
Madam President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your able guidance of the humanitarian segment. We also thank Mr. Holmes for his detailed and useful statement. Our thanks also go to the Secretary General for his report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. The report has enhanced our understanding of key issues which merit consideration by this Council.

Madam President,

The humanitarian role of the UN has assumed added importance in recent years. Today, the humanitarian assistance is required more than ever before as several million people are being forced into poverty and degraded living conditions. As the SG’s Report notes, over one-sixth of the global population is likely to face the spectre of hunger by the end of 2009. The situation is further compounded by the increasing incidence of natural disasters. A well-targeted, timely and need based humanitarian response with adequate, predictable and timely funding, both in terms of quantity as well as quality is needed in the face of these multiple crises. We are happy that this issue has been highlighted by all previous speakers.

Madam President,

The provision of humanitarian assistance must be in accordance with the Guiding Principles as contained in the Annex to GA Resolution 46/182. India firmly believes that the humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the well established principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. The Guiding Principles enjoin that
sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the States must be fully respected and that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle, on the basis of an appeal by the affected country.

India is deeply concerned by the increasing incidence of attacks on humanitarian personnel. India has always opposed violence and condemns such attacks in strongest possible terms.

Madam President,

The coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance is one of the most important responsibilities of the United Nations. Though progress has been made in this direction, the capabilities and role of the United Nations in coordination and delivery of international humanitarian assistance need to be strengthened further. This also means an augmentation of the operational coordination capacities of the Office for Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), improved delivery of humanitarian services by relevant UN funds and programmes as well as greater accountability to stakeholders.

There is an important need to recognise that the task for emergency assistance is now-a-days increasingly undertaken at local, national and regional levels. The SG’s report rightly points out that strengthening response capacities at the local, national and regional levels including national civil society organisation are critical to face the humanitarian emergencies.

Cooperation to strengthen local, national and regional capacities in this critical sector will benefit all. In a globalised world, each nation has capabilities, resources, experiences and knowledge that can be used in partnership by all nations and the international community for their mutual benefit. Mechanisms that tap these capacities and disseminate best practices and knowledge therefore must be given high priority by the UN.

We are happy to note that the UN and its partners are increasing their efforts to strengthen humanitarian coordination capacities, inter alia, through inter-cluster coordination. We have no objection to the implementation of the humanitarian cluster provided it increases the efficiency and coordination of the humanitarian response. However, this must be carried out with consent of and under the leadership of the national government of the affected State. We fully endorse the proposed independent evaluation to assess the overall effectiveness of the cluster approach.

Madam President,

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been successful in mobilizing over US$ 1.5 billion since its inception. Cognizant of its responsibilities, India too has made
significant contributions to the CERF since its inception. We are further committed to contribute US $ 500,000/- each over a period of next three years i.e. 2009-2011. The disbursal of CERF funds have had a role in accelerating responses to emergency situations and have had a positive impact on the management of these situations. The institution and operation of the CERF has highlighted the collective and shared interests that all Member States have in the humanitarian agenda.

Despite CERF’s initial success, much is yet to be accomplished. It is pertinent to recall that CERF and other pool funding mechanisms of the UN have been able to attract just 8% of the global humanitarian assistance during the last year.

Madam President,

Before I conclude, let me briefly mention some aspects in the SG’s Report where we feel necessary to express our concerns. While dealing at length with complex emergencies, the Report seems to convey its own assessment of the political situation in concerned Member States, which could perhaps have been avoided. We are a bit concerned that some suggestions in the Report on humanitarian access are also not exactly within the scope of the Guiding Principles of Resolution 46/182.

Thank you.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS