



General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

54th plenary meeting
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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Jeremić (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 70

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

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/492)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.32 and A/67/L.37)

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

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/89, A/67/361, A/67/363 and A/67/367)

Draft resolution (A/67/L.39)

(b) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/84)

Draft resolution (A/67/L.38)

(c) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina, who will introduce draft resolution A/67/L.32.

Mr. Fuks (Argentina) (spoke in Spanish): It is an honour for me once again to introduce to the General

Assembly a draft resolution on the White Helmets initiative (A/67/L.32).

Against a backdrop in which global economic and financial difficulties are affecting international humanitarian cooperation, the effects of climate change are ever more devastating, and socio-natural disasters claim lives and exact a high price for development, the countries of the South and middle- and low-income countries are playing an ever more important role on the international stage in terms of commitment, technical and material resources, collaboration with the communities in greatest need, fighting hunger and poverty, emergency response and international humanitarian assistance.

These circumstances have been recognized by various actors in the international humanitarian assistance field, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, which emphasized in its appeal for emergency funds for 2013 that several countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America have been participating increasingly and more directly in humanitarian assistance and development cooperation activities.

That is the backdrop against which the White Helmets initiative has begun its eighteenth year of work within the United Nations system since the adoption of resolution 49/139 B in 1994. At that time, few countries had decided to develop such a tool; almost 20 years later, we are pleased to see that this minority has become the majority.

Whenever a disaster or emergency occurs, the first to arrive on the scene to help are the neighbouring

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countries. In turn, subregional organizations and then the international system take their places and assume their responsibilities to promote international cooperation to reduce risks, prevent and mitigate disasters, provide assistance, and coordinate rescue and rehabilitation measures.

However, the situation remains difficult. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, has informed the world that 62 million people across the five continents are in need of humanitarian assistance. We believe that the General Assembly's support for the draft resolution, which once again supports the White Helmets initiative of the Republic of Argentina, is also a recognition of other national initiatives in the Latin American region with global scope.

The efforts of developing countries should be valued not only for the extent of their investment in the humanitarian field, but also for the models and concepts reflected in their international practices that give priority to local capacity-building and how easy actions are to replicate. Such components include the participation of organized communities and their affected or vulnerable populations in disaster situations and complex emergencies, the training of local voluntary corps, and support for specialized volunteers when needed.

The use of the ancestral knowledge of indigenous communities and a cross-gender approach contribute to ensuring that our working methods include the full spectrum of sectors and take national particularities into account.

Finally, it is important to underline some areas of common agreement in our region regarding the concept of disasters. We reject their designation as natural events; they should be recognized for what they truly are — the consequences of development policies that are far from equitable or interested in the distribution of wealth, social justice and community participation.

We trust that Member States will support the White Helmets initiative at this sixty-seventh session, thereby strengthening the coordination strategy with the United Nations system that has been implemented by the White Helmets through our shared activities with the United Nations Volunteers, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the

World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Our President, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, has pointed out to the Assembly that a safer and more just world can be built only on the basis of greater equality among all countries and if true multilateralism is achieved. We look to the future with confidence and aim to build more and better mechanisms based on those pillars.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus to introduce draft resolutions A/67/L.37 and A/67/L.38.

Ms. Rafti (Cyprus): I have the honour to introduce two draft resolutions on behalf of the European Union and its member States. I will begin with draft resolution A.67/L.37, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

The European Union and its member States attach great importance to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We are concerned by the increased number of casualties and accidents involving humanitarian personnel in recent years, especially when attacks deliberately target United Nations and humanitarian personnel. We are also concerned that aviation incidents are the primary cause of safety-related accidents. We 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.

The draft resolution, which we hope to see adopted by consensus today, shows that all Member States are concerned by and can come together around the safety, security and protection of humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel. We note with satisfaction that this year's draft resolution has some reinforced language on the need for closer cooperation between the United Nations and its implementing partners on security policies and the better integration of gender into risk-management strategies. The United Nations and aid organizations have realized that they have to manage risk in order to continue to operate even in the most complex emergencies.

Building good relations and trust not only with host Governments but also with affected populations should be an integral part of humanitarian risk management strategies and is now strengthened in the draft resolution.

We welcome the measures taken by the Department of Safety and Security and 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 stay and deliver and to respond to all emergencies, including those of a very complex nature. We cannot be late in saving lives.

To conclude, I would like to thank all delegations for their engagement in the negotiations and their frankness and willingness to agree on the important issues addressed by the draft resolution. We warmly thank the numerous States that are sponsoring the draft resolution and look forward to its adoption by consensus once again.

Let me now turn to the draft resolution A/67/L.38. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly a draft resolution submitted by the 27 members of the European Union on assistance to the Palestinian people. The draft resolution has been shared with Member States. As in previous years, the European Union expects the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The sustained support from the donors of the international community is essential to assisting Palestinian State-building efforts, to strengthening the Palestinian economy, and to meeting the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

The draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people submitted 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 done by the United Nations and its agencies, notably in providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. It 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 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 it stresses the importance of free humanitarian access to the Palestinian people.

The European Union wishes to express its gratitude to the delegations that have asked to be included 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/67/L.39.

Mr. Grunditz (Sweden): It is my great pleasure to introduce this year's draft resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency and humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, as contained in document A/67/L.39.

The annual adoption of this draft resolution by the General Assembly reaffirms the distinctive and leading role of the United Nations in coordinating and responding to growing humanitarian needs at the global level. This year, a number of new elements have been introduced or reinforced in the draft resolution, making it even more pertinent and reflective of today's new reality. Some of those new elements are the importance of strengthening partnerships and dialogue at all levels, including building good relations and trust at the national and local levels with a view to fostering acceptance.

The draft resolution also reflects the importance of data collection and exchange in humanitarian decision-making. Moreover, the General Assembly this year specifically condemns the deliberate attacks on medical personnel and facilities. Some features already dealt with in the resolution have been strengthened, such as accountability and leadership, including the role of the resident humanitarian coordinator. Another example of progress is the reinforced emphasis on the challenges encountered in humanitarian emergencies by persons with disabilities. This year's draft resolution also has more relevant and specific references to the importance of building resilience.

I would like to warmly thank all delegations that participated in this year's negotiations for their active and collaborative engagement and contributions. It has permitted us yet again to adopt this important draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Sea (Cambodia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which consists of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Cambodia, on agenda item 70, "Strengthening of

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

Every year, disasters and conflicts cause immense suffering for millions of people. Several factors — such as rapid population growth, urbanization, the potential outbreak of pandemic disease, rising food prices, regional economic and social disparities, and global climate change — increase countries’ vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters. A wide range of activities and measures have been undertaken to enhance the abilities of national and local authorities to prepare for and respond to disasters. However, a large-scale disaster could overwhelm a Government’s capacities at the national and local levels, requiring immediate assistance from the international humanitarian community, regional organizations, neighbouring countries and relevant agencies of the United Nations.

ASEAN highly appreciates the efforts made by the United Nations to improve humanitarian response, including the strengthening of capacities to manage disaster, improving humanitarian coordination and preparedness, and providing adequate funding for emergency relief. It is truly gratifying to note that the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination network is also helping Governments to strengthen their national capacities, including by sharing valuable knowledge, for better disaster prevention, preparedness and response, as well as effective post-disaster recovery.

Regional organizations’ participation in humanitarian action is increasing. Several regional organizations are already playing an active role in emergency preparedness and response. I am proud to mention that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was the first organization to adopt a legally binding regional cooperation agreement for disaster risk reduction by signing the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response in 2005. The Agreement creates an effective mechanism for minimizing losses of the personnel of ASEAN member States, as well as of their social, economic and environmental assets and resources, while facilitating a joint response to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

Furthermore, in November 2011, ASEAN Foreign Ministers also signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre

for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management for the purpose of facilitating cooperation and coordination among the operational parties and with relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations in promoting regional collaboration in disaster management and response. The signing of the Agreement demonstrated ASEAN members’ commitment to enhancing disaster management and reaffirmed our willingness to respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

ASEAN continues to strengthen cooperation and coordination among its member States and with the relevant United Nations agencies, especially the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, on disaster risk management, response preparedness and post-disaster coordination under the ASEAN-United Nations Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2011-2015.

Questions related to the coordination and facilitation of international assistance in response to national disasters have long challenged the international community. Local and national actors have always been at the forefront of responding to emergencies. When they have been unable to respond effectively, they have requested assistance from regional and international partners. Over the years, particularly in the past two decades, the number and diversity of international actors becoming directly involved in operations after major disasters has grown, but there remain systematic challenges regarding how affected States and international assistance actors coordinate during international response efforts. Affected States continue to have concerns that international humanitarian actors show insufficient respect for their own sovereign ability to respond to disasters. In dealing with problems of international assistance, therefore, the recognition that a country has the primary responsibility of providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance needs to be balanced with the recognition that international assistance should be based on consent when local and national capacities have been overwhelmed.

Humanitarian needs are expected to continue to rise in the coming decades because of an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Rapid economic growth and urbanization will lead to a growing concentration of people in hazard-prone cities with increased exposure to natural hazards. Therefore, humanitarian organizations will need to develop new

approaches to responding to environmental disasters as part of their wider response to natural disasters.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to state that ASEAN highly appreciates the laudable work that is being carried out by the relevant agencies of the United Nations. As humanitarian requirements escalate, there will be a need for Governments and humanitarian organizations to anticipate, prepare for and respond to crises more successfully and to improve their abilities to understand how global trends and challenges affect vulnerability and needs.

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

Mr. Mayr-Harting (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, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

It is a particular honour to speak here on this important occasion, just a few days after the European Union was formally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. We believe that that decision was a recognition of our long-standing efforts to help victims of conflicts and natural disasters, and a loud call to continue with those efforts in the future.

Over the past two decades, our humanitarian aid has been the concrete expression of our solidarity with those most in need, having been affected by conflict or disaster. As a specific expression of that commitment, the decision has been made to use the Nobel Peace Prize money, matched by an equal amount from the European Commission, to support humanitarian projects aimed at assisting children affected by conflict.

The global humanitarian context remains challenging, and the need for humanitarian assistance around the globe is ever increasing. A number of factors contribute to that challenging context. They include the complexity of conflict situations, the increasing disregard for international humanitarian and refugee law, the obstruction of access in a growing number of humanitarian emergencies, and the multiplication of actors appearing on the humanitarian aid scene. The combined impact of continuous demographic pressure

and urbanization, climate change and competition for resources, high and volatile food and energy prices, security threats and poor governance exacerbates vulnerabilities and further increases humanitarian needs. The effects of the global financial crisis further aggravate the challenge by limiting resources available for humanitarian ends.

In that context, the humanitarian community needs to do more with less by increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of aid. We therefore continue to strongly support the reinforcement of the global humanitarian system. We welcome the Transformative Agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), launched by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, which aims at further strengthening the humanitarian response system in all humanitarian crises. We call on the Emergency Relief Coordinator and all other IASC members to further the Agenda's implementation at the operational level under the three pillars of leadership, coordination and accountability, and to demonstrate concrete and tangible results.

Humanitarian leadership is a central element of ensuring a coordinated and principled humanitarian response. Resident and/or humanitarian coordinators play an especially important role in helping to preserve humanitarian space, through strong advocacy for fundamental humanitarian principles. We believe that resident coordinators should have the ability to lead on behalf of the entire United Nations system, contribute to the work of the United Nations country teams, and promote change. We call on the United Nations and relevant stakeholders to devise an integrated strategy to support them and humanitarian coordinators, as well as to facilitate the appointment, retention and empowerment of strong and experienced humanitarian leaders.

We also acknowledge the important role played by non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which deliver the bulk of humanitarian assistance on the ground, and we commend their efforts in support of a more effective humanitarian response.

A solid, shared understanding of humanitarian needs is essential to providing an effective and targeted response. We therefore support the continued work towards developing a framework for common needs assessments. In order to develop strategic, prioritized and efficient responses, and to better measure the performance of the humanitarian system, we need to

ensure that humanitarian action is based upon reliable, timely and independent baseline information. We therefore welcome the relevant efforts made by the United Nations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

We also welcome the ongoing efforts of humanitarian actors to strengthen accountability to all stakeholders, in particular to affected populations. Affected populations must remain at the centre of humanitarian action, and their active participation is essential in providing assistance in ways that best meet their needs. In order to better monitor and report humanitarian action, agencies need clear objectives and indicators in their strategic plans.

We also emphasize the need for both the development and the humanitarian communities to strengthen their support for transition and early recovery in order to provide hope to people affected by crises and to promote structural changes. The strengthening of disaster resilience as a means to address chronic vulnerabilities in many regions of the world is becoming increasingly important. As an example, the European Union, together with the affected countries of the region, supports building resilience in the Sahel region through a specific initiative. A similar initiative has also been devised for the Horn of Africa. At the European Union level, we look forward to learning from and building upon those initiatives, and to further strengthening links between our humanitarian and development communities.

In that regard, we encourage United Nations funds, programmes and other development actors, as well as OCHA and humanitarian actors, according to their respective roles and responsibilities, to integrate resilience-based and disaster risk reduction strategies into their planning, in close cooperation with host Governments and regional organizations.

The impact of natural disasters is increasing, and humanitarian needs persist as a consequence of armed conflict. We firmly believe in the need to strengthen the global partnership on international humanitarian assistance in an effort to tackle those challenges. That means developing new partnerships, building an inclusive international dialogue and working towards an even broader donor base and more even burden-sharing. We welcome the outreach efforts of Under-Secretary-General Amos to strengthen partnerships, enhance effective coordination and encourage all

Member States and other humanitarian actors to work alongside OCHA in that regard.

While the European Union recognizes that a growing number of humanitarian actors can create unique and new possibilities for humanitarian response, it is necessary to ensure the protection of the established humanitarian principles, and thereby continue to strengthen the humanitarian space. The European Union therefore also calls on all relevant actors to respect the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Last but not least, the European Union remains gravely concerned about the outbreak of several new complex emergencies, the continuation of protracted conflicts and the continued displacement of millions of people. In such emergencies, international humanitarian assistance is often essential to supporting and supplementing national efforts to protect and meet the needs of those in need. Access to affected populations, however, is often severely restricted, due to violent conflict, bureaucratic constraints or even deliberate bans of humanitarian organizations.

We also remain gravely concerned by escalating acts of violence perpetrated against humanitarian personnel and the looting of humanitarian supplies. The European Union urges all States and all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and to preserve the humanitarian space by ensuring rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel and supplies to populations in need, for populations in need to receive aid and be afforded protection, and to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

Internationally recognized humanitarian emblems that afford protection for humanitarian workers are, unfortunately, becoming deliberately selected targets. Similarly, health care and medical personnel are increasingly subject to attacks. That is highly alarming. It is unacceptable that the very people who are there to assist those in need should become the targets of attacks. We call on all parties to conflicts to protect medical and health care personnel assigned to medical duties, their means of transport, property and other medical facilities, in accordance with all relevant international law, including humanitarian law.

In closing, let me reiterate our strong commitment to continuing our engagement with all Member States in strengthening the humanitarian partnership, as well

as our strong support for the remarkable work led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Amos.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, on behalf of the Palestinian people, I wish to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the solidarity and support, including economic and humanitarian, of Governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and individuals from around the world that continue to significantly assuage part of the suffering endured by our people, who have been living under Israel's ruthless occupation for more than four decades. For millions of Palestinian families, that assistance has been the main source of survival and sustenance provided to them through endless periods of instability, crises and uncertainty. We affirm that such assistance has been vital, including in supporting the Palestinian people's efforts towards ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, in order to achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The latest figures regarding the humanitarian and economic situation in Palestine are astounding and tragic. In fact, all recent reports have documented the enormous burden international agencies are enduring in trying to address the continuously growing needs of the Palestinian people and to alleviate the now entrenched crisis, caused by the fact that the illegal actions and measures of Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory have continued unabated and have dragged the Palestinian people deeper into poverty and dependence on aid. Therefore, despite the desire of the Palestinian people to pursue development towards the independence of their State of Palestine, Israeli policies and practices have caused reverse development in the State of Palestine, miring a sizeable portion of the Palestinian civilian population in abject poverty.

The negative repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people have been intensified by the fact that the Palestinian National Authority continues to suffer from a severe fiscal crisis, partially triggered by shrinking external budget support, as outlined in the latest reports of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). While the total financing needs for the Palestinian National Authority

during the first half of 2012 amounted to \$749 million, the external financial support received was only \$446 million, leading to increased borrowing needs and debt. Despite that, on its part the Palestinian National Authority implemented several steps to mitigate the decline in donor support. For example, most notably, the Palestinian National Authority widened the tax base and enhanced the collection of tax arrears from the largest corporations.

However, despite the enacted reforms, the monetary shortage remains large, thus hindering the Palestinian National Authority from investing in education, health and infrastructure, and from repaying outstanding debts to the private sector, which is necessary to fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and private-sector investment. As a result, Palestine's economic growth rate decreased and unemployment rates increased throughout the first half of 2012.

We therefore reiterate our appeal to donor States and international organizations to fulfil their outstanding financial commitments to the Palestinian National Authority and to boost their fiscal support. Moreover, we call on the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to end its ongoing practice of withholding taxes and customs revenues due to the Palestinian people, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and conventions, in addition to being a form of collective punishment. Consequently, it affects, inter alia, the ability of the Palestinian National Authority to meet its obligations to public sector employees, as well as to the private sector.

While the decline and delays in donor support continue to aggravate the fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian National Authority, it should be made clear that it is the unjust, illegitimate Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory since 1967, including East Jerusalem, that is to blame for the existence of the fiscal crisis in the first place. The geographical fragmentation of the Palestinian land through the confiscation of lands and destruction of property in connection with the expansion of Israel's illegal colonial settlements, its continued construction of its expansionist wall throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; and the erection of a network of more than 500 military checkpoints all contribute to the deprival of the Palestinian people's access to more than 60 per cent of their land and to the normal flow of socioeconomic life, including commerce and trade. That 60 per cent of land holds the majority of the occupied

territory's water, agricultural lands, natural resources and land reserves that form the natural capital necessary to sustainable development. Again, it must be reiterated that such Israeli measures and actions remain the major impediment to sustainable economic growth, as they hamper both public and potential private investment, raise costs and hinder economic cohesion.

At the same time, while Israel, the occupying Power, continues to deny the Palestinian people sovereignty over their natural resources, it continues to unabatedly exploit those very resources. For example, more than 90 per cent of Palestinian water resources are exploited by Israel, most notably for use by the more than 500,000 illegal settlers the occupying Power has transferred to settlements throughout the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. With less than 10 per cent of those resources left for Palestinian use, average Palestinian water consumption is only 70 litres per capita per day, which is below the 100-litre threshold recommended by the World Health Organization, and much less than the average 300 litres per capita per day enjoyed in Israel. Due to that reality, and as a consequence of mobility restrictions, only 35 per cent of irrigable Palestinian land is actually irrigated, which costs the economy a staggering 110,000 jobs and 10 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The immoral and illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip poses another immense impediment to achieving sustainable Palestinian economic growth. The limited access of Palestinian entrepreneurs to competitive international markets, especially for the purpose of exporting agricultural goods, continues to discourage private-sector investment, which is a pillar of economic growth. As detailed in the latest report issued by UNCTAD, Palestinian exports declined by \$136 million in 2011, to reach slightly more than \$1 billion, while imports also declined by \$434 million, to reach \$4.2 billion. Consequently, the Palestinian trade deficit increased in 2011 to \$3.2 billion, causing a decline in GDP.

Indeed, the socioeconomic situation of the Palestinian people in Gaza remains dire, with the blockade adversely impacting the viability of all aspects of life. Economic, health, education and other societal indicators reveal the magnitude of the humanitarian suffering that has been deliberately inflicted by the occupying Power on the Palestinian civilian population, in what definitely constitutes collective punishment on the scale of a war crime.

We are thereby obliged to reiterate our call on the international community to exert every possible effort, including practical measures, to compel Israel to immediately lift its dehumanizing, unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip and the more than 1.6 million Palestinians living there.

In addition to hampering economic growth, the Israeli Government regrettably continues to impose trade restrictions that make the Palestinian economy dependent on Israel's economy. Unable to access the international marketplace, Palestinians are forced to trade with Israel, the occupying Power, which makes the State of Palestine the number-one importer of Israeli products. In 2011, trade with Israel amounted to 83 per cent of total Palestinian trade, with 83 per cent of imports originating from and through Israel and 80 per cent absorbed by Israeli markets. Such high dependence deprives the Palestinian economy of more competitive sources of imports and markets for exports, and heightens its vulnerability to the Israeli business cycle.

To conclude, the economic and humanitarian assistance of the international community is crucial but not enough. Strengthening that assistance in order to achieve its higher objectives requires serious efforts and action aimed at removing the tremendous obstacles the occupying Power places on the ground, and which continue to undermine the efforts of the Palestinian people and its leadership to fully realize the independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace with all of its neighbours, including Israel. If the international community truly aspires to see the two-State solution materialize and observe a sustained economic growth trajectory and development for the Palestinian people, it must compel the occupying Power to end all its illegal measures and actions and finally terminate its military occupation. The international community must face up to its responsibility and put pressure on Israel to abide by its legal obligations under international, humanitarian and human rights law because, after more than 45 years of occupation, it can no longer stand idly by while an entire people continue to be denied their inalienable human rights — including the right to live in freedom and dignity — and while their society is being deliberately devastated and debilitated.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The annual report of the Secretary-General on

agenda item 70 (A/67/492) reveals the growing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in many areas of the world, due to the increasing number of disasters caused by natural phenomena, climate change and continued conflicts and violence. Despite the solidarity and quick response of the international community in dealing with such disasters, the challenges facing those conducting international humanitarian action are many and big, demanding more and more resources, international effort and cooperation.

The experiences and practices of some countries in responding to humanitarian crises underscore the importance of building and strengthening national and local capacities and preparedness to deal with disasters as a key factor in reducing human losses and achieving quick recovery, as stated in the Hyogo Framework for Action (see A/CONF.206/6) and reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex). In that regard, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the necessity of integrating disaster risk-reduction strategies, capacity-building and quick, efficient response and recovery into the sustainable development plans of developing countries, as well as allocating sufficient resources to that end. The United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to integrating strategies for disaster risk reduction and strengthening local capacities into its comprehensive national development plans, whereby the Government has adopted a strategy of preventive prediction and early preparedness, establishing a national emergency, crisis and disaster management authority to ensure its implementation.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the major participants in the international partnership for development and aid to countries dealing with natural disasters, climate change and armed conflict. It also provides direct and immediate humanitarian relief assistance to such countries, as well as humanitarian initiatives and global development projects implemented by the Government in coordination with relevant United Nations bodies and other international partners.

The United Arab Emirates was rated the second highest donor of humanitarian assistance between 2009 and 2012 in relation to gross domestic product (GDP), according to the Financial Tracking Service. Our official development assistance contribution for 2011 totaled 0.22 per cent of GDP, of which 8.1 per cent was allocated to humanitarian development assistance

in the form of grants and loans for humanitarian, charitable and development programmes in more than 30 countries all over the world, based on the principles of neutrality and humanitarianism.

The United Arab Emirates is a major contributor to international efforts to maintain stability and advance development in countries emerging from conflict and vulnerable countries, through its participation in international groups involved in rebuilding the capacities of developing countries affected by armed conflict and natural disasters and supporting their economic and social institutions and infrastructure. These include the Group of Friends of Yemen, the Group of Friends of Pakistan, the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, and the international partnership to rebuild Afghanistan. The United Arab Emirates was also one of the first countries to respond to the earthquake disaster in Haiti, the humanitarian crisis in Libya and the food crisis in the Horn of Africa.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned about the deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, due to Israel's continued occupation and its policies of aggression and blockade, especially in the Gaza Strip, which has been subject for years to a siege imposed by the Israeli occupying forces, as well as to recent brutal attacks. We renew our call to the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip immediately, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its residents and end its occupation of Arab lands. We also urge donor countries to continue their aid to the Palestinian people and Government until the Israeli occupation of their land ends and their independent State is established.

The United Arab Emirates is committed to continuing to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority. It is one of the major contributors to current humanitarian assistance and development projects, as well as to the direct budget of the Palestinian Authority. Our contribution in 2011 amounted to \$34 million in support of the Palestinian people and Government and development projects. In that context, we reaffirm our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and stress the importance of its role in helping the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories. We also emphasize the importance of allowing UNRWA

workers and aid easy access to the Palestinian refugees in all areas of its operations, which will require providing it with enough financial support to enable it to continue its humanitarian and development activities in the area.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): The frequency of disasters and the scale of humanitarian need across the globe demand that we perform and coordinate better as an international community. In 2012, civilians continued to bear the brunt of armed conflict. Political solutions to conflict are obviously urgently needed, and respect for international humanitarian law is critical. We must make certain that we are united in our efforts to ensure that aid reaches those most in need and that civilians are protected from violence, wilful deprivation, exploitation and abuse. Australia is particularly concerned about the increased number and frequency of deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers — a practice that is clearly unacceptable under international law and reprehensible by all moral standards. We are also concerned about the grave consequences of attacks against medical staff and facilities and the sick and wounded, which are detailed in the *Health Care in Danger* report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Current violence and access constraints in Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan are cause for particular and serious concern. In Syria, humanitarian workers and health care facilities continue to be targets of violence. My own Minister for Foreign Affairs has advanced a proposal calling for a commitment from all sides not to target medical personnel, medical facilities or vehicles, or to block access to doctors, hospitals or emergency care. We also continue to call for immediate and unimpeded access to the delivery of humanitarian aid and life-saving assistance. We appreciate the vital work being undertaken by the United Nations and all humanitarian organizations on the ground in Syria under extremely difficult circumstances. Obviously, there is a very urgent need for the violence to end and for a political solution to the crisis to be found.

Australia is also deeply concerned about the ongoing lack of access for humanitarian agencies in the Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states of the Sudan. We call upon the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to negotiate a solution for both sides to allow for the delivery of much-needed assistance.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated to a point not seen for many years. In particular, the conflict in the eastern part of the country has triggered an upsurge in the number of displaced people. Across the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

there are now 2.4 million internally displaced people, and a staggering 5.4 million people require humanitarian assistance. Australia has been profoundly concerned about reports of widespread abuse of civilians, including murder, rape and the forced recruitment of children by armed groups. We are equally concerned by the endemic levels of sexual violence. Such acts, perpetrated with the intent of terrorizing and displacing individuals and populations, must be stopped and impunity for the perpetrators ended.

Australia is a long-time supporter of the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, and on children and armed conflict. We will continue to advocate strongly for positive outcomes for women and children during our term on the Security Council, which begins next year.

Australia welcomes the calm in Gaza, which seems to be holding after the ceasefire announced on 22 November. We urge all sides to adhere to the terms of that ceasefire. We are concerned by United Nations reports that almost 65 per cent of the people killed in the Gaza conflict were civilians, and that many more civilians were injured. We continue to support the efforts of United Nations agencies to provide basic services and support for Palestinians in need of humanitarian assistance. We must stress that recent events highlight the compelling need to find a durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated two-State settlement, and for that to happen before the window completely closes.

We must ensure that the international humanitarian system is fit for purpose. We welcome the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to address the most critical challenges in coordination, leadership and accountability. The humanitarian system must become more open and inclusive. It must reflect on its shortcomings, be accountable to beneficiaries and learn from mistakes. The system also needs to be more responsive to country and local leadership, particularly where Governments are willing and capable to help their citizens in crisis.

We see that progress is being made, and we acknowledge the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Amos in particular in achieving that progress, but we believe that reform risks stalling if the commitments made by the principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee do not translate into real results in the field. Humanitarian agencies need to demonstrate how they are rolling out the Transformative Agenda reforms throughout all humanitarian responses. We encourage further attention to be paid to what the Transformative Agenda means

for complex and protracted crises, where leadership, accountability and coordination are so critical. Australia expects its humanitarian partners to fully support the Transformative Agenda and will hold them accountable for implementing the reforms needed.

The food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel region of West Africa demonstrates the importance of investing in longer-term solutions that help communities to anticipate, respond to and recover from disasters. Australia welcomes the steps the international community is taking to implement humanitarian action that builds resilience and preparedness. We welcome the introduction of a three-year consolidated appeal in Somalia. A multi-year appeal encourages longer-term vision in a context where humanitarian need will persist for some time. It also encourages a stronger focus on resilience programming. But we cannot build resilience through humanitarian programmes alone. We encourage further coordination between humanitarian and development agencies and strong leadership from the United Nations to ensure such coordination is successful.

Flexible funding from donors is key to integrating disaster risk reduction response, recovery and resilience efforts. Australia's approach to humanitarian and development funding is flexible, and we seek to take the long-term view. Our funding to disaster risk reduction, for instance, comes from both our humanitarian and development programmes, and at 2.3 per cent of our total official development assistance, it is more than double the 1 per cent target recommended by the Global Platform For Disaster Risk Reduction.

We fund early recovery because we know it is essential to ensuring a smooth transition to longer-term development. It is a very simple linear equation. We continue to invest in humanitarian action through multi-year, multi-million dollar partnerships with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the ICRC.

In concluding, we can only reiterate that, as 2012 draws to a close, it is evident that stronger action is needed to protect civilians. We urge all fellow Member States to abide by international law, including international humanitarian law, and relevant resolutions designed to afford civilians safety from conflict, violence and wilful deprivation. We urge a special focus on those most vulnerable — people with disabilities, women and children — and we urge redoubled efforts to make certain that the reforms promised by the Transformative Agenda are actually implemented, in support of national leadership, to ensure effective and

timely humanitarian response. We must remind ourselves every single day that millions of people in crisis are relying on us all to support them and to save them.

Mr. Bonser (Canada) (*spoke in French*): People continue to suffer needlessly in far too many contexts. The ongoing humanitarian crises in Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sahel, the Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Afghanistan highlight the continued need for effective international humanitarian responses. In the face of increasing humanitarian needs and shrinking financial resources, the United Nations must ensure that it is working as effectively and strategically as possible so that real results can be achieved for those most in need.

Progress has been made in that regard. Under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, genuine efforts are being undertaken to improve humanitarian leadership, accountability and coordination. However, much work remains to be done, and we call on the Coordinator to continue her effective leadership to ensure that those reforms lead to substantial improvements in how the international humanitarian system responds to humanitarian crises.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and by the forced displacement of 650,000 civilians since April. We unequivocally condemn the acts perpetrated by the rebel group Mouvement du 23 mars. We continue to call for all parties to respect human rights and to allow safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance.

We remain extremely concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria and its impact on neighbouring countries and the overall stability of the region. We recognize the immense pressure that the influx of refugees is placing on refugee host countries and communities. We commend the generosity of neighbouring States — Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq — that have welcomed refugees fleeing the violence in Syria. Their generosity is born from a genuine spirit of humanitarianism.

Canada applauds the courageous efforts of humanitarian actors in Syria and in other humanitarian emergencies around the world who place their own lives at risk in order to provide life-saving assistance to those affected by crisis. We express our deepest gratitude and sincere condolences to the families, friends and

organizations of those who have given their lives in order to save others. We call upon the Government of Syria to allow humanitarian actors, including health care providers, full and safe access to those affected by the violence and to remove obstacles to the delivery of aid. The people of Syria must be safe from oppression and attacks. Civilians denied the necessities of life require humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. We urge all parties to the conflict to fully respect their obligations, especially their obligation to take constant care to spare the civilian population from the effects of hostilities.

While Syria continues to capture our collective attention, there are less visible crises that must not be forgotten. The humanitarian situations in the Horn of Africa, the Central African Republic, Yemen, Colombia, Haiti and elsewhere all require our continued engagement and resolve. That is equally true for the protection needs of women and girls, who continue to be victims of sexual violence such as rape as a weapon of war; members of vulnerable religious minorities who are persecuted for their beliefs; and lesbians and gay populations, who face violence for their orientation. Political will and commitment are required in order to bring attention and meaningful solutions to each of those severe and protracted humanitarian crises.

Canada remains committed to working with a range of actors, including United Nations humanitarian agencies, member States, the Red Cross Movement, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to strengthen the humanitarian response system and to create an enabling environment for humanitarian actors to save lives and alleviate human suffering.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country, Syria, is bleeding. The people of Syria are the first victims of this blood that has continually been shed. As I address the Assembly today, at this very moment there has been an explosion, a martyr has been buried, a casualty is in pain or a family has been displaced. I regret having to relay the painful news that took place this morning. There was a terrorist explosion this morning in front of an elementary school in the city of Katana, south-west of Damascus, that killed dozens of children and their families. Yesterday, eight other terrorist explosions hit other regions near Damascus, also causing dozens of deaths.

I will not dwell from this rostrum on the horror of those terrorist events and all those behind them, be they States or armed groups. I will simply note the intensely

negative impact of such terrorist acts on the daily life of our people, in particular the attacks on power plants and the theft or incineration of grain stores and fuel. Bombing of gas lines, hospitals and schools are all aimed at destabilizing society and at sowing chaos and fear and terrorizing the civilian population.

Allow me, Sir, to reiterate Syria's firm belief in the importance of coordinating humanitarian assistance aimed at providing affected citizens with aid in such emergency situations. In that regard, I would evoke resolution 46/186 (1991), which established the mandate of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and which deserves our praise. I would like to reaffirm Syria's full readiness to cooperate with all those who are working inside Syria in accordance with the obligations of that mandate and with the principles expressed by that resolution to ensure the coordination of humanitarian aid provided by agencies of the United Nations in emergency situations, especially those guidelines that are related to strict respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity and non-interference in the internal affairs of a State, in accordance, of course, with the Charter of the United Nations.

Throughout this painful crisis, the Government of Syria has repeatedly offered to provide immediate aid and assistance to the population in accordance with its national obligations and responsibilities under international law. In that regard, a monitoring committee has been established to ensure close attention to humanitarian conditions among the civilian population, including the provision of food, health services, shelter and other services or compensation for damage caused by armed terrorist groups. Our Government has also helped to restore infrastructure in order to resume providing health and social services. We have also formed a high-level committee on relief aid to coordinate the provision of assistance to those affected. As a result of the Government's enormous efforts under extremely difficult circumstances, approximately 547 temporary shelters have been opened, using all available Government buildings.

In addition to the national effort, the Government of Syria has coordinated its efforts with OCHA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Syrian Government has offered to facilitate all efforts to help those affected throughout the country to gain access to humanitarian assistance.

We have also completed our amended plan to respond to humanitarian needs inside Syria. The Government has issued licenses to more than 80 non-governmental organizations to participate in United Nations response efforts, and continues to provide a wide variety of facilities to humanitarian aid workers. It has also issued licenses to OCHA to perform field visits in many areas inside Syria, without delay.

As all are aware, my country, Syria, participated constructively in six meetings of the Syria Humanitarian Forum in Geneva. However, the efforts of the Government regarding humanitarian aid face a number extremely negative obstacles, including the continued funding, arming and protection of armed terrorist groups in Syria by countries known to support terrorism in my country. In that vein, Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, has said that the situation in Syria is exceptional because of the intense battles raging throughout the country, and also because of the involvement of some regional and international powers inside the country.

It is truly ironic that the Security Council has been prevented from issuing six press releases, despite the fact that they condemned terrorist bombings perpetrated by the so-called Jabhat al-Nusra, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida that claims to have carried out approximately 600 attacks since October 2011, including more than 40 suicide attacks, as well as other operations in which it has used small weapons and explosive devices in central urban centres, including the capital, Damascus, and the cities of Hama, Aleppo, Dar'a, Homs, Idlib and Dayr al-Zawr. Those attacks have killed many innocent Syrians. One of the very States involved in obstructing the six Security Council press releases has since added that same terrorist organization to its national list of terrorist organizations.

From the very start of the crisis, we have worked to draw the attention of Member States to the presence of armed terrorists interfering in our internal affairs. However, we ran up against a wall of political pride and ignorance of geopolitical conditions, and large-scale media fabrications that have led many top officials of the Organization to deny reality and to formulate mistaken conclusions regarding developments in the Syrian crisis. As a result, the United Nations, starting with the Secretary-General and his top aides, including his Special Envoys and Representatives, have waited more than a year to finally and timidly acknowledge the presence of what they call a "third element". That

is a polite euphemism for armed terrorist groups. It took them another six months to progress from admitting the presence of a third element in the crisis to acknowledging the presence of armed groups, and three more months, while the Syrian people continued to shed blood, before they admitted the presence of terrorist organizations related to Al-Qaida. In other words, the Syrian people suffered from terrorism for 21 months while they waited for the United Nations and its Member States to heed their cries of agony and their tears caused by the actions of organized terrorist entities supported by foreign and, sadly, Arab, regional and international forces, as was clear from the start.

The Syrian Government has fully cooperated with the humanitarian response plan that it signed with OCHA. Regrettably, the plan has been poorly funded, which has obstructed the joint efforts to implement it and meet humanitarian needs. While the Syrian Government plays the primary role in meeting the basic needs of its citizens, pledges made by donors in several international forums and through the media have not been fulfilled. Proof of that can be found in the reports and statements of OCHA. The most recent of these, dated 10 December, indicates that only half of the necessary funding of the humanitarian response inside Syria has been received so far, while only 35 per cent of the funding necessary to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees has been supplied so far. It also notes that the World Food Programme has had to decrease the rations it distributes because of the lack of funding, leading to slow implementation and the inability to meet the minimum humanitarian requirements of those affected by current events, and raising doubts about the sincerity of expressions of concern for Syrian citizens made by some countries.

Moreover, the continued imposition by some hegemonic States and regional groups of packages of unilateral, coercive economic measures outside the framework of international legitimacy has greatly contributed to the deterioration of the living conditions of Syrian citizens. It has limited the ability to provide them with basic services and obstructed efforts to import medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and the spare parts needed to ensure the continued operation and maintenance of public facilities. Furthermore, these packages of unilateral coercive economic measures have led, inter alia, to increases in foreign currency exchange rates, resulting in reduced purchasing power for the Syrian lira and rising inflation, which in turn has made it harder to import goods, fund investment projects

and has created shortages in financial resources. This has also contributed to increased unemployment and poverty rates.

What is important here is that those who are imposing these coercive measures with one hand claim to offer humanitarian aid with the other. They are a symbol of political hypocrisy and deception. The States that are imposing these coercive measures want to transform the people of Syria from a productive and giving nation — who in recent years achieved economic growth and a renaissance that brought them food self-sufficiency and allowed them to export much of their surplus to many parts of the world — into a people surviving on aid.

The Government of Syria has called on those of its people who have been forced by difficult circumstances to leave the country for neighbouring States to return to their homes to live in dignity in their homeland, safe from the exploitation of terrorist organizations and those who support them, and from falling into the hands of those who practice humanitarian blackmail. The Syrian Government has allocated aid and assistance to all whose houses have been damaged in order to enable them to rebuild and go on with their lives in a dignified manner in their homeland. That is a civic right that the Government is obliged to uphold.

In that regard, I note that the disgusting manipulation of many Syrian refugees by some parties is barbaric and an insult to the integrity and dignity of the Syrian people. Some States are reporting growing numbers of Syrian refugees in their territories; meanwhile, the High Commissioner for Refugees, whom we thank, submitted a report yesterday, 12 December, noting that only 40 per cent of Syrian refugees in the region are living in camps, while the majority live mainly in rented residences or with host families. There is no need to clarify that the remaining 60 per cent of Syrians who were forced by the crisis to leave their homeland are living in hotels, spending Syrian money that is supporting the economies of the host States. In any case, and whatever the efforts being made by States hosting Syrian citizens, we thank them. But we urge and call on them to address this humanitarian issue in an objective manner, with integrity and a clear conscience, since the profits they are making by hosting Syrian refugees and citizens are much greater than the costs they claim to be carrying because of the presence of some refugee camps.

In conclusion, on behalf of my Government, I would like to stress that the humanitarian crisis in Syria cannot be resolved by playing the political blame games that some Member States are indulging in so as to settle old or new scores. It cannot be resolved by fanning the flames of ethnic and religious discord or by funding and protecting armed terrorists and encouraging them to perpetrate massacres, bombings and attacks against Syrian citizens. The solution to the crisis in Syria can be achieved through adherence to the principle of offering humanitarian assistance — particularly under resolution 46/182 — and a demonstration of political will on the part of donor States and other bodies to honour their pledges and end policies imposing unilateral, coercive economic measures that chiefly affect and severely harm the Syrian people.

That is what we have to say on the humanitarian level. As for the political level, Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi is making welcome efforts in that area, and his work enjoys international consensus. All the Syrian people ask of the so-called international community is that it support the efforts of Mr. Brahimi. What they do not want is for certain parties to help him publicly while secretly undermining his work. We seek honest and objective help for our country, our Government, our people and the opposition so that we can reach the shores of safety.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand): Thailand aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Cambodia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports submitted under this agenda item. We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to the relevant United Nations agencies, particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, for their untiring efforts throughout the past year in coordinating humanitarian and disaster relief assistance and their ongoing reform efforts aimed at achieving more effective humanitarian response and relief.

As is evident to all of us and highlighted in the reports of the Secretary-General again this year, humanitarian crises continue to be among the biggest challenges of our time. We are witnessing increases

in the frequency, scale and intensity of disasters, both natural and man-made. Thailand will continue to work with the international community in bringing relief and hope to those in need of assistance. In providing that assistance, we abide by the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence. We believe that national efforts within individual States' territories are of primary importance. We are also of the view that appropriate, adequate and timely regional and international humanitarian responses are essential to support such national efforts. Thailand therefore remains committed to enhancing international partnership in this field.

For decades, Thailand has contributed to global efforts in humanitarian and disaster relief. We are proud to host the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in Bangkok. For the past 25 years, the Centre has advocated and promoted disaster risk reduction in the region, while advocating closer cooperation with other regional organizations. In our region of South-East Asia, Thailand has served since March as the Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management. We have worked closely with our fellow ASEAN member States towards better-prepared and more coordinated regional mechanisms for humanitarian response and disaster management in order to ensure the effective, adequate and timely mobilization of assistance.

Thailand looks forward to hosting the Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit next year. The Summit will provide the opportunity to share experiences and best practices in managing water-related disasters such as flooding, drought and rising sea levels. Since Thailand's unprecedented floods last year, the Royal Thai Government has implemented a new water-management and flood-prevention system. We will continue to invest in developing a comprehensive system for a sustainable solution. We also stand ready to share our experiences with any international partners who wish to work with us.

Also next year, Thailand will co-host, together with the Republic of Korea, the third ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise to increase the civil-military coordination of Forum participants in response to disasters. In 2014, Thailand will host the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, at which a regional post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework for the region will be the main topic of discussion.

Allow me now to share some thoughts on the issues that we believe are important to advancing our common efforts in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. First, capacity-building is key to any success. Humanitarian crises hit developing countries hardest, especially affecting civilians in areas of conflict and vulnerable groups. In such cases, what is needed most is not only humanitarian assistance but also capacity-building at all levels — local, national, regional and international.

Capacity-building, in our view, encompasses many dimensions, from the sharing of expertise and best practices to technical assistance, and from infrastructure development to technology transfer. Capacity-building should begin at the grass-roots level. In implementing our Strategic National Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2010-2014, the Royal Thai Government has focused on capacity-building for local communities, matching their specific local needs while mobilizing resources from all sectors and contributions from all stakeholders. We fully support a resilience approach, especially for the most vulnerable, as outlined by the Secretary-General in his report in document A/67/363.

Our second observation is that, from our own experience and that of others, Thailand believes that the impact of natural disasters, including loss of life and livelihood, can be significantly reduced through the development of early-warning mechanisms, preparedness, emergency response and relief capacities. From prevention to disaster risk reduction, there must be a holistic approach and an integrated disaster management system. Both require strong regional and international partnerships. Thailand therefore attaches great importance to widening and deepening of such international cooperation. We therefore wholeheartedly agree with the focus the Secretary-General places, in his report in document A/67/89, on the need to improve data collection, analysis and information-sharing in order to ensure effective humanitarian responses.

Our third point is that equitable, predictable and flexible funding for humanitarian assistance is another important tool that would help ensure timely and cost-effective humanitarian delivery. Adequate funding should be made possible through enhanced partnerships and strengthened financial mechanisms. Thailand fully supports the Central Emergency Response Fund, and we have therefore decided to increase our contribution to the Fund. We also welcome the progress made so far in the implementation of the management response plan

following the five-year evaluation, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report in document A/67/361.

Thailand has steadfastly supported the Tsunami Regional Trust Fund since its establishment in 2005. It has now been renamed the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia. We hope that the international community will increase voluntary contributions to the Fund.

Our fourth point is that disasters can set back hard-gained development. With our experience and efforts in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of people-centred development policies, we are committed to working with our international partners on our post-2015 development agenda. Likewise, we would like to encourage Member States to include the adverse impacts of disasters in their national sustainable development plans.

My fifth and final point is that Thailand welcomes the cooperation and partnership of international organizations to promote women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction. Two months ago, in October, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Margareta Wahlström, visited Thailand. There, she honoured the Prime Minister as a leading female figure in disaster management for her leadership in responding to Thailand's severe flooding last year, as well as for her commitment to gender equality. While in Bangkok, on 13 October Ms. Wahlström also attended this year's event to observe the International Day for Disaster Reduction, under the theme "Women and Girls — the (In)Visible Force of Resilience". It is our fervent hope that the constructive role played by women and girls in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief shall continue to be recognized and further enhanced.

Our consideration of agenda item 70 and the related draft resolutions provides yet another opportunity to collectively reflect not only on our ongoing efforts in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, but also on the need for a sharing of the burdens of humanitarian crises and disasters. Those burdens need to be shared through stronger coordination and closer partnership among the States Members of the United Nations and with other humanitarian actors, including the private sector and civil society.

Let me conclude by expressing Thailand's deepest gratitude to all the men and women on the ground, within and outside the United Nations system, who work tirelessly to provide necessary humanitarian and disaster relief assistance around the world. As much as we value the lives of people affected by humanitarian crises and disasters, the safety and security of emergency medical teams, rapid first responders and search and rescue personnel, to name but a few, must be adequately addressed and ensured.

Ms. Saran (United States of America): The United States wishes to reaffirm its strong support for the international humanitarian system. We remain deeply committed to working with the United Nations, its Member States and other humanitarian actors to protect and assist vulnerable individuals caught up in conflict or affected by natural disasters. During our 2012 fiscal year, we provided over \$4 billion in humanitarian assistance to save lives and reduce suffering.

But our commitment goes well beyond our significant financial contributions. The United States continues to play a leading role in the development and promotion of global humanitarian policies, principles and standards that strengthen the international humanitarian system, and we engage robustly and constructively with a range of partners to create conditions in countries around the world in which aid can be delivered in a timely and effective manner to those most in need.

The Secretary-General's latest report on humanitarian trends and challenges (A/67/89) notes that at least 51 million people in 16 countries required humanitarian assistance during the past year. In 2012, humanitarian crises in all corners of the world tested the ability of the United Nations system to provide timely and effective assistance to individuals, families and communities struggling to overcome events beyond their control.

Together, we must redouble our efforts to improve the capabilities and responsiveness of the international humanitarian system. In particular, we must strive to enhance the United Nations leadership in the field, broaden and strengthen coordination mechanisms, and heighten accountability to the people we seek to serve. That is why the United States strongly supports the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda. We urge United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors to continue to work on and

implement the various elements of the Transformative Agenda so that together we can help to make the system more coherent, coordinated and effective.

We are particularly pleased with some of the progress that has been made on strengthening leadership. As we have noted before, no international response involving the United Nations can be successful without top-notch leadership within the United Nations system. We welcome the Emergency Relief Coordinator's efforts in that regard, and note that the United Nations has increasingly put forward candidates with strong humanitarian experience, although room for improvement remains. We look to United Nations agencies to demonstrate leadership by doing more to put forward their best humanitarian officers to serve as resident and humanitarian coordinators for the United Nations system. Specifically, we continue to strongly urge well-established United Nations agencies to provide as many of their high-performing senior managers as possible as candidates for the humanitarian and resident coordinator pools.

Improved coordination at all levels is also essential. As the Secretary-General notes, that requires focus on building new partnerships of all kinds for more effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. We applaud the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in that regard. The United States is also committed to helping to build an inclusive system that is responsive to new actors and different approaches. Those new lines of communication and partnership are essential to meeting such challenges as access, resource limitations and capacity issues. We welcome opportunities to share information and expertise with a wide range of stakeholders to help advance our multilateral approach to humanitarian assistance.

Over the past several years, we have seen wider agreement among United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, donors, disaster-affected countries and others on the need for greater accountability when it comes to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. One key element of more rigorous accountability is the establishment of policies and action plans that improve the quality of data and exchange of information. The United States supports the Secretary-General's recommendation in that regard, and is committed to working with our partners to develop and adhere to common international standards for the exchange of data. Such efforts will help to

facilitate better preparedness and a more effective response to emergencies.

As we look back at the humanitarian response over the past year, we are deeply troubled by continuing impediments that limit or block access by humanitarian workers to vulnerable populations, particularly those in situations of conflict. The United States also remains gravely concerned for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We continue to see cowardly and unjustifiable attacks against those delivering humanitarian assistance. We strongly urge that timely humanitarian access be provided to disaster-stricken populations and that attacks against humanitarian workers cease. This year, we would also like to highlight the troubling reality of deliberate attacks against medical personnel and facilities. Those despicable attacks are unacceptable and remind us that efforts need to be redoubled to promote the protection of the medical mission.

Finally, the United States would like to reaffirm its continuing support for the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity. Adherence to those core principles provides a strong foundation for the rapid and effective delivery of assistance that saves lives and reduces suffering during times of crisis. We urge the United Nations to continue its efforts to promote a principled and needs-based approach to humanitarian assistance for the benefit of all those who find themselves in need of aid in times of conflict or when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Nofukuka (South Africa): First, let me thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/67/89) on the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance.

My delegation notes with appreciation the achievements made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in furtherance of strengthening the coordination of the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Amos. We have also noted the progress made in responding to humanitarian challenges, but of course there is always room for further improvement, especially in the area of gender-sensitive response in taking care of the needs of women, girls and vulnerable groups in general. OCHA could be more effective if Member States were to continue their provision of predictable funds to support

the humanitarian response operations of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

South Africa recognizes with concern an increase in humanitarian vulnerability as a result of both sudden-onset natural disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies. Since developing countries, especially in Africa, bear the brunt of those scourges, South Africa will continue to facilitate and contribute to humanitarian interventions to alleviate human suffering and to protect the victims of natural disasters and conflict.

Regarding disaster risk reduction, we urge the international community to support developing countries and to strengthen their national capacities for disaster relief and reduction, as well as to improve their preparedness to provide effective responses when those humanitarian emergencies strike. More investment in building early-warning systems and the resilience of communities through disaster risk reduction should be prioritized. The Hyogo Framework for Action, as an international strategy agreed to by Member States, remains a critical guide to action. To that end, the transfer of disaster relief and reduction technologies and expertise to developing countries remains of paramount importance.

The effects of climate change have a long-term negative impact and social and economic consequences in developing countries. In that regard, measures need to be taken to assist developing countries in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

The Sahel region of West Africa remains a challenge to the international humanitarian community, as millions of people there are in need of assistance due to droughts, poverty and other situations. We express our appreciation and gratitude to the international community for its response, and urge it to continue cooperating with the countries in that region. OCHA can assist the African Union in establishing its humanitarian resource allocation mechanism to mobilize and manage resources for the region.

The continuing targeted threats and violent attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities, including medical personnel around the world, remain of concern to my delegation. We believe that it is the responsibility of States to provide unhindered access for humanitarian personnel and relief consignments to reach vulnerable populations. A critical factor in providing such an enabling environment is ensuring

the safety and security of humanitarian emergency personnel, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

In conclusion, my delegation is of the view that the international humanitarian community can enhance our efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in a manner that is faster, more predictable and well coordinated to eventually alleviate the suffering of millions of people affected by humanitarian emergencies. Cooperation and solidarity among the nations of the world in this regard must be preserved and promoted at all times.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his reports submitted under agenda item 70.

For the international humanitarian community, the year 2012, which shall soon come to an end, has been far from tranquil; incessant natural disasters and regional conflicts, which are often interconnected, have posed daunting challenges to global humanitarian response capabilities and relief resources, and seriously hampered the socioeconomic development of the countries concerned. The international community should take immediate action and foster close cooperation so as to respond to the increasingly grave situation through concrete measures. In that regard, China wishes to further highlight the following points.

First, any humanitarian relief operation must be premised on the fundamental principles set out in resolution 46/182. In providing humanitarian relief, it is imperative to abide by the fundamental humanitarian principles of the United Nations; respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of recipient countries; comply with international law and the laws of the host countries; avoid politicizing humanitarian issues; and ensure the non-militarization of humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, capacity-building must be effectively strengthened as an essential step to relieve the pressure exerted by humanitarian needs. As a firm supporter of and advocate for the strengthening of capacity-building in the humanitarian and development areas, China believes that the most important task at the moment is to take concrete and effective measures to address the specific needs of different countries, including increased investment, transfer of technology and expertise to developing countries, and enhanced infrastructure-building to help countries affected

by disasters, developing countries in particular, to strengthen capacity-building comprehensively. Humanitarian needs will thereby be lessened, root causes for the deterioration of situations will be addressed, and the people affected by disasters will really feel the benefit of capacity-building.

Thirdly, building partnerships is an important way to enhance cooperation and integrate resources. With ever-growing humanitarian needs, humanitarian relief actors have multiplied, which has made the establishment of partnerships all the more important. China believes that three issues merit our attention in building effective partnerships. First, the leading role of affected countries should be upheld, and any form of partnership must be built on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and respect for the will of the Governments of the countries affected. Secondly, well-functioning and effective participation and coordination mechanisms should be put in place to encourage effective cooperation and communication among humanitarian actors in order to ensure the maximum utilization of resources and enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian relief. Thirdly, the existing mechanisms and resources of the United Nations should be fully utilized in playing a coordinating and pivotal role in partnership-building.

Fourthly, the efficient functioning of the United Nations humanitarian system is an important guarantee of effective humanitarian relief. Over the past two years, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Amos, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has played an irreplaceable role in appealing for donations and coordinating various actors. China commends its work and hopes that the United Nations humanitarian system will further improve its mechanisms, intensify the reform of its humanitarian activities, increase the participation of Member States, improve management and enhance efficiency so that the United Nations may play a greater role in international humanitarian affairs.

As a developing country prone to natural disasters, China knows all too well the suffering disasters inflict on the people affected. The Chinese Government therefore attaches great importance to international cooperation in the humanitarian field, actively participates in multilateral and bilateral humanitarian assistance, and shares with other developing countries its experience in and technologies for coping with natural disasters. Since the beginning of the year, China has provided food assistance to Chad and other countries in the Sahel

region of Africa, and humanitarian assistance to Cuba and Syria, among others. China will continue to follow closely the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region, and contribute within its means to the international humanitarian endeavour.

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The recent increasing frequency of natural disasters, coupled with the ongoing occurrence of man-made catastrophes and armed conflicts, confirm the relevance of United Nations humanitarian assistance. The legal framework regulating United Nations activities in the humanitarian sphere remains resolution 46/182 and subsequent decisions of the Assembly. Russia actively supports unwavering compliance with the principles established in the Assembly's resolutions to govern the provision of humanitarian assistance. Such compliance is the only way to ensure their effectiveness and the confidence of Member States in the United Nations humanitarian sector as a reliable and efficient mechanism for coordinating humanitarian assistance.

The manipulation of humanitarian issues in order to achieve political objectives is unacceptable, especially in times of armed conflict. It is contradictory to the principles of humanity, partiality, neutrality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance, and is not conducive to mitigating the suffering of populations. It only makes matters worse.

We have studied with interest the proposals of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to enhance the effectiveness of the humanitarian response. We agree that relevant measures should be geared towards strengthening coordination, improving accountability and bolstering civilian leadership. In that regard, we stress the leading role of the Governments of affected States in initiating, organizing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance within national territories.

The role of the international community is to complement the efforts of Governments in dealing with emergency situations. In that respect, it is important to strengthen the close interaction between the United Nations humanitarian structures and Member States, which also helps to boost confidence in the Organization's humanitarian work. In our opinion, the key to enhancing the effectiveness of the response is to strengthen humanitarian capacities, above all at the national and local levels. In that respect, we support the work of the United Nations system to improve national disaster risk reduction mechanisms

and instruments, including by ensuring humanitarian preparedness and developing early-warning systems and emergency responses to natural disasters and man-made catastrophes.

Russia implements comprehensive measures to prevent and respond to emergency situations. In 2008, a national crisis management centre was created within the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Affairs for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters. We would like to see such centres in various countries come together in a single global network in order to ensure the rapid exchange of information on natural risks and disasters and the coordination of the activities of all managing bodies and authorities carrying out humanitarian activities in disaster zones throughout the world.

Russia attaches great importance to information resource management when planning a humanitarian response. We believe that a special role could be played in that regard by partnerships among the various actors in humanitarian activities. In that context, we call on resident coordinators and/or humanitarian coordinators to work more closely with the Governments of the countries concerned to that end, on the understanding that the country hosting humanitarian workers is responsible for ensuring their protection. We believe that the exchange of information between Governments and the leaders of humanitarian operations genuinely contributes to bolstering the security of personnel and humanitarian missions.

The use of military resources in contemporary United Nations emergency response operations is becoming a reality. However, the practice of providing humanitarian assistance was intentionally conceived as a purely civilian activity, and we believe it necessary to preserve its civilian nature. We are in favour of using military resources only as a last resort. The participation of troops in such operations should be in line with the principle of independence, while overall coordination should remain with the national civilian structure and the United Nations, above all the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Our fundamental position is in support of the role of OCHA in ensuring that the civilian nature of humanitarian assistance is maintained and carried out on the basis of the guiding principles laid out in the annex to the founding resolution 46/182.

Ms. Chun (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea would like to express its sincere appreciation to

the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on humanitarian assistance. I would also like to reiterate the Korean Government's support for the dedicated work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which plays a key role in coordinating international humanitarian assistance.

The increase in the frequency and severity of disasters, conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies, in particular with the impact of climate change, has increased the need for closer coordination and collaboration among development and humanitarian actors. My delegation believes that it is critical that the United Nations play a leading role in the coordinating process. The United Nations should effectively introduce the existing coordination mechanisms to new players and, at the same time, actively promote humanitarian principles and codes among humanitarian actors.

As a strong supporter of the United Nations efforts to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance, Korea's humanitarian activities are carried out in partnership with the United Nations and other international agencies. In addition to increasing collaboration with the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Korea has participated in various donor support groups and committed to strengthening partnerships with humanitarian assistance-related United Nations bodies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

If the international community is to adequately respond to the increasing humanitarian needs, it is essential to build stronger partnerships at the global, regional and national levels. Stronger partnerships enable the humanitarian actors to gain access to areas and people that would otherwise be difficult to reach. This also has a positive impact as local populations become more engaged in projects on the ground as partners.

My delegation would like to stress that the United Nations needs to take a greater role in leadership to facilitate the engagement of local partners by clarifying the functions of local non-governmental organizations and identifying their comparative advantages. We encourage the United Nations to provide smaller national organizations with financial support by simplifying the procedures for granting access to pooled funds, such as CERF and CAP, and by strengthening the capacities of national staff.

The Republic of Korea will continue its efforts to expand its partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by actively sharing information and providing NGOs with the financial support they need for their projects to respond to humanitarian emergencies. The Korean Government is making efforts to reduce the administrative burden of NGOs by streamlining the reporting process, as well as by providing multi-year funding to enhance the flexibility and predictability of funding.

In order to ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, we should create a more coordinated platform to resolve issues of overlapping and gaps in delivery between humanitarian and development-related agencies. The importance of establishing a link between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation needs to be more widely understood. We need to take a cluster approach to ensure an integrated response among humanitarian and development actors based on the comparative advantages of lead agencies.

As part of Korea's commitment towards ensuring a coordinated approach between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, the Korean Government plans to provide Afghanistan next year with up to \$100 million in assistance, half of which will be executed through United Nations development agencies and other actors working for the economic and social development of Afghanistan.

In making the best use of resources for humanitarian assistance, well-informed decision-making based on evidence from reliable data is essential. Making basic data available to humanitarian partners and to the public will ultimately strengthen efficient and effective coordination and response. This will go a long way towards enhancing transparency and accountability. The Republic of Korea strongly supports data-driven decision-making and welcomes the international community's effort to develop common standards in the field of data collection and analysis.

Efforts to strengthen disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness will prove to be just as important as responding to emerging crises. Disasters cause more damage in developing than in developed countries, thereby exacerbating poverty. Since being prepared is cost-effective and reduces the impacts on affected people and their livelihoods, we need to continue our efforts to bolster preparedness capabilities in disaster-prone countries.

Given the varying level of preparedness of different actors, a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach is essential for better preparedness. In particular, in order to avoid international fragmentation in efforts directed towards disaster reduction, it is necessary to strengthen global coordination between humanitarian agencies and development cooperation agencies. Furthermore, we need to continue our efforts to make disaster preparedness and disaster reduction an important topic of discussion within the international community. By actively participating in the post-Millennium Development Goals discussions, we should make disaster risk reduction one of our major development goals after 2015.

The Republic of Korea also believes that regional cooperation mechanisms should be fully integrated with local responses to disasters. Korea has been actively participating in regional forums on disaster preparedness. In particular, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has been instrumental in leading the discussions on regional cooperation and in developing guidelines and systems for disaster management cooperation at the regional level. The Republic of Korea will therefore gladly co-host the 2013 ARF Disaster Relief Exercise with the Kingdom of Thailand in May 2013, as the representative of Thailand mentioned earlier. The Exercise will highlight civilian-military coordination and the active involvement of regional and global organizations in disaster relief. I believe that the Exercise will make a substantial contribution to strengthening the multinational disaster relief capacity of the Asia-Pacific region.

In closing, the Korean Government once again expresses its appreciation for the unrelenting efforts of OCHA to save lives and alleviate human suffering, and would like to reaffirm our strong support for its work. We will, as always, continue to strengthen our cooperation with OCHA, all Member States and other humanitarian partners, and stand ready to do our part in providing humanitarian assistance to the countries affected by disasters and conflicts.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent reports. We endorse his analysis of the challenges facing humanitarian action, which emphasizes the need to strengthen the leadership, coordination and accountability of the international humanitarian response. He can count on Switzerland's full support for his recommendations.

The United Nations humanitarian response system lies at the heart of all efforts to coordinate humanitarian action based on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. However, the context in which such action is needed changes continuously. The response must be able to adapt to new challenges in order to be more effective and meet the needs of crisis-affected populations. To this end, institutional and operational changes must be made, in particular on three specific points that I would like to address in this debate.

First, there is a need for a more inclusive system and a broadening of partnerships. Strengthened collaboration with regional and local structures is essential to enabling affected States to be better prepared for risks related to disasters and crises. The consequences of these risks have indeed shown the need to make the communities concerned more resilient so that they can be at least somewhat less dependent on emergency aid. In order to break the vicious circle of chronic humanitarian aid, better coordination is needed, especially between humanitarian and development actors. The links among development, early recovery, risk reduction, resilience, preparedness and prevention are well known and equally relevant to humanitarian aid and development.

At the same time, the development of new partnerships with non-traditional donor Governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector will strengthen and complement the United Nations humanitarian system. Flexible cooperation mechanisms must be put in place in the framework of these new partnerships in order to ensure that all the actors involved are on the same page. Such mechanisms must be based on a transparent sharing of information and appropriate communication. Each stakeholder has its own comparative advantage in terms of skills, and such complementarity should be exploited in a spirit of trust, respect and solidarity.

Secondly, Switzerland would like to highlight the recommendations made in the Transformative Agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, mentioned in the Secretary-General's reports. By focusing primarily on strengthening leadership, coordination and accountability to the affected populations, this instrument aims to improve collective response efforts and to strengthen the impact of humanitarian aid, in particular through better strategic planning. The Transformative Agenda, which was adopted a year ago, should now be considered the basis on which

these objectives can be achieved, enabling United Nations agencies to fulfil their mission on behalf of the affected populations in the spirit of delivering as one. We therefore call on those agencies to strengthen their collective commitment to this process and to implement on the ground the intentions that have been declared at the global level.

Thirdly and finally, Switzerland recall that, if humanitarian actors are to be able to fulfil their mission to save human lives, they must have rapid and unimpeded access to the victims of crises. Access to populations in need is an indispensable prerequisite for effective humanitarian action and the primary responsibility of affected States. Full, rapid and unimpeded access is essential to the delivery of goods and personnel to where they are needed, the distribution of humanitarian goods and, above all, the provision of health services. It enables the affected populations to benefit fully from the assistance and services made available to them.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports, which provide a sound framework for further deliberation on the issue of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos and her team for their leadership and unwavering efforts in coordinating the provision of humanitarian assistance to those who need it most.

Malaysia commends the Secretary-General's action agenda, which provides a five-year timeline for humanitarian organizations to agree on and implement measures to increase their effectiveness and transparency. We also support the Transformative Agenda process led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for improving the quality of leadership, strategic planning, accountability and coordination mechanisms in humanitarian response. Indeed, the current challenges around the world of increased climate-related natural disasters, conflicts and complex emergencies require dynamic adjustments and urgent attention on the part of the United Nations and its Member States.

It has been more than 20 years since resolution 46/182 was adopted, setting a fundamental structure for the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance. However, as humanitarian

needs evolve over time, the current system has not adapted quickly and flexibly enough to meet new realities. There is thus a need to build a more inclusive global humanitarian system, with stronger relationships at the global, regional and national levels.

Malaysia's involvement in humanitarian and disaster relief assistance is based on a three-pronged approach: Government-to-Government, either through bilateral assistance or cooperation in multilateral forums; involvement through non-governmental organizations; and people-to-people participation. At the multilateral level, Malaysia is one of the hubs housing the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Subang. UNHRD is a preparedness tool supporting the strategic stockpiling efforts of United Nations, international, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and reinforcing the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to emergencies. It also serves as a first-line response to emergencies through an efficient mechanism that can provide flexible, sustainable and scalable facilities and services for timely and cost-effective delivery of items and assistance to humanitarian organizations in the South-East Asian region. The Malaysian Government has agreed to contribute \$1 million annually, in the form of a grant, to cover the centre's operating costs.

Malaysia welcomes the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on improving responses to natural disasters. Lessons learned from the response to recurrent humanitarian crises have underscored the importance of building communities' resilience to shocks by addressing the physical, social, economic and environmental elements that make large numbers of people vulnerable. We agree that a resilience approach is key to addressing recurrent crises.

The importance of a resilience-based approach was set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (see A/CONF.206/6). Malaysia is committed to disaster risk reduction and will continue its efforts towards implementing the priority areas of the Hyogo Framework. We are aware that building resilience over the long term is a Government responsibility that is supported by development programming. Malaysia will thus continue to work closely with the private sector, national institutions, academicians and the non-governmental sector to ensure that we put in place the appropriate implementation plans for disaster risk

reduction and building resilience, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report.

Let me now turn to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/67/84). I wish to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to providing assistance to the Palestinian people in helping them to meet their needs. We take note the fact that additional support is urgently needed for the core budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which faces a shortfall of \$70 million for 2012. In that regard, Malaysia made a one-off contribution of \$200,000 to UNRWA in November. Taking into account the latest appeal and UNRWA's acute financial situation, the Malaysian Government has pledged an additional \$1 million to help the Palestinians affected by Israel's recent military aggression in Gaza. This additional contribution was announced by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur on 3 December, and is part of our country's long history of continued assistance to Palestine and its people, following more than 30 years of annual contributions to UNRWA.

Malaysia reiterates its support for the important work done by UNRWA in assisting the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We also urge donor countries to continue their financial assistance so that UNRWA can effectively carry out its development activities in the region. The international community's continued political commitment requires it to show solidarity through financial commitments as well. As the Secretary-General's report states, the United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Malaysia hopes and prays for a quick and lasting solution to this historical injustice.

The Government of Malaysia is of the view that dealing with disasters requires a holistic, full-spectrum approach at the response stage, but also one that proceeds from effective disaster risk-reduction strategies. Nonetheless, Malaysia will continue to extend its humanitarian assistance, whether financial or by deploying humanitarian and emergency relief teams, within its means, to disaster-affected countries. We hope that such humanitarian assistance will lessen the burden faced by some of the victims and assist them in their hour of need.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): It is my privilege to participate in this very important debate. We appreciate the leadership provided by Emergency

Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos to the international humanitarian effort.

The Secretary-General's report (A/67/89) mentions massive economic damage caused by last year's natural disasters. As a result of those disasters, an increasing number of people require humanitarian assistance worldwide. While we cannot control natural disasters, we can reduce their impact and the devastation that they cause. That requires an efficient international and national emergency response system, capable of handling large-scale disasters.

The recent appearance of Hurricane Sandy showed the devastating impact of a large-scale disaster, even in one of the most developed countries of the world. The affected communities took days to emerge from the disaster's immediate impact. Such situations become even more challenging when a natural disaster strikes a developing country. The immediate tasks in the aftermath of such disasters are relief and recovery. In the long term we have to focus on the equally pressing areas of rehabilitation and reconstruction. We have to come up with strategies that will restore and generate jobs and repair damage to the environment. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General's observation that there is a need for more investment in building community resilience through disaster risk reduction and for a long-term, development-oriented process.

Pakistan has experienced major humanitarian challenges in the past few years, affecting millions of people, from north to south, from east to west. Infrastructure, houses and businesses worth billions of dollars have been destroyed. The nation of Pakistan has faced the challenges with courage, resilience and ingenuity, but we are most grateful to the United Nations system and the international community for their help and support in responding to those disasters.

The valuable experience we have accumulated in the course of multiple catastrophes has taught us both self-reliance and ways to work with the international community in a synergetic way. It has also made us acutely aware of the need to identify gaps and redress deficits in order to respond more effectively to disasters in the future. I take this opportunity to highlight our key messages and observations. We should collectively — especially in regions where catastrophes strike — tap into local resources in order to save funds and to contribute to long-term development. Trust

among donors, international humanitarian actors and affected States should be built. Capacity-building for domestic preparedness should be enhanced.

We must ensure that all humanitarian actors are subject to accountability, especially in the matter of delivery on the ground. The work of humanitarian actors should conform to host community agreements. We need to improve dialogue between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and developing countries, especially those that have experienced humanitarian emergencies. United Nations reporting mechanisms should remain cognizant of the differences among situations that are not comparable. Politicization of humanitarian relief work should be avoided. The safety and security of humanitarian actors should be ensured.

The humanitarian landscape has changed in the past few years as a result of an increasing number of large-scale disasters, the greater involvement of actors that cannot be strictly termed humanitarian, the greater involvement of the global South in humanitarian work, improved disaster preparedness in developing countries, and new assessment tools being developed by OCHA. These developments require increased dialogue between OCHA and Member States, especially developing countries, as well as among Member States. In that regard, the Secretary-General's focus on building a more global, accountable and robust humanitarian system under his five-year agenda, including by convening a world humanitarian summit, will help provide an opportunity to share knowledge and define a way forward for our future humanitarian agenda.

Mrs. Mørch Smith (Norway): Conflicts and disasters today are increasingly complex. Humanitarian principles are being challenged in a number of ways, and humanitarian access is becoming more and more difficult. Those issues have been high on the agenda of the United Nations this fall, reflecting the situation on the ground in a number of concrete country situations.

We see on a daily basis that civilians are affected by armed conflict, whether directly, suffering death, injury, rape and forcible displacement, or indirectly, due to increases in disease, hunger and malnutrition. In countries such as Syria, Mali, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Somalia, humanitarian aid is being provided in very constrained conditions. Difficult security situations or

lack of acceptance by the parties to the conflict limit or even prevent the delivery of aid to people in dire need.

The result is that the civilian populations have to flee in order to secure vital help. Being internally displaced or a refugee is dangerous. Vulnerable people often become more vulnerable when they have to leave their homes, and are thus more likely to suffer abuse, including sexual violence, from warring parties and criminal gangs. It is therefore vital to strengthen efforts to ensure that more civilian victims of war and conflict receive protection and assistance as close to home as possible.

Norway is particularly concerned by the fact that increasing numbers of health-care workers and hospitals are being attacked and threatened by warring parties. An International Committee of the Red Cross study of 16 countries over a two-year time span has identified no less than 644 violent incidents that affected opportunities to provide or receive health care. The use of explosive weapons, the destruction of ambulances, and kidnappings and killings of health-care personnel are just some of the examples mentioned.

One example is from Somalia, where a bomb killed more than 20 people, including two doctors and a number of medical students, at a graduation ceremony in Mogadishu in December 2009. Another example is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where an estimated 40,000 deaths per month are due to easily treatable diseases. The main reason those people are not receiving treatment is the lack of security due to the armed conflict.

At the same time, we know that the normative framework is in place. International humanitarian and human rights law for the protection of civilians in armed conflict and other situations of violence is comprehensive and relevant. The right to health is enshrined in human rights law. The protection of medical missions in armed conflict is highlighted in

international humanitarian law. The problem is not law, but the lack of implementation — the lack of both understanding of and respect for the law.

It is necessary to remind parties to conflicts about their responsibilities with regard to international humanitarian law. We must engage States that have influence over parties to conflicts to remind them of and insist they honour commitments to respect international humanitarian law and to protect health workers, hospitals and ambulances.

Norway is determined to strengthen our own humanitarian policy in this matter and to work with partners to enhance the protection of health facilities and personnel in areas of conflict. We will work to bring countries together across regional and political divides to move that agenda forward so as to reduce suffering in conflicts and other emergencies.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to consult members regarding an extension for the work of the Second Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 42nd plenary meeting, on 28 November, the General Assembly agreed to extend the work of the Second Committee until Thursday, 13 December. However, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an additional extension of its work to Friday, 14 December, in view of the fact that such an extension would facilitate reaching consensus on the pending draft resolutions before it.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Friday, 14 December?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.