A/66/81, constraints such as bureaucratic hurdles, as well as active hostilities and attacks on humanitarian personnel, such as those in Abuja and Kandahar, are still an obstacle to effective aid, whether in natural disasters or complex emergencies.

Encouraging rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is more than ever an absolute priority in enabling humanitarian personnel to accomplish their mission, save lives, mitigate suffering and protect

human dignity in all circumstances. The Secretary-General's recommendations on those points therefore seem particularly important to us. We support the Secretary-General's call to Member States to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected communities.

We commend the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their advocacy before Governments in defence of humanitarian access. It is also important that the operating methods of every humanitarian agency fall within a framework of strict respect for humanitarian principles. In that connection, we commend the World Food Programme, which is scheduled to present its protection doctrine next year.

Secondly, particular efforts should be devoted to preparedness in responding to environmental emergencies and to disaster risk reduction. The report of the Secretary-General (A/66/81) quite rightly emphasizes that financing for preparedness for environmental emergencies is very often ad hoc and inconsistent. Yet the need to strengthen local capacity and that of the Governments concerned for meeting those challenges is widely acknowledged. We should no longer focus on reacting to disasters, but rather on anticipating them. Discussions of the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Reconstruction Conference in Geneva have demonstrated that "we now possess the knowledge, the means and the commitment to make disaster risk reduction a national, local and international priority". A recent internal study in Switzerland shows that investment costs for disaster risk reduction are four to seven times lower than the cost entailed by a response after the fact.

Switzerland also believes that it is essential to align short-term emergency reconstruction efforts with long-term developmental efforts in order to ensure a coherent transition from one phase to another in a crisis. My country has therefore adopted that approach by including all relevant global, national and regional stakeholders and by taking into account the linkages between climate change, natural disasters and environmental emergencies.

Thirdly, Switzerland particularly supports the Secretary-General's recommendation on strengthening humanitarian coordination mechanisms and humanitarian leadership in emergency situations. The

progress made thanks to the system of clusters — including via the new cluster on global food security — should not lead us to forget just how much progress remains to be made. Greater involvement of national and local structures in the management of clusters and in the definition of the inherent responsibilities is especially necessary.

Enhancing the cooperation between United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the cluster approach is also required. In that regard, the commitments made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of coordination in the field and fostering a culture of mutual responsibility among agencies on the ground to work towards achieving collective results should be commended.

Switzerland would also like to highlight the importance of better incorporating affected populations in the planning of humanitarian responses, beginning with identifying needs, but also offering people the opportunity to voice their opinions on the services provided.

Mr. Dos Santos (Brazil): Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and would like to add the following comments in its national capacity.

Brazil welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/66/81) and "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development" (A/66/339). We commend in particular the focus on humanitarian financing and preparedness, areas where work is still required by the United Nations and its Member States.

Enhancing the preparedness and resilience of our societies is key to reducing impacts and improving the capacity of States to cope with emergencies in their territories. More preparedness would ideally reduce the need for international humanitarian assistance. Yet, in that regard, the international community still has a crucial role to play in supporting national efforts to strengthen the preparedness of national and local authorities and civil society. International organizations such as the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the

United Nations Development Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) must improve their coordination to avoid gaps and duplication. Donors and international organizations need to make progress in streamlining the financing of national preparedness efforts in order to ensure an adequate level of resources and to avoid funding gaps.

On the issue of financing, we note with concern the potential impact that the economic and financial crisis could have on the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance. We call on donor countries to maintain and increase their level of financial support in order to enable the continued delivery of relief.

Brazil, as a developing country, has done its part. In the past few years we have significantly increased our contributions, both in cash and in kind. Last June, the Brazilian Congress enacted legislation authorizing the Government to contribute more than 700,000 tons of food to countries facing emergencies. We have also steadily increased our contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund, and plan to continue to do so.

For Brazil, it is essential to ensure a mutually supportive relationship between humanitarian cooperation and sustainable development. Several initiatives that reflect that approach are already being implemented, such as local procurement of food aid and cash-for-work schemes. Nevertheless, more needs to be done in this area. The United Nations must mainstream early recovery in all its humanitarian activities, including by developing appropriate tools in that regard. The “gender marker” provides a useful example that could be replicated in area of early recovery.

Brazil would like to highlight the role of education in humanitarian cooperation. Education is a powerful tool for preventing and responding to natural disasters, while providing a wide range of other socio-economic benefits. For that reason, Brazil supports humanitarian efforts that facilitate the fulfilment of the right to education, such as the provision of school meals and educational materials and the establishment of school infrastructure.

Our humanitarian cooperation with Haiti embodies such a perspective. It is built on the idea that sustainable recovery from a disaster can only be achieved if we combine immediate relief with support for economic activities, creating jobs and generating

income. Brazil remains committed to supporting Haiti in overcoming its remaining humanitarian challenges and to promoting long-term sustainable development. We also call on all partners to maintain their commitment to the development of Haiti.

Complex emergencies, including armed conflict, remain a leading cause of suffering, displacement and loss of life. We stress the need to ensure safe, unhindered and timely access to affected populations for the provision of life-saving assistance. We emphasize the importance of strict adherence by all relevant actors to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Moreover, Member States must comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Finally, we believe that strengthening partnerships among all Member States and humanitarian actors will increase ownership and contribute to the effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian assistance. In that regard, OCHA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should improve dialogue and cooperation with developing countries in order to benefit from their expertise in responding to emergencies. Furthermore, developing countries must be involved in relevant policy discussions concerning humanitarian assistance. We welcome the steps taken by OCHA and the Committee in that regard and encourage them to further enhance such efforts to ensure that United Nations humanitarian assistance is backed by the political support of the wider membership.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report submitted under this agenda item (A/66/345).

China endorses the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In recent years, due to global issues such as the economic, food and energy crises and the consequences of climate change, compounded by frequent natural disasters and regional conflicts, the global humanitarian situation has faced ever greater challenges. The food crisis in the Horn of Africa has affected more than 13 million people, displacing several million and leaving many on the brink of death. Several areas in Somalia have been engulfed by

famine, which in turn has become the most serious global humanitarian crisis today. All of those issues have together seriously challenged the global humanitarian coordination and response capacity. What is the most effective way to strengthen international humanitarian coordination and cooperation to assist affected countries in capacity-building aimed at facilitating transition from disaster relief to development while ensuring the sustainable growth of humanitarian resources? Those are the greatest challenges to international humanitarian effort. In that context, I wish to make the following points.

First, we must continue to adhere to the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance established by resolution 46/182. The year 2011 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of that resolution, which is essential to the humanitarian efforts of the international community. The resolution is a landmark document that establishes the basic framework and guiding principles for United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance efforts. It is an effective prerequisite for the implementation of humanitarian assistance and serves as a basis for strengthening international cooperation and mutual trust.

Parties involved in humanitarian assistance 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 recipient countries, and respect local customs and traditions. Only in that way can humanitarian assistance be carried out successfully with the consent of the affected Governments and the trust and support of the affected people.

Secondly, we must effectively strengthen capacity-building for the affected countries. At present, insufficient capacity and lack of support for capacity-building have constrained affected countries from effectively tackling humanitarian crises. Disaster relief capability and capacity-building in that context is precisely what is urgently needed by affected countries. As an old Chinese saying goes, it is better to teach one the skill of fishing than to offer him fish. China calls on the international community to focus on the capacity-building of affected countries in its humanitarian assistance efforts.

China also is of the view that strengthening of capacity-building should include two aspects: one is

disaster prevention, preparedness and response capacity; and the other is the capacity for early recovery and long-term development. The international community, the United Nations included, should emphasize and promote cooperation with affected countries in those areas, tailor its efforts to the needs of the affected Governments and people and provide affected countries with technical, financial and other support to enable them to tackle both the symptoms and the root causes of a crisis.

Thirdly, we must improve the working mechanism of the United Nations humanitarian system. In recent years, global humanitarian needs have continued to increase. More and more countries, international organizations, members of the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become extensively engaged in international humanitarian assistance. China maintains that in the face of major disasters, humanitarian actors should strengthen coordination, increase mutual trust and integrate planning efforts in order to maximize the effectiveness of disaster relief and resources allocation.

China supports the United Nations in strengthening coordination in that area, establishing partnerships with the relevant countries, international agencies and NGOs and expanding areas of cooperation. Over the past year, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Amos, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has played an irreplaceable role in fund-raising appeals and coordination. China welcomes those efforts and hopes that the United Nations humanitarian system and OCHA will further improve the coordination mechanism and fund-raising channels, strengthen communication and cooperation with Member States and play a greater role in international humanitarian endeavours.

Fourthly, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) should continue to play its important role. China welcomes the CERF five-year evaluation report (A/66/357), which suggests that the Fund has provided timely and effective assistance during various natural disasters and emergencies, playing a vital role in ensuring the rational allocation and efficient use of disaster relief resources while helping to improve access to humanitarian assistance. China hopes that CERF will build on its first independent evaluation, further improve its management mechanism, optimize the use of funds and enhance its transparency, so that it

will not only play its unique role but also emerge as a hallmark of the reform of United Nations humanitarian affairs.

China is a developing country prone to natural disasters. Disaster reduction, preparedness and emergency relief have been the major tasks facing Chinese Governments at all levels every year. The Chinese Government, while meeting the enormous challenges brought about by natural disasters to its own territory, also places great emphasis on international cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance. In response to appeals by the Governments of affected countries and the international community, China has done what it can to take an active part in multilateral relief efforts. In addition, the Chinese Government cosponsored with OCHA the Humanitarian Partnership Workshop for the Asia-Pacific Region, which promoted exchanges, cooperation and experience-sharing among the international humanitarian community.

Finally, the Chinese Government will continue to promote international humanitarian principles and work within its means with the international community to help affected countries overcome disasters and rebuild people's homes.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Recent natural disasters, technological accidents and armed conflicts have underscored the relevance of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

Strengthening the humanitarian response capacity, in particular at the national and local levels, is the basis for effective response to disasters. In that context, we support the activities of the United Nations system to develop national mechanisms and tools in the area of disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, developing early warning systems, strengthening emergency response to natural disasters and technological accidents, and promoting early recovery and development. Particular attention should be paid to close cooperation between United Nations humanitarian mechanisms and development agencies.

In Russia, a number of measures are being implemented aimed at improving national emergency prevention and response systems. In 2008, the National Crisis Management Centre was established under the Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters. We advocate connecting such national centres of different countries into a single global network. The objective of

such a network would be operational information-sharing on natural risks and disasters in order to contribute to timely measures by national Governments to prevent large-scale disasters, to reduce the vulnerability of people and to mitigate the consequences of disasters.

Russia attaches great importance to the safety and security of United Nations humanitarian personnel. In that context, we support active advocacy work among affected communities on the goals and tasks of the humanitarian mission.

Given their effectiveness, military assets are beginning to be used in United Nations emergency response operations. However, the provision of humanitarian assistance was always meant to be strictly a civilian activity, and we believe that it is of paramount importance to preserve its civilian character. Using military assets should remain a measure of last resort for cases where it is not possible to fulfil the tasks and goals of a particular humanitarian operation through other means in the specified time frame. The functions and mandate of military contingents involved should be in accordance with the principle of independence. Overall, the coordinating role should remain with civil entities and the United Nations, namely, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Our principled position is to support the further strengthening of OCHA's capacity and role in ensuring the civil nature of humanitarian assistance provided on the basis of the guiding principles set out in the annex to resolution 46/182.

Russia supports, and actively contributes to, the financial sustainability of the United Nations humanitarian sector. The United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process should remain the key mechanism for international humanitarian assistance. The successful operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund is one of the main achievements of joint efforts to strengthen the humanitarian response mechanism. We commend the operation of the Fund, which has proved to be an effective tool to ensure the predictable, adequate and timely financing of humanitarian operations.

Russia has traditionally been an active participant in international humanitarian efforts, and we continue to increase our contribution. In 2010-2011, Russia provided humanitarian support and assistance

bilaterally and in the context of the United Nations humanitarian appeals for countries such as Chad, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Namibia, Pakistan, Somalia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Yemen. That support amounted to \$100 million. In addition, the Government of the Russian Federation contributed \$1 million to UNICEF and \$500,000 to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for humanitarian assistance to the people in the countries of the Horn of Africa affected by drought and famine.

Mrs. Davidovich (Israel): We come together this morning after a year filled with tragedy. The year 2011 brought tsunamis, earthquakes, drought, hunger, violence and political instability. Many have perished. Millions have suffered. Those crises have had a debilitating impact on many communities and countries around the world.

Yet, in such moments of tragedy, we have also seen the best of humankind. In the midst of chaos, many have shown great bravery. Nations have shown solidarity. And the international community has shown its ability to take bold action.

We can draw valuable lessons in the wake of this year's disasters. Investing in disaster risk reduction is critical. Building resilient communities requires that we be prepared at all levels. Coordination is key at the local, national and international levels.

The State of Israel has a long-standing tradition of providing humanitarian assistance to other nations. This year was no exception. Following the earthquake last February in Christchurch, New Zealand, Israel sent sanitation supplies, water purification equipment and temporary shelters to the earthquake-ravaged city. A month later, when a tragic earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, Israel sent a team of medical specialists, search-and-rescue experts and communications personnel to a devastated port in the region. Following an earthquake in Turkey in October, Israel sent field hospitals and temporary buildings to house those displaced by the disaster.

In response to the terrible drought in the Horn of Africa, Israel contributed to the World Food Programme, supporting the delivery of food packages to Somali refugees in Kenya. We have also donated funds to the Ethiopian Government, which have been used to purchase locally produced food aid for Somali refugees there.

Israel's humanitarian assistance is guided by a comprehensive approach. We believe that preparedness must stand at the core of disaster response. For decades, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation — known by its Hebrew acronym MASHAV — has conducted courses on emergency and disaster medicine around the world. Those courses train doctors, nurses, medical technicians and administrators to deal with mass casualty events. MASHAV provides theoretical training and organizes practical simulation exercises relevant to disaster scenarios likely to face particular countries or regions.

In the past few years, Israel's cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, particularly with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team (UNDAC), has increased considerably. Israel is a member of UNDAC, and we are proud that the emergency response roster team includes five Israeli experts. Our cooperation will continue in the coming year. UNDAC will participate in our annual national security exercise, which will simulate an earthquake and the coordination of international assistance. Israel is also planning to organize a training course by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group for our regional emergency response team, allowing for international standardization and full coordination in the case of mass casualties following a disaster.

Israel recognizes that coordination is vital to ensuring an optimal response to disasters. As such, coordinating the delivery of humanitarian assistance through legitimate and recognized channels is of crucial importance. Yet, the exploitation of humanitarian aid by certain non-State actors as a tool for conflict and terrorism remains an ongoing challenge. We remain committed to working with all relevant United Nations agencies in that regard.

The United Nations plays a fundamental role in coordinating humanitarian assistance, providing a valuable framework for collective action. The work of the United Nations in disaster response underscores a fundamental truth. Each and every national has an obligation to stand in solidarity with others when they face the tragedy of disasters. Earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis know no borders. They threaten all of us. Countries that are donors one day may be recipients the next.

Israel's experience demonstrates that clearly. Just one year ago, countries in our region and around the world rallied to our aid in the wake of major forest fires in the region of Mount Carmel. I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all of those who stood in solidarity with my country during that difficult time.

Allow me to pay my respects to all humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel who have paid the ultimate price while trying to provide hope for those in dire situations. Let us always be inspired by their compassion, dedication and kindness.

Before concluding, let me say that I am compelled to respond to certain false accusations that some delegations have made against Israel today. Those cynical attacks have nothing to do with this debate and they undermine its professional nature. It is unfortunate that certain delegations continue to be more concerned with scoring cheap political points in the Hall than they are with the important issue of humanitarian aid.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada): Events in 2011 have once again underscored the importance of timely and effective humanitarian action. Globally, needs continue to rise at an alarming rate. Protracted emergencies in countries such as the Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Afghanistan, and recent natural disasters including the earthquake in Turkey, as well as flooding in Pakistan and Central America, highlight the continued need for improved coordination of humanitarian action. The evolving humanitarian situations in Libya, Yemen, Côte d'Ivoire and Syria also highlight the importance of meeting the protection and humanitarian needs of populations affected by violence and armed conflict.

Key trends such as significant population growth, rapid urbanization, growing levels of forced migration, including as a result of religious persecution, as well as insufficient attention to disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures in some of the world's most vulnerable countries, will likely result in greater human vulnerability and, by extension, increasing pressure on the international humanitarian system to respond. Moreover, the proliferation of humanitarian actors, some of whom have limited experience, along with increasing restrictions on humanitarian space in key contexts such as Somalia and the Sudan, and growing risks to the security of humanitarian aid workers, make

the task of meeting humanitarian needs even more challenging.

(spoke in French)

Strategic leadership is more critical than ever in that increasingly complex environment. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has a key role to play in terms of providing such leadership. Nevertheless, we expect all humanitarian actors — United Nations and non-United Nations alike — to work closely together, to share information and to ensure that established coordination mechanisms work when disasters strike. In that respect, OCHA can continue to rely on Canada's strong support in its efforts to deliver meaningful concrete actions that improve humanitarian coordination and produce tangible results for those most in need.

Canada welcomes the initiative of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to focus on and achieve quantifiable results in the areas of leadership, coordination, accountability, preparedness and advocacy. We call on the Committee to continue its efforts to quickly disseminate information about discussions devoted to humanitarian challenges. In our view, greater transparency in decision-making and disseminating information will help to strengthen coordination between humanitarian actors and Member States and to ensure transparency and accountability within the United Nations system.

(spoke in English)

Canada strongly supports the cluster coordination system and views it as an important tool for improving coordination and for ensuring a timely and effective humanitarian response. However, further efforts are required to strengthen the system. We therefore call on cluster leads to work more closely with local and national coordination mechanisms to avoid duplicating efforts and to ensure that international humanitarian action responds to the needs of affected populations. Furthermore, we call on United Nations agencies to find a way to agree on a common approach to humanitarian analysis, including common joint needs assessments. Our humanitarian actions must be rooted in a strong evidence base; otherwise, we risk diluting their effectiveness.

Improved collaboration among United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, including host Governments and local actors as well as the private

sector, diaspora communities, science communities and faith groups, is also fundamental to improving organizational effectiveness and the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian needs. Collaborative networks will help to improve the exchange of information, capitalize on lessons learned and facilitate better programme design.

Our humanitarian coordination efforts are only as good as the people responsible for fulfilling that coordination role. Ensuring that resident and humanitarian coordinators have access to the training and tools they need to lead on humanitarian issues is critical to our success. OCHA and the principals on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee must continue their efforts to strengthen the role, accountability, selection and capacities of humanitarian and resident coordinators.

The Organization can count on Canada's commitment to collaborate with OCHA and other humanitarian partners to work to strengthen coordination and the ability of the international humanitarian system to respond to humanitarian crises. Vulnerable populations around the world deserve our commitment to decision-making that is strategic, transparent and grounded in sound assessments, with delivery that is innovative and well coordinated. Together, I am certain that we can overcome the challenges that lie ahead and deliver life-saving assistance to those in need.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand is fully committed to the international humanitarian system. The massive demands on that system over the past year involve us all — Governments, the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, non-governmental organizations, civil society and, of course, individuals. Some people, in the midst of a disaster, move quickly to help and rescue others even more perilously placed; others, farther removed from the disaster, dig deep just to help.

Throughout 2011, the world has continued to grapple with volatile food and fuel prices, with drought and famine in the Horn of Africa and with other smaller but still serious disasters, all with severe consequences for countries and their populations. There are also many protracted, but often overlooked, crises that continue to require international humanitarian support. Likewise, severe food insecurity has required international action, but it has also shown

how reforms in the humanitarian system are delivering better coordinated responses, particularly coordination between humanitarian and development actors and national Governments. The result should be more sustainable recovery for affected countries and their communities.

New Zealand supports the United Nations in its leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action in both preparedness and response. We specifically endorse the leading role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and we support the efforts of United Nations agencies and others in the twin-track approach of addressing both immediate humanitarian food crises and the need for building long-term resilience that contributes to food and nutrition security. New Zealand welcomed the opportunity to serve as Chair of the OCHA Donor Support Group over the past year. We were especially pleased to host and chair the Group's annual high-level meeting in June, which produced some very tangible and worthwhile outcomes for follow-up by OCHA and the donor community.

Events this year have again highlighted concerns about the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, as well as the actions of some groups in conflict areas — actions that prevented populations from receiving, or sometimes even seeking, humanitarian assistance and that obstructed humanitarian personnel in discharging their functions. We deplore the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and principles, the more so as personnel must now operate in increasingly complex and challenging situations.

New Zealand has also joined others in condemning actions by armed groups that lead to the expulsion of humanitarian organizations, bans on the activities of humanitarian personnel, and targeting, hindering or preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We likewise condemn all attacks, harassment, intimidation, murder, abduction and kidnapping perpetrated against international and national humanitarian personnel, and against others caught up in crisis situations. We particularly condemn acts of murder, rape and sexual assault against women and children. We therefore strongly support the work of the Secretary-General and the Department of Safety and Security aimed at reducing such risks, particularly the "Saving Lives Together" framework.

New Zealand welcomes recent efforts to strengthen United Nations humanitarian leadership and coordination in-country. We encourage further work to mainstream early recovery into humanitarian programming, and to ensure that clusters are in place quickly and are able to communicate effectively with relevant players, including other clusters, local and international non-governmental organizations, national Governments and the military. However, it remains critical for the international community to do much more, and urgently, in mitigation and adaptation dealing with climate change. The small island nations of the Pacific and other regions are among the most vulnerable to those effects, and to the potential impact of disasters, whatever their cause. The international community must invest more in early recovery to bridge the gap between lifesaving humanitarian work and longer-term development.

While many Member States continue to wrestle with fiscal constraints, increasing demands are also being made on the international humanitarian system. Our elected legislators, taxpayers and domestic stakeholders expect greater accountability and performance from all our development and humanitarian partners. It is therefore essential that the United Nations and those partners continue to strengthen their response efforts by monitoring and evaluating the provision of humanitarian assistance, consulting with affected populations and incorporating the lessons learned into actual programmes. It is also essential that this work support gender equality and the empowerment of women.

New Zealand also continues to support the Central Emergency Response Fund in assisting with rapid, effective and equitable response to humanitarian crises, large and small. We remain as responsive as possible to specific humanitarian appeals. Wherever and whenever humanitarian assistance is provided, our collective and individual goal must be to prevent and alleviate human suffering and to protect the most exposed and most vulnerable, regardless of location. That goal deserves our fullest support. It certainly has New Zealand's full support.

Mrs. Chaimongkol (Thailand): At the outset, Thailand would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and comprehensive report, submitted under agenda item 70, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief

assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance" (A/66/345).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize Thailand's solidarity with those affected by natural disasters around the world. Their bravery and resilience in the face of such overwhelming challenges are to be commended. We also want them to know that they are not alone, and that the international community stands ready to support them in their time of need and to help them surmount those challenges.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the women and men working, within and outside the United Nations system, to provide humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to people in affected areas throughout the world. The safety of victims of natural disasters as well as that of their rescuers and relief providers must also be of paramount concern. In that regard, Thailand fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen its capacity in coordinating humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, especially in the initiatives of relevant United Nations agencies aimed at keeping their personnel safe.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance (A/66/81), the United Nations responded to more than 30 emergencies worldwide in the reporting period of June 2010 to May 2011. In addition to identifying a number of worrying trends, the report notes an increase in the frequency and scale of natural disasters. The past year saw many more deaths and millions affected, including the most vulnerable, across the globe. That is a disturbing trend that must be met with resolute commitment and action to strengthen our responses in the most effective and sustainable manner possible.

As natural and man-made disasters intensify and become more frequent, we must continually improve our response capacities, at the regional and global levels as well as nationally. While natural disasters are not preventable, the loss of lives and livelihoods is.

The recent flooding in Thailand, the worst in decades, tested our national resilience and response capacities. In that time of crisis our people were more than ever united in helping one another. In that regard,

let me express Thailand's sincere appreciation to our friends for their messages of goodwill and support and for their assistance in our time of need.

One of the more important lessons that Thailand learned from our latest crisis was that there continues to be a need for the sharing of best practices and technical assistance. It is also necessary to have available the necessary infrastructure and equipment at the national, regional and international levels in order to better prepare, cope with and rebuild when disaster strikes.

At the national level, Thailand has always placed great importance on building early warning mechanisms and resilience, while emphasizing capacity-building and providing technical assistance to local communities to meet specific local needs. The Thai Government has taken several steps to achieve the goals set by the Hyogo Framework for Action, such as establishing the National Disaster Warning Centre and approving our strategic national plan on disaster risk reduction for the period 2010 to 2014, which aims at providing aid to affected people in case of emergency. We have also worked to strengthen our collective efforts in mobilizing resources from all sectors, in order to protect, alleviate and rehabilitate affected areas and people. Our Government is committed to doing still more in that regard.

At the regional level, in 2005 the Thai Government contributed \$10 million to the establishment of the Tsunami Regional Trust Fund in order to strengthen regional disaster preparedness following the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami that struck the region in 2004. In 2010, the scope of the Fund was expanded to cover overall disaster and climate preparedness in the region.

As the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) move closer to becoming an ASEAN community in 2015, ASEAN leaders are committed to enhancing regional cooperation on disaster management through the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. The Agreement focuses on better preparedness, particularly the need for an early warning system and a mechanism to ensure timely dispatches of rescue and assistance.

At the international level, this year Thailand extended financial assistance amounting to approximately \$700,000 to countries affected by

natural disasters worldwide, including to our immediate neighbours and countries in the region and beyond. We have also contributed additional funds through the World Food Programme to assist drought-affected people in the Horn of Africa. And we have dispatched emergency medical teams to affected areas as requested.

Moreover, this year we again contributed to the Central Emergency Response Fund. We also take note of the Fund's five-year evaluation and the initiatives taken by the Fund's secretariat to provide a clear road map to make the Fund even more effective, efficient, accountable and transparent. Apart from financial contributions by the Thai Government, Thailand's private sector and non-governmental organizations have also provided significant contributions to affected countries worldwide.

We must also look for new ways to improve disaster preparedness through the use of new technologies, to ensure that needed technical assistance is provided to enhance the capacities of affected countries. We should also explore the use of media outlets and new communication channels to assist and enhance our early warning and response capacity, in order to provide timely information.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Thai Government and its people to continually improve our own national capacity to respond to natural disasters in our region and to assist affected countries there and beyond. We must aim not only to assist affected countries to overcome the challenges posed by the severe impacts of natural disasters but to do so in a way that enables them to achieve sustainable recovery towards sustainable development.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): The United States joins others gathered here today to recognize the twentieth anniversary of resolution 46/182, a pivotal instrument in shaping the framework for the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance. As a foundational document, resolution 46/182 laid out the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance and elevated the importance of preparedness as a vital element of emergency relief.

The international humanitarian system has evolved to meet new and growing challenges over the past decades. Indeed, 2011 was no exception. The ongoing drought in the Horn of Africa and the complex

nature of the famine that struck parts of Somalia pushed the system to its limits. Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire led to large-scale internal and external displacement. Flooding in Pakistan devastated countless communities.

Each of those crises created unique needs, which required tailor-made solutions. The United States believes that we must continue to support and enhance the capability of the United Nations and the broader international humanitarian response system to confront a wide range of disasters in countries that have varying degrees of capacity to respond within their own resources. No one country or organization is equipped to respond to each and every humanitarian crisis. Strengthened partnerships are critical to improving coordination and delivering timely and effective assistance.

For example, the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the African Union and Turkey have each responded to the famine in Somalia. Yet they have also taken steps to harmonize their work by communicating regularly and exchanging information. We commend their efforts and support the decision of Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos to make outreach to non-United Nations organizations a key pillar of her tenure at the United Nations.

Regrettably, the suffering of many victims of both natural and man-made disasters is unnecessarily heightened due to the fact that they either received no humanitarian assistance or insufficient levels thereof due to access restrictions imposed by Governments or other parties. In particular we must highlight the case of Somalia, where the terrorist group Al-Shabaab has expelled humanitarian agencies, banned their lifesaving activities and generally reduced the ability of the United Nations and other international aid agencies to deliver vital food, health care and water services to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Somalis. The United States urges other Member States to join us in strongly condemning Al-Shabaab's unconscionable blockage of humanitarian assistance, which has put Somali lives at risk.

The United States commends the emphasis on gender equality and gender-based violence in this year's report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance (A/66/339). The United States supports the view that national and

local Governments, as well as the humanitarian community, must recognize and address gender sensitivities before, during and after a disaster occurs. Gender-sensitive approaches and activities should be incorporated or mainstreamed into all phases of disaster programming, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. We believe that disaster-affected countries, United Nations agencies and other humanitarian partners must plan relief programmes in such a way as to eliminate or reduce exposure to sexual and gender-based violence.

The United States has long recognized the importance of not only responding to natural disasters, but also helping communities prepare for and minimize vulnerabilities. Investments in disaster risk reduction are therefore critical, as they help reduce the loss of lives and livelihoods, safeguard land and infrastructure, increase resilience and lessen economic disruptions caused by disasters.

Development partners should have a role in reducing underlying risks of natural disasters, since disaster risk reduction alone will not make communities and nations resilient to disasters, if those programmes are not designed within a sustainable framework. It will be difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals if communities and households do not become more resilient. We therefore urge development actors to engage more robustly in disaster risk reduction programmes, alongside their humanitarian counterparts.

Similarly, we urge stronger partnerships between humanitarian and development agencies, to address the relief to development gap. Today, the average length of displacement is 17 years. Over 10 million people live in protracted, displaced situations in 30 countries worldwide. Development actors should incorporate the needs of forced migrants into their country programmes and strategies, to help bring about durable and lasting solutions.

We also note that humanitarian crises are increasingly urban in nature. More than 50 per cent of the global population lives in urban areas, 1 million of whom live in precarious, underserved informal settlements and slums. An increasing number of displaced people are joining populations who suffer from chronic deprivation in impoverished areas of big cities. As the scale and pace of urbanization accelerates, urban populations will become

increasingly vulnerable to a range of current and emerging threats. Humanitarian actors need to develop response mechanisms to meet that new challenge.

The United States encourages the United Nations and its partners to continue to improve leadership, accountability and coordination. The United States supports granting the Emergency Relief Coordinator a stronger voice in the resident coordinator selection process for countries where there are acute humanitarian needs. The Emergency Relief Coordinator should also be equipped with the tools necessary to hold country-level coordinators accountable for their work. We must think creatively about ways to incentivize agencies to act in the collective interest of the United Nations, specifically in coordinating among the clusters and in nominating senior staff for resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator posts.

The safety and security of humanitarian personnel continue to be essential in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The United States categorically condemns the targeting of humanitarian workers and calls upon all parties to safeguard the well-being of organizations and individuals delivering lifesaving assistance to victims of man-made and natural disasters. In particular, we deplore the attacks against United Nations facilities in Abuja, Nigeria, and Mazar-e-Sharif, which led to the tragic deaths of individuals seeking to make the world a better place.

While we look back at the adoption of resolution 46/182, we must acknowledge that subsequent humanitarian policy decisions in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council have also shaped much of the international humanitarian system as it exists today. We expect that the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations system will continue to develop the normative and operational framework of the humanitarian system, in order to better meet the needs of victims of natural disasters and complex emergencies.

The United States wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to the international humanitarian system. We will continue our support of the United Nations as it works with others to respond to growing and evolving humanitarian challenges.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Natural disasters are increasing in number and in

effect, and in particular in the loss of human lives. For that reason, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/339), we must recognize the critical importance of disaster preparedness, strengthen the response capacity of local, regional and national actors and increase the human and financial resources allocated to addressing such situations.

Unfortunately, the Central American region has not escaped the damage left by such events. The General Assembly responded promptly, through resolution 66/9, to the most recent tragedy to which we have been victims. I am therefore here today to express our sincere gratitude for the broad support that members of the Assembly provided for that humanitarian resolution, which was adopted by consensus on 11 November. The urgent call for assistance we have been obliged to make owing to one of the most serious emergency situations in Central America in recent memory was met by the best possible response from all the countries that demonstrated their solidarity with our peoples at that time of bitter suffering.

Prior to the adoption of that resolution, Ms. Catherine Bragg, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on her field visit to Central America and on the serious humanitarian situation she found there. Last October, Central America suffered from rains that vastly exceeded the historical average — including those that accompanied Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which was classified as one of the most powerful and deadly hurricanes of the past 50 years.

Equally pressing and severe is the need for the rehabilitation and construction efforts that must be undertaken in order to overcome the serious effects of those storms. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has categorized Central America as the most environmentally vulnerable region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Unfortunately, that was once again evident with the last year's passing of the devastating Hurricane Tomas. This year, tropical storm 12E was responsible for death and destruction, including thousands of displaced individuals and enormous material losses in crops, housing and basic infrastructure. That has taken a great toll on the economic and trade activity of our countries.

In Costa Rica, reported losses in the livestock and agricultural sector alone amounted to more than \$34 million, with thousands of hectares of crops damaged. As Ms. Bragg has pointed out, the magnitude of the disaster far outstrips the economic and social capacity of our countries to respond with our own resources alone. For that reason, the aid we have already received from friendly nations and from international organizations has been so important in providing the help that we need to move forward with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Central American isthmus. I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to those countries and organizations.

We are aware of our national and regional responsibilities. Our Governments have therefore allocated substantial portions of our scarce resources towards mitigating the damage and towards continuing to work with determination and in a coordinated manner to improve our national and regional capacities in the area of disaster risk reduction, management and care. However, we cannot carry out those tasks alone. The support of the international community continues to be vital and urgent.

In order to consolidate our efforts, we also call for increased investment in disaster risk management at all levels, as well as in the preservation and protection of a balanced natural environment, and in guaranteeing the sustainable development and well-being of all our populations. Like our neighbour countries, Costa Rica is working tirelessly to tackle those tasks as effectively as possible and with due transparency and accountability.

Finally, allow me to call attention to the significant challenges we continue to face with respect to humanitarian issues in general around the world. We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In my national capacity, however, I would like to highlight some of the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/66/81.

First, it is clear that we need to encourage greater respect for, and adherence to, the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence — a recommendation to which my delegation fully subscribes. Secondly, however, it is also unquestionably true that safe, timely and

unhindered access to vulnerable populations is a prerequisite for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as paragraph 80 (b) of that document makes clear. We also agree that it is very important to maintain the civilian character of emergency humanitarian assistance. And we support the call to strengthen efforts to address sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies.

We should all strengthen our commitment to humanitarian action based on principles.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 46/182 provides us with a vantage point for evaluating both the performance of the humanitarian framework established by that resolution and the challenges that it faces and is likely to face. The principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality emphasized by the resolution, as well as the primary role of States in the provision of humanitarian assistance as articulated by the resolution, remain of cardinal importance, lest humanitarian assistance become engulfed by political expediencies.

A primary challenge for us today is the increasing frequency and magnitude of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. That makes it important to increase the resources available for meeting humanitarian emergencies. During the last monsoon season, Pakistan was hit by yet another flood that affected millions of people in the southern part of the country, who were already trying to rebuild their lives after the unprecedented floods of 2010. Our Government has mobilized all its resources to provide rescue and relief to the affected people. While the United Nations system and the international community have come forward, much more needs to be done, given the scale of floods.

Based on our experience of dealing with natural disasters, we have created the necessary institutional, infrastructure and legislative framework. That includes the National Disaster Management Authority, which leads the response to floods or other disasters, which in turn is supported by provincial disaster management authorities.

Our experience has convinced us of a number of points. First, States concerned must have the primary

role in the initiation, identification, coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance. Respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the national unity of States must remain the overarching parameters in all coordination, as enshrined in the resolution 46/182.

An improved, accountable and inclusive Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance will help to improve coordination.

In order to save funds, it is important to tap alternate forms of assistance, such as increased local procurement of material resources and the hiring of local expertise.

It is necessary to build trust among donors, international humanitarian actors and affected States.

Accountability of all humanitarian actors, especially in the area of delivery on the ground, should be ensured. The United Nations must improve its capacity to make sure that money is spent for the intended purpose.

As an important element of domestic preparedness, it is essential to build capacity in the countries that are most likely to be affected by humanitarian emergencies.

Most important, emphasis should be not only on restoring lives but on restoring livelihoods as well, through better integration of recovery with development.

It is also pertinent to highlight that reporting mechanisms should follow the facts and should remain cognizant of the different situations that are not comparable. The politicization of humanitarian relief work should be eschewed.

Pakistan condemns all attacks against humanitarian actors who render invaluable services to people in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we would like to urge that humanitarian assistance be kept above board and remain free of political nuances and expediencies. The successful provision of principled humanitarian assistance requires sensitivity towards specific situations and in the response to genuine needs. That is not possible unless we do away with the one-size-fits-all approach to humanitarian assistance.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this morning. A representative has requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention, and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Jawhara (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply to respond to the statement made by the representative of Canada, who spoke on agenda item 70.

The representative of Canada explicitly mentioned Syria in referring to the strengthening of humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations in emergency situations. While we welcome the interest expressed by some friendly countries and are keen to respect the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter regarding emergency humanitarian assistance, we categorically reject Canadian interference in our internal affairs. We believe that the statements made are opportunistic and politically hypocritical. They also violate the rules of international law governing relations between sovereign States. We can support this assertion with many examples and evidence that explain the motives behind the statements made by the representative of Canada, which are based on the existence of a double standard. An important debate such as today's on humanitarian assistance should not be blatantly politicized.

In further supporting our assertions, we wish to remind representatives attending today's meeting that the delegation of Canada, which expresses great concern regarding humanitarian matters, voted against resolution 66/80, on Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan, as well as against other relevant resolutions regarding the Palestinian people and their cause. If the Canadian delegation truly had such concerns, they should have joined the majority of Member States and international legitimacy, which have categorically rejected Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. The Canadian representative should have also explicitly condemned the inhumane blockade and comprehensive siege by

Israel over the past four years against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel is also hindering humanitarian access to the stricken Gaza Strip. We would have liked for the Canadian representative to have condemned the attack against United Nations officials who protect and provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories. We also

would have liked for that representative to have condemned the Israeli destruction of schools established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East during Israel's barbaric attack on Gaza in 2008.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.