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### **ADDRESSING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR STRESSES NEED**

### **FOR SOUND DECISION-MAKING, BROADER PARTNERSHIPS FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

#### **Council Opens Humanitarian Affairs Segment Also Holds Special Event on Humanitarian Needs in Sahel Region**

Basing humanitarian responses on reliable data and tapping the expertise of local partners were vital to bringing relief aid to areas and communities in need, top United Nations officials said this afternoon, as the Economic and Social Council began its humanitarian affairs segment.

“To make the best use of resources for humanitarian response, decision-making must be based on evidence from reliable data,” said Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, as she introduced the Secretary-General’s report on strengthening the United Nations coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Operational datasets could highlight the locations and scale of essential services such as functioning health facilities or water sources, added Ms. Amos, who is also the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. If that information was in place ahead of time and updated immediately after initial assessments, it would help planning and would directly support the response to a crisis. National and local authorities possessed a wealth of such information, but lacked the mechanisms to share it, she said.

For its part, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was expanding its collaborative efforts with Governments and partners to make sure that operational datasets for preparedness were in place. She said that creation of “one-stop-shop” information-sharing websites would be of great help to staff and organizations working in emergencies, and would give humanitarian country teams a solid basis of evidence for decision-making. “It’s all work in progress,” she said.

She also stressed the importance of broadening and deepening partnerships for humanitarian response, in support of the primary role of affected States in initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing such assistance. Through partnerships and relationships with regional and national actors, the Office was able to gain access to areas and people that would otherwise be difficult to reach. Finally, Ms. Amos challenged Member States to address key questions, such as ways to improve the quality, timeliness and exchange of humanitarian information.

In his opening remarks, Council Vice-President Fernando Arias ( Spain) said that the humanitarian affairs segment — held under the theme of “working in partnership to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance in a changing world” — provided a unique opportunity to deepen understanding of the operational challenges of delivering relief aid.

“Humanitarian action required active engagement by Member States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others,” he said. “To ensure coordination, needs must be recorded comprehensively and all available resources should reach those in need in a timely manner.”

The segment would feature two high-level panels over the next two days — one on evidence-based humanitarian decision-making and the other on partnerships, he said. There would also be an update on Inter-Agency Standing Committee efforts to make the humanitarian system more effective.

During the general discussion that followed those presentations, many delegations echoed the view that reliable data and partnerships with local governments and organizations were essential to reach the people in dire need. The delegate of Norway said that to make international humanitarian assistance and coordination more effective and sustainable, the international community should work more directly with people in need, since “local communities were the first responders when disaster struck”.

To this, Ireland’s representative added: “We need to remember that people affected by crisis and disaster survive and recover mainly on their own.” It was up to the international community to help strengthen local capacities and harness resources available to national Governments and communities. The representative of Cuba was among those who stressed that humanitarian assistance should be carried out in full respect of the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. It must also be provided upon the request and on consent of the countries needing it. He rejected the endorsement of concepts that had not been agreed upon and that ran counter to sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Many Member States also acknowledged the work done by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and stressed the importance of disaster preparedness. The representative of Denmark said much had been achieved within the framework of that Committee’s Transformative Agenda process over the past year, citing improvements in the management and performance of clusters, use of consolidated appeals as a strategic planning instrument, and in the mandate and functioning of humanitarian coordinators.

Yet there was also room for improvement, such as ensuring the availability and deployment of Humanitarian Coordinators with skills that matched requirements on the ground. Coordinators also must be given strong operational mandates with clear lines of authority. He was also among those who said crises in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel showed the need for much stronger efforts in early warning, prevention and strengthening resilience.

Australia’s representative said recurring crises, such as the ones in the Sahel region, highlighted the absolute need for disaster risk reduction and building resilience to cope with disasters. “Investing in disaster risk reduction saves lives, livelihoods and assets, and it reduces the costs of responding to disasters and rebuilding after them,” he said. The delegate from Nepal, speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said that the Hyogo Framework for Action of 2005-2015 had provided a comprehensive road map in strengthening disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures at multiple levels.

Ahead of the opening of the segment, the Council held a special event on the humanitarian situation in the Sahel. Amadou Allahoury Diallo, High Commissioner for the Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (3Ns) initiative, Government of the Niger, said the scale and complexity of cyclical food crises in Niger had underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of the food insecurity, which put about 5.5 million people at risk of hunger this year in the country.

His Government had launched the 3N initiative, which sought to provide a holistic strategy encompassing diversification of agriculture production, improvement of rural infrastructure and trade-related capacity for market access and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable households and communities, among others. Partners should align their efforts with this national strategy. “We’re in the driver’s seat in partnerships,” he said.

Claus Sorensen, Director-General, European Commission Humanitarian Office, said the Commission’s member States were accelerating funds to the Sahel, noting that another \$40 million had just been allocated. He agreed on the importance of Governments in Sahel taking the lead. “We cannot continue to pick up the bill at the end,” he said.

Speaking during today’s general discussion was the Vice-Minister of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, and the Vice-Director of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency.

Also taking part were the representatives of Algeria (on behalf of the “Group of 77” developing countries and China) and Cyprus (on behalf of the European Union).

Also speaking were the representatives of the Russian Federation, Morocco, El Salvador, Mexico, United States, Croatia, Nicaragua, Finland, China, South Africa, Chile, Israel and Sweden.

The Economic and Social Council will reconvene at 10 a.m. Thursday, 19 July, to continue its humanitarian affairs segment.

### Background

The Economic and Social Council met today to begin the humanitarian segment of its 2012 substantive session. The segment, which will run to 20 June, is expected to feature two high-level panel discussions on two operational challenges for humanitarian coordination and assistance. The Council is also scheduled to hear an address from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator.

For their discussions today, delegates had before them the Secretary-General's report on Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document [A/67/89-E-2012/77](#)), which describes the major humanitarian trends and challenges over the past year and explores two issues that the humanitarian community must address going forward: the need to build systems to support data-driven humanitarian decision making; and the need to broaden and deepen partnerships for humanitarian response. It also gives an overview of efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and response and makes recommendations for strengthening the United Nations' coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Delegates also had before them a draft resolution of the same name (document [E/2012/L.11](#)), submitted by Council Vice-President Fernando Arias ( Spain), on the basis of informal consultations.

The day was to begin with a panel discussion on "Humanitarian needs in the Sahel and the importance of building resilience", for which the Council had before it a note verbale (document [E/2012/85](#)) from the Permanent Mission Egypt to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General's Executive Office. It transmits the text of the Chair's summary adopted by the Conference on the Urgent Appeal for the Sahel Region, which was held at Geneva on 29 June 2012 on an Egyptian initiative.

### Humanitarian Affairs Segment

In opening remarks, Council Vice-President ARIAS ( [Spain](#)) said that the segment — held under the theme of "working in partnership to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance in a changing world" — provided a unique opportunity to deepen understanding of the operational challenges of delivering relief aid. "Together we can identify the ways to strengthen our collective response to the humanitarian emergencies facing us today, as well as prepare for the challenges of tomorrow," he asserted.

Humanitarian action required active engagement by Member States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others, he said. To ensure coordination, needs must be recorded comprehensively and all available resources should reach those in need in a timely manner. The Council's upcoming panel discussions offered an opportunity to explore the potential of new technologies and global networks; and the impact of more — and more diverse — actors providing assistance.

Over the next two days, two panels would be held on the themes of "Improving capacities for evidence-based humanitarian decision-making", and "Partnerships for effective humanitarian assistance in support of national, regional and international efforts". There would also be an update on Inter-Agency Standing Committee efforts to make the humanitarian system more effective, he said.

Introducing the Secretary-General's report on Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document [A/67/89-E-2012/77](#)), VALERIE AMOS, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said the survey focused on two areas: the need to support data and evidence-based humanitarian decision-making; and the importance of broadening and deepening partnerships for humanitarian response, in support of the primary role of affected States in initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance.

"Our work is taking place in increasingly complex environments," she said. "War,

displacement, climate-related disasters, high food and energy prices, population growth, political unrest and migration are pushing us to think about the way in which we work and how to tackle these multiple challenges.” Last year, there were 302 natural disasters around the world which had claimed an estimated 29,780 lives and affected some 206 million people. That was fewer than in 2010, but the economic damage from those disasters had been the highest ever recorded — an estimated \$366 billion.

“One of the ways we are seeking to work differently is by linking the work we are doing on the humanitarian and development sides of the equation to the building of community resilience in support of national-led efforts”, she said, noting that that strategy was particularly important in countries and regions that were vulnerable to recurrent and slow-onset disasters, like the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

To make the best use of resources for humanitarian response, decision-making must be based on evidence from reliable data, she said. Solid information was crucial. Operational datasets, for example, could highlight the locations and scale of essential services, like functioning health centres or water sources. If that information was in place ahead of time and updated immediately after initial assessments, it would help planning and directly support the response to a crisis. National and sub-national authorities had a wealth of this information, but did not necessarily have the mechanisms in place to share it.

Making basic data more easily accessible would support efficient and effective coordination and response, and enhance the transparency and accountability to beneficiaries and affected States, as well as donors. The Kenya Open Data Initiative was a good example of how that could work, she said. The Secretary-General’s report recommended that Member States improve the quality of data and facilitate the exchange and sharing of information, two issues that were reflected in the draft resolution the Council had before it.

The coordination of humanitarian organizations throughout the programming cycle — from assessing people’s needs to prioritization and planning, allocating resources and monitoring impact — was the operational core of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ work at the country level, she said. The Office was now introducing standardized reporting procedures to enable coordination of needs assessments with partners inside and outside the United Nations. It was also expanding its collaborative efforts with Governments and partners to make sure that operational datasets for preparedness were in place. The creation of “one-stop-shop” information-sharing websites would be of great help to staff and relief organizations, and would give humanitarian country teams a solid basis of evidence for decision-making. “It’s all work in progress,” she said.

New and diverse groups of people and organizations were becoming involved in humanitarian aid, she said. There had been continued growth in the number and diversity of Member States contributing to the Office’s work. Aid organizations originating in Turkey and the Gulf region had taken a lead role in responding to the emergencies in Libya and Somalia. Through partnerships and relationships with regional and national actors, the Office was able to gain access to areas and people that would otherwise be difficult to reach. Argentina and Saudi Arabia had joined the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system, and Brazil had begun negotiations to join. The Dialogue on Humanitarian Partnership, launched by Sweden and Brazil with the Office’s support, had brought together 19 Member States ranging from emerging partners to traditional donors, to consider key humanitarian policy issues.

She said that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had signed Memoranda of Understanding with the League of Arab States, the African Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and it was discussing joint standard operating procedures with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Efforts were also under way to deepen partnerships with the private sector, particularly with logistics companies such as DHL and with media, entertainment and advertising companies.

Finally, Ms. Amos challenged Member States to address key questions concerning ways to improve the quality, timeliness and exchange of humanitarian information; measures to deliver on partnership and inclusivity; and how to make United Nations humanitarian activities more accountable and effective.

### General Discussion

MOURAD BENMEHIDI ([Algeria](#)), speaking on behalf of the “Group of 77” developing countries and China, took note of the Secretary-General’s report and recommendations, including the

reference to the importance of strengthening partnerships at all levels, and the necessity to base humanitarian decision-making on reliable data and information exchange. The outcome of the Inter-agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda was a relatively new development in the field of humanitarian assistance, and he requested Ms. Amos to enhance dialogue and consultation with all States not only on that issue but on the entire humanitarian reform agenda. Voicing concern that the humanitarian challenges stemming from complex emergencies and natural disasters continued to increase, he urged redoubled efforts to enhance the capacity of all stakeholders.

He also reiterated the Group's support to the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality, which should remain the basis of all responses to humanitarian emergencies and guide the coordination of assistance. Particular attention also must be paid to respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States, he said, underlining the State's primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance. There was more work to be done to improve the humanitarian response. The United Nations and the international community should help developing countries enhance their capacities, knowledge and institutions including through transferring technology, funding and expertise.

Predictable, flexible and adequate funding for the effective provision of humanitarian assistance was also needed, he said, stressing the importance of increased funding through enhanced partnerships and financial mechanisms. Member States must also comply with their international humanitarian law obligations. There was a clear link between emergency relief, rehabilitation and development to ensure a smooth transition from relief to development. As such, assistance must be provided in a way that supported long-term development, and he called for better coordination between humanitarian and development actors. Humanitarian assistance must not be seen as a replacement for international development cooperation.

NICHOLAS EMILIOU (Cyprus), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said he strongly supported continued reinforcement of the international humanitarian system and welcomed the Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda. Underlining the importance of the timely implementation of that agenda at an operational level, he said that required focus on leadership, coordination and accountability. There was room for improving the system's overall effectiveness and accountability. Leadership was central to a coordinated humanitarian response and Resident Coordinators played an especially important role in preserving humanitarian space through advocacy for the humanitarian principles. Resident Coordinators should have the ability to lead on behalf of the entire United Nations, contribute to the country teams and promote change.

In that regard, he called for an integrated strategy to support Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators. Further, a shared understanding of humanitarian needs was essential and he supported work towards developing a framework for common needs assessments. He also underlined the importance of evidence-based decision-making and urged that humanitarian assistance was based on reliable timely and independent baseline information. Affected populations were at the centre of humanitarian action and their participation was essential in providing assistance in ways that best met their needs. There was also a need for the development and humanitarian communities to boost support for transition and early recovery, in order to provide hope to people affected by crisis and promote structural changes. He highlighted the importance of delivering effective aid, which prioritized those at the gravest risk.

Disaster risk reduction should be seen as a primary responsibility of Governments, supported by development and humanitarian partners, and he called for improving the links between humanitarian and development aid. Underlining the need to strengthen the global partnership on humanitarian assistance in an effort to tackle such challenges, he urged engaging with new partners, building an inclusive international dialogue and working towards a broader donor base. He welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's efforts in that regard. While the growing number of humanitarian actors could create new possibilities for response, he called on all relevant actors to respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Finally, he pressed all States and parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure rapid, unhindered access for humanitarian personnel.

GYAN CHANDRA ACHARYA (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said those countries faced severe and recurrent humanitarian challenges. In today's globalized world, they were often confronted with the downside of globalization due to their capacity constraints. Least developed countries grappled with conflicts, increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, food insecurity, and epidemics, among other problems. The compounded effects of climate change and natural calamities were on the rise, which negatively impacted development prospects. In view of such growing vulnerabilities, he said, there was a need to scale up an effective, principled and coordinated humanitarian response at the local, national and international levels.

The international community should assist least developed countries in strengthening their capacities for prevention, resilience, mitigation and response. Humanitarian organizations also needed to strengthen their own response capacities in order to ensure their effectiveness. In that regard, the “Delivering as One” initiative should also be a fundamental principle for the effective use of resources and capacities. Continuing, he said that the Hyogo Framework for Action of 2005-2015 provided a comprehensive road map in strengthening disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures at multiple levels. In addition, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction had also given increased priority to such activities through supporting national and local efforts.

In that context, he said it was also important to strengthen decentralized responsibility of the local authorities and capacity development of disaster-prone and disaster-affected communities. The means of implementation and adequate financing for emergency preparedness remained an area of critical concern to the United Nations and its partners. Funding for preparedness was often “ad hoc” and inconsistent; therefore, appropriate and well-resourced financing mechanisms needed to be put in place. Harmonized and coordinated needs assessments should be conducted in a participatory manner, he said, and core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, and independence should always guide humanitarian efforts. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries prioritized those issues, he recalled.

GONZALO ROBLES, Vice-Minister of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, aligning with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, said that his country strongly supported neutral humanitarian action based on the needs-assessments carried out by the international humanitarian community under the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ overall coordination. In connection with the Transformative Agenda, the role of Humanitarian Coordinators was of special significance, as they were in charge of creating synergies among different agencies and actors. In that vein, he stressed the need to select coordinators with strong leadership skills, conflict-management capabilities and field experience.

In the pursuit of improving the quality of its multilateral funding, over the course of the year, Spain had carried out an external evaluation on the quality of funding proposals received from the different United Nations agencies. The evaluation had revealed a number of deficiencies in terms of proposal justification and monitoring and evaluation systems. Bearing that in mind, Spain proposed the setting of minimum standards for funding projects.

“Humanitarian needs and contexts are changing,” he stressed. The impact of climate change increased the number and intensity of natural disasters and created contexts of structural insecurity in regions of Africa, with recurrent humanitarian crises. Those were the areas in which humanitarian action had proven to be insufficient in saving lives when it was not accompanied by other interventions directed at mitigating the effects of climate change and increasing food insecurity in a sustainable way. Spain advocated the creation of areas of connection between humanitarian and development actors in certain crisis-prone contexts. Food security was probably the area in which the materialization of that common working space could best be applied, he said.

GRIGORY USTINOV ( Russian federation) said that his country had consistently promoted the principles of the provisions on humanitarian assistance reflected in resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The implementation of those principles had made it possible to ensure aid effectiveness and to build confidence among Member States towards the United Nations humanitarian sector as a reliable and efficient mechanism for providing assistance to those in need. Manipulating humanitarian issues for political gains was unacceptable, especially in situations of armed conflict. Such acts violated the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance. They also did not contribute to the alleviation of the suffering of the populations but only aggravated the situation.

With regard to the enhancement of the Organization’s humanitarian response efficiency, he said the Russian Federation agreed that measurers needed to be taken to strengthen coordination, improve accountability and reinforce the United Nations’ civil leadership. Governments of affected States, however, had to have the major role in initiating, organizing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance within their national territories. The role of the international community should complement the efforts of the Governments to overcome the consequences of emergencies. The Russian Federation also supported the policy of including elements of mid-term and long-term development planning in United Nations emergency response operations. Such an approach would strengthen the operational potential and capacities of the respective Governments to provide humanitarian assistance to the population. It would also promote national ownership, as well as exclude humanitarian dependency.

HASSAN EL MKHANTAR ( [Morocco](#)) said armed conflict, political and social upheavals and food crises had shaped the debate for strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations. In Asia, for example, the human and material damage caused by floods had worsened the food situation for children under age 5, which underlined the need for all relevant actors to improve the operational response to natural disasters and help avoid the risk of recurrence.

Resilience must be based on a long-term approach to development, he said, and preparation must be a focus in that regard. He denounced obstacles preventing humanitarian actors from working. He supported the Secretary-General's efforts to create a more transparent humanitarian system, and one-stop-shop to ensure local focal points and contacts between humanitarian and development actors. He supported the recommendations concerning the call to facilitate humanitarian access without conditions to those in need. He underscored the principles of impartiality, centrality and independence in that regard.

EINAR HEBOGAARD ( [Denmark](#)) said much had been achieved within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda over the past year, citing improvements in the management and performance of clusters, use of consolidated appeals as a strategic planning instrument, and in the mandate and functioning of humanitarian coordinators. Yet there was also room for improvement. First, everything must be done to ensure the availability and deployment of Humanitarian Coordinators with skills that matched requirements on the ground, and he urged continued efforts towards human resource development policies and incentive-based recruitment systems that covered the entire United Nations. Coordinators also must be given strong operational mandates with clear lines of authority.

Next, he said crises in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel showed the need for much stronger efforts in early warning, prevention and strengthening resilience. "We simply cannot continue resorting to humanitarian assistance when crisis strikes", he said, urging that development actors do everything to strengthen resilience within a framework that supported good governance and stability. Durable solutions also must be found for displaced people, as more than 25 per cent of Somalia's population, for example, was displaced. That was part-and-parcel of the quest to support food security and resilience. Far greater risks must be taken in the humanitarian response. "Without this, we will fail," he said. Planning and coordination must be based on local, national and regional capacities, as well as ownership.

MANUEL BESSLER, Vice-Director, Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency, [Switzerland](#), called for more inclusive and broader partnerships in the United Nations humanitarian response system through greater collaboration between national, regional and local structures. Doing so would better prepare affected States to assume primary responsibility in providing assistance to their own people. Furthermore, the development of new partnerships with non-traditional donor Governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector would also contribute to the strengthening of the United Nations humanitarian system.

He went on to say that access to populations affected by armed conflicts was becoming "increasingly difficult" and he emphasized that ensuring such access was the responsibility of the affected State. It was, however, important to make a clear distinction between humanitarian action and security-related operations. He also noted the impact of climate change, and stressed that the increasing number of natural disasters called for affected States to develop and strengthen their own capabilities in order to face such occurrences.

Continuing, he said that an improvement in coordination, particularly between humanitarian and development actors, was crucial if the "vicious circle of chronic dependence" on such aid was to end. In that regard, the international community had an important role in supporting national and local Governments. Concluding, he applauded the Secretary-General's efforts to understand the role that gender and age play in improving humanitarian interventions, voicing his support for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's efforts to identify activities that promoted gender equality.

ANNE ANDERSON ( [Ireland](#)) said that there had been an explosion of non-governmental organizations in recent years, but also a change in the donor landscape. "We must engage with the new donor architecture", she said in that respect, adding that the exchange of ideas and expertise with new partners, including donors and organizations from the Arab and Muslim worlds, was critical. Forging innovative, smart and strategic partnerships was one way for the international humanitarian community to better respond to today's growing humanitarian challenges. However, she recalled, the most important partners of all were the affected communities.

"We need to remember that people affected by crisis and disaster survive and recover mainly on their own," she said. It was up to the international community to help strengthen local capacities

and harness resources available to national Governments and communities. In that regard, Ireland believed it was necessary to intensify support to national partner Governments' institutional capacity and processes for risk management and humanitarian response, rather than creating new and parallel structures. "Aid can be an important form of support, but it is never the only one," she continued. It was, therefore, fundamentally important to understand the local institutional context, and tailor assistance accordingly.

A further area to consider was that of partnership with the development sector. Greater coherence and collaboration between development and humanitarian planning and funding modalities were urgently needed, as uncoordinated, parallel planning and financing might result in competing objectives, contradictory priorities and strategic incoherence. "Disasters rarely just happen — they often result from failures of development which increase vulnerability", she said, adding that planning was needed as part of development assistance. It was vitally important that reducing disaster risk and building the resilience of risk-prone communities was of central concern to both development and humanitarian work. Finally, she said, the central tenets of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence must continue to guide all of that work.

JOAQUÍN MAZA MARTELLI ( *El Salvador*) said that his country, like others in the Latin American and Caribbean region, was prone to natural disasters stemming from climate change. It was, therefore, grateful for the international community's involvement in efforts to alleviate the impacts of such disasters, as set out a recent General Assembly resolution. Raising several issues that were highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, he cited, in particular, the need to expand and deepen associations for humanitarian response. El Salvador suffered from many disasters, whose frequency was on the rise. Adequate management of humanitarian issues must be supported by research, and a new culture based on evidence should be created in that respect. He also cited important necessary actions, including: the training of responsible staff; strengthening the capacities of affected States; taking necessary measures to ensure that aid went to vulnerable groups first; and involving the local population in humanitarian efforts, among other key actions.

Coordination of humanitarian assistance in support of national and regional efforts must be commensurate with the needs on the ground, and should go hand in hand with the protection and promotion of human rights, he said. Combating the impacts of climate change, as well as continued investment in mitigation and response capabilities, was of paramount importance for disaster-prone countries. El Salvador also felt that traditionally vulnerable groups were an important part of the humanitarian response and preparedness systems, he concluded.

YANERIT MORGAN ( *Mexico*) expressed her country's support for the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs but noted that coordination between the humanitarian and development pillars needed to be enhanced. Promoting the implementation of preparedness criteria for relief aid was crucial to the coordination and collaboration among the various humanitarian and development actors. By promoting partnerships to strengthen humanitarian response and to provide accurate information, the decision-making processes in the delivery assistance would be more efficient and more coordinated. They would not only provide relief to people in need but also build a path towards development and resilience.

She went on to say that Mexico had strengthened its relationships with the humanitarian pillar of the Organization and with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Mexico would be steadfast in promoting a close and positive relationship between emergency response and development so that humanitarian efforts would not only seek to meet the immediate and short-term needs of nations but would also contribute to sustainable development in the long term. Mexico stressed the importance of investing in prevention and preparedness in order to reduce the impact of natural disasters. She said it was also important to exchange data and technology among Member States, the international humanitarian community and local actors in order to provide better humanitarian responses. On food security, she said that the issue should be addressed from the emergency, structural and right-to-food perspectives.

OYSTEIN LYNGROTH ( *Norway*) said that to make international humanitarian assistance and coordination more effective and sustainable, the international community should strengthen the capacity of national Government and local actors by working more directly with people in need, since local communities were the first responders when disaster struck. The international community's response should shift from providing assistance to cooperation. Working closely with non-governmental organizations was also important. Necessary capacity should be provided to facilitate the transfer of roles and responsibilities from international humanitarian mechanisms to affected countries' national and local structures.

In addition, building partnerships for more effective delivery of humanitarian assistance was

key. While commendable progress had been made in terms of closer cooperation between international and regional systems, he looked forward to seeing how that could translate into tangible action on the ground, including joint evaluations, training and contingency planning. South-South cooperation should also be promoted, as demonstrated by the work of Cuban medical teams during the cholera outbreak in Haiti during the cholera crisis, and developing countries could take the lead here. Finally, he said the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions were important measures for protecting civilians in affected countries. Not only were those treaties contributing to easing civilian harm, they also aimed to prevent future harm.

ELIZABETH COUSENS ( United States) said that, last year, the United Nations system had been called on to respond to an unprecedented number of natural disasters and related crises around the world. There was a food crisis in Sahel, a drought in the Horn of Africa, floods in South-East Asia and humanitarian crises resulting from conflict in a number of countries. United Nations humanitarian agencies had been at the forefront of a “learning culture” in that respect, she said, welcoming the Organization’s commitment to deploying senior leadership at the early stages of a crisis and its emphasis on decision-making. The United States commended the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ focus on partnerships, which were at the core of timely and effective response.

The United States shared that commitment, she continued, and it was working to train, plan and coordinate efforts with partners around the world. For example, it had joined the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) to fight drought and enhance resilience to drought in several parts of Africa. In addition, it was imperative that all parties to conflict allowed access to affected populations. Finally, she expressed thanks to colleagues who had helped to negotiate and facilitate the draft resolution on humanitarian coordination before the Council.

NANCY BUTIJER ( Croatia) said that the last two decades had marked extraordinary progress in the United Nations humanitarian system. Among changes during that time were General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1991) — the “cornerstone” of the Organization’s humanitarian framework — the establishment of the Resident Coordinator system, the creation of the Consolidated Appeals Process, and others. The humanitarian community, gathered in the current segment, was now called upon to provide integrated solutions across interconnected areas of the humanitarian system. Further strengthening of the humanitarian response, with a view to providing the necessary assistance in a timely, accountable and effective fashion, demanded a constructive collaboration among the Member States and leadership of the United Nations.

Several major concerns were putting “hard pressure” on the Organization’s ability to offer hope to those who depended on it, she said. Top among those was the problem of access and security of humanitarian workers. An unacceptable lack of humanitarian access in several crises, primarily those driven by insecurity and conflict, was making it difficult to reach those in need and ran fundamentally contrary to the basic functioning of the humanitarian system. Above all, the principled approach of “humanitarian space” must be preserved, she said in that respect. In addition, in the context of rising demand, escalating costs and budgetary constraints, the need to target humanitarian financing effectively and equitably was ever more compelling. CAP, the main reference for the annual humanitarian budgetary planning of Croatia, was an essential tool in that respect, she added.

OSCAR LEÓN GONZÁLEZ ( Cuba) said humanitarian assistance must be carried out in full respect of the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. It must also be provided upon the request and on consent of the countries needing it. He rejected the endorsement of concepts that had not been agreed upon and that ran counter to sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in State affairs. Hunger and poverty placed millions of people in a vulnerable situation, the direct outcome of an unfair economic order. The United Nations had a major responsibility to help improve national response capabilities, and countries should comply with their ODA commitments.

For its part, Cuba had progressed towards goals set in the Hyogo Plan of Action, and had played a key role in organization and coordination of humanitarian assistance. This year, Cuba would celebrate 50 years of its civil defence system, which was in line with international conventions on the protection of civilians. Lessons learned had allowed Cuba to strengthen its normative and institutional frameworks to reduce disaster risks. The introduction of disaster risk reduction issues into schools was another development. Cuba had held a regional workshop to exchange experiences in disaster risk reduction, while Cuban doctors had specialized in that area. “We are ready to share our modest experience”, he said, and thus promote humanitarian assistance as a matter of ethics and principle.

MARÍA RUBIALES DE CHAMORRO ( Nicaragua) said humanitarian assistance should comply with the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and operational independence. Nicaragua was highly vulnerable to natural disasters, during which humanitarian assistance had

focused on the provision of water, food, medicine, clothing and other basic items. Joint efforts among the divisions of the National System for Prevention, Mitigation and Attention to Disasters had allowed for better protection of people. That system relied on the national, regional, provincial and municipal levels for joint action among ministries, public institutions and social sector organizations.

In 2012, the process of establishing a specialized unit in the Foreign Ministry was launched, she said, to strengthen the Ministry's coordination with the Centre for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and Aid. Nicaragua had seen positive results in the face of different emergency situations, due in part to the Government's focus on prevention in every at-risk area of the country. Finally, she said the Central American Policy for Integrated Action on Disaster Risk had strengthened the region's joint disaster-risk reduction actions. It responded to the need for compliance with accords among the Presidents of Central American countries, the Dominican Republic and Belize. She urged the United Nations and developed countries to extend assistance in line with humanitarian principles.

GARY QUINLAN ( [Australia](#)) said that, while the international community had made good progress in the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance, "much more needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of this assistance". In that vein, he added: "A 'business as usual' approach is just not tenable." Recurring crises, such as the ones in the Sahel region, reminded of the absolute need for disaster risk reduction and to build resilience to cope with disasters. "Investing in disaster risk reduction saves lives, livelihoods and assets, and it reduces the costs of responding to disasters and rebuilding after them", he said in that respect. Regional partnerships could play a particularly important role. In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia supported the recent signing of a United Nations-ASEAN Strategic Plan for Disaster Management (2011-2015), as well as a recent earthquakes simulation in Indonesia.

Australia was heartened to see the humanitarian system progress in a direction of increasing effectiveness and inclusivity, but more must be done to create an international system "fit for purpose". Calling on all agencies to urgently implement the commitments under the Transformative Agenda, he said that fragmented and uncoordinated approaches were no longer acceptable. Australia would be calling agencies to account for the way they worked together to deliver system-wide results, he said. All parties must adhere to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It was only by upholding those principles that timely, secure, and unimpeded humanitarian access could be provided.

ULLA-MAIJA FINKAS ( [Finland](#)) reviewed several aspects of the Secretary-General's report, welcoming the system-wide recommendations concerning the implementation of the Transformative Agenda. She noted, nonetheless, that she had wished to see more on that item. Finland was a longstanding supporter of that agenda, as well as of humanitarian reform which was aimed at improving leadership, coordination and accountability of the international humanitarian response. Good progress had been made in implementing the Agenda, but much work remained to be done across the United Nations system in that respect. "Well functioning coordination helps to save lives," she said, adding, "and money, too."

The promotion of humanitarian issues in the governing bodies of the United Nations agencies was a priority for Finland. A number of funds and programmes played a central role as cluster lead or sub-lead agencies, and issues relating to the effectiveness of response, coordination and leadership were closely interlinked. They needed to be addressed in a coherent manner in all relevant bodies, thus improving Member States' understanding of the humanitarian architecture. There was also a need to harmonize the agencies' reporting practices, building on their own reporting systems, which would make it easier to measure collective results against joint strategic objectives.

WANG HONGBO ( [China](#)) called for the international community to expand and deepen partnerships when assisting affected countries in need of humanitarian assistance. He also emphasized that for effective coordination, there needed to be extensive participation by Governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Because of its "irreplaceable role" in international cooperation, the United Nations should continue to make further efforts to strengthen partnerships with regional organizations and the private sector. However, she also pointed out that Governments of affected countries needed to take a leading role in both disaster preparedness and relief and post-disaster reconstruction. In that regard, those Governments needed to "shoulder the primary responsibility" for initiating, organizing, coordinating and carrying out humanitarian assistance.

She went on to say that capacity-building in affected countries was a crucial component that required the support of the international community. In that regard, collection and analysis of

information was the “groundwork” for humanitarian responses and capacity-building efforts. Affected countries, therefore, needed to have their own relevant infrastructure and professionals, enabling them to increase their capacity for policymaking and disaster rescuing.

She urged the international community to assist developing countries in strengthening and expanding that area through the transfer and input of technologies and expertise and through infrastructure development. Noting that China was a developing country prone to natural disasters, she said that, while responding to its domestic situations, her country’s Government was committed to taking an active part in international humanitarian cooperation and assistance, in particular, through providing natural disaster response training for professionals in developing countries, among others.

XOLELA NOFUKUKA ( [South Africa](#)) said the theme of this year’s humanitarian segment — “Working in partnership to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance in a changing world” — was fitting, as funding remained a challenge in efforts to effectively respond to humanitarian challenges. He, therefore, urged donor States to provide predictable, flexible and adequate resources in such cases. Strengthening of partnerships could also go a long way in addressing that shortfall as such actions would allow more countries to join efforts to provide financial assistance.

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) depended on timely contributions by donor communities, he said, calling on more countries to support that mechanism. South Africa had, for its part, supported the CERF since its inception and intended to continue doing so. His Government was of the view that it was also critical to mainstream a gender perspective and pay attention to the needs of women and children. Sexual and gender-based violence was of serious concern to his delegation. Vulnerable groups, including people living in occupied territories, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons, needed attention.

OCTAVIO ERRÁZURIZ ( [Chile](#)) underscored the importance of the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as well as unimpeded access of humanitarian staff to affected communities. It was important to support States affected by humanitarian emergencies. He urged coordinated action to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure fully integrated responses. In that regard, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had met in Panama City, Panama, in March, to discuss ways for coordination to be more effective at national, regional and subregional levels. A regional plan of action was adopted. Disaster risk and emergency response were priority issues for Chile, which had led to efforts to reduce the damage caused by disasters.

He went on to say that Chile’s system of digital maps was available in various regions and should be available throughout the territory in 2013, providing a key way to train for emergencies and create early warning systems. The United Nations was the main provider and coordinator of emergency assistance. In September, Chile and the Resident Coordinator signed a Memorandum of Understanding for protocols to coordinate community and international aid. That experience had enhanced alliances at all levels and strengthened the relationship with the private sector. In sum, he agreed on the urgent need to improve coordination between humanitarian and development actors.

SHULAMIT DAVIDOVICH ( [Israel](#)) said her country had a long tradition of providing humanitarian assistance, noting that, in the wake of explosions in Brazzaville, Congo, last March, Israel had sent medical burn treatment equipment. Israel’s humanitarian assistance was guided by a comprehensive approach and preparedness stood at the core of disaster response. The most valuable lesson to learn was that investing in disaster risk reduction was critical. For decades, the Agency for Development Cooperation had worked to strengthen countries’ capacities to cope with disasters, by conducting courses on emergency and disaster medicine around the world.

She went on to say that Israel’s partnership with the UNDAC had increased considerably in recent years and the Government was proud that the emergency response roster team included four Israeli experts. UNDAC also had participated in Israel’s national security exercise. “Building resilient communities demands preparation at all levels,” she said. Coordination between the public, private and non-profit sectors was essential, as was coordination at the national and international levels. Israel would continue to support United Nations efforts and offer humanitarian assistance wherever and whenever it was needed.

JAKOB HALLGREN ( [Sweden](#)), associating himself with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union, noted several trends cited in the Secretary-General’s report. Among those was an increase in humanitarian needs, as well as a lack of humanitarian access, such as in the case of Syria. Sweden was a proponent of reliable data and its analysis and, therefore, appreciated the commitment of the international community to adhere to common standards in data collection and

analysis.

The United Nations humanitarian system was based on the wide consensus of Member States, he said, recalling that it was also guided by a landmark General Assembly resolution. Moreover, it was now time to roll out the Transformative Agenda, which Sweden saw as a way to “reform and refine” the common humanitarian system. Humanitarian leadership among international organizations was also crucial to delivering effective response, he added.

### Special Event on Humanitarian Situation in Sahel

Moderated by Debbie Landey, Director, United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, the panel featured presentations by Amadou Allahoury Diallo, High Commissioner for the Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (3Ns) initiative, Government of the Niger; Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP); Claus Sorensen, Director-General, European Commission Humanitarian Office; David Gressly, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel; Fodé Ndiaye, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Niger; and Marie Larlem, General Coordinator, Association for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms in Chad.

The panel, co-chaired by Economic and Social Council Vice-Presidents Desra Percaya (Indonesia) and Fernando Arias (Spain), was organized as a transition from the operational activities segment to the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council’s substantive session.

At the outset, Ms. LANDEY said humanitarian affairs were “key challenges of our time” that required a holistic approach spanning various humanitarian and other fields of operations, all levels of leadership and actors.

Speaking first, Mr. DIALLO described the current situation in Niger, saying that the country was struggling to cope with the effects of a major drought. Disappointing rains in 2011 had left communities to face the long dry months of the lean season desperately short of food and other sources of livelihood. Cyclical and more intense crises in the region since 2000, as the result of droughts and climatic hazards, had led to a progressive degradation of the populations’ livelihood and increased food and nutrition insecurity.

“The scale and complexity of these crises have highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of the food insecurity and of building resilience in tandem with humanitarian response,” he said. About 5.5 million people were at risk of hunger this year in Niger, and the price of cereals and grains was rising as basic commodities began to vanish from local markets.

Niger had launched the so-called 3N (Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens) initiative, which sought to provide a comprehensive strategy for bolstering national food output and enhancing the positive impact this had on levels of food security, nutrition, household welfare and economic activity. It was based on five pillars: increasing and diversifying agriculture production particularly through irrigation and livestock; improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacity for market access; strengthening the resilience of vulnerable households and communities and managing risks and crisis; improving nutrition; and creating an enabling environment for sustainable food security and coordinating multi-sector and multi-stakeholder interventions.

The 3N programme was not the first attempt by the Niger Government to promote domestic food production. “We are not reinventing the wheel,” he said. The strategy featured a clear vision and strong political will to put food security at the top of national priorities by investing more of the national budget in that sector and in mobilizing civil society around the issue, including non-governmental organizations, traditional leaders, donors, local communities and farmers’ organizations.

The programme also stressed a commitment to address the root causes of the food insecurity and build vulnerable people’s resilience in tandem with preventing and responding to food crisis. The strategy also focused on community initiatives and bottom-up approaches. Finally, it was vital for partners to align their efforts with Niger’s strategy. “We’re in the driver’s seat in partnerships,” he said.

Taking the floor next, Ms. COUSIN stressed the importance of a holistic approach with the right mix of components grounded in comprehensive analysis of complex situations and the need to inoculate resilience into communities as a way to make a smooth transition from relief to recovery.

She outlined some of the lessons learned by WFP, including that early warning systems were paramount. Indeed, perhaps the very reason Member States and other stakeholders were sitting together in the Council discussing the Sahel food crisis today was because an early warning system had been in place. Having a common assessment of any situation was of vital importance, especially since all actors and donors must be on the same page. The speed of humanitarian responses varied when there was no such common understanding or evaluation. “We need to agree on the assessment of challenges in front of us,” she said.

“In order to build resilience, we must have country-led strategies,” she continued, stressing the importance of political will and acknowledging that strategies devised by Governments were in place in such Sahel countries as Niger and Chad. It was also vital to deliver responses suitable to different situations. She also noted that man-made disaster situations and conflict situations require different responses. For instance, in the Horn of Africa, more effective responses were delivered in Kenya and Ethiopia than in some parts of Somalia. “Circumstances will dictate responses,” she added.

Finally, she said that the most challenging was the issue of resources. There must be recognition among stakeholders, particularly donor partners, that more flexible resources were necessary. There was also a need for going beyond the traditional “silo” approach. Humanitarian efforts required multi-year funding. Situations in the Sahel would not be resolved in a year, and “if we are truly going to do things differently, funding is key”, she added.

Mr. SORENSEN said that, among the elements at the core of the Sahel crisis were politics, climate change and the mismanagement of development assistance. He said the humanitarian community was frequently “there to pick up the bill”, and stressed that “we have to move upstream” with the creation of better prevention and resilience. While some issues — particularly climate change — could not be helped, there was real work to do in the area of political instability in the Sahel region. Political unrest in the north risked creating negative “domino effects” throughout the region. In that vein, the European Union had established a comprehensive Sahel strategy — known as AGIR Sahel - along with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other partners, he said. But without a political perspective, “whatever we do here is bound to fail”.

The European Commission and its member States were accelerating funds to the Sahel, he said, noting that another \$40 million had just been allocated in that respect. Funding was easier if political leaders could see that what was being done made sense; if the situation seemed “chaotic” or opaque they would not be willing to allocate funds. The famous Household Economy Analysis tool was helping to predict events on the ground, and was helping leaders to allocate funds appropriately. There was a delicate balance to strike in that respect, but the humanitarian community had come a long way. In addition, targeted social safety nets continued to be essential, he said, as they meant that no one would be forced to sell his or her “very last cow or goat”. Indeed, those interventions were essential and would continue.

Nonetheless, many mistakes had been made in the handling of the Sahel crisis, as well. In the upcoming planning phase, it was crucial that the choice of sectors was made correctly from the beginning. “We can’t just continue to do the same things”, he said, stressing that each sector policy needed to be made disaster-proof. The designs of water policy, training and education, critical transport and other areas required overhauls. In that vein, the humanitarian community needed to sit down and examine the particularities of each country, meanwhile keeping a holistic perspective in mind. Disaster-related flexibility was now being built into development programmes, he added, emphasizing his support for such long-term planning.

“We cannot continue to pick up the bill at the end”, he said of the humanitarian community. Continued political will must be maintained and the needs of the Sahel region must be at the centre of the political agenda. A partnership approach was needed in which Governments were in the lead, with humanitarian agencies closely following. A small technical group representing main donors could be organized and a secretariat would lead the effort in the region. The same hunger crises “year after year” must end, he said, stressing that, unless action was taken, they would continue to occur.

Mr. GRESSLY agreed with the need to move towards stronger resilience. Three elements needed to be examined in that respect: the acute crisis due to last year’s lack of rains, the chronic food crisis and the effect that food insecurity was having on the humanitarian situation throughout the region. Due to the lack of rains in 2011, about 18.7 million people were at risk of food insecurity in 2012, and millions of children were severely or moderately malnourished. However, an early response had been taken, with the Government of Niger leading the call to action and many intergovernmental organizations and international donors responding quickly. That had positioned

the humanitarian community to contain what could have become a catastrophe, he said. If such efforts continued, the crisis could be seen through successfully.

However, he said, such efforts came with a big price tag, namely, about \$1.6 billion for 2012. Insufficient support was going into the agricultural sector, which was rebuilding after the recent drought. Further, support for the health and water sectors was not strong enough and, as a result of the recent climate patterns, diseases and the emergence of locust swarms could have negative impacts in the coming years. While reasonable success had been achieved this year and last year, a chronic situation would be faced going forward in 2013. Millions of children would still face chronic malnutrition in the region, and many thousands would die each year.

It was critical, therefore, to attack the structural problems of chronic malnutrition and food insecurity. Donors, including the European Union, were stepping up efforts, but those efforts needed to be translated into operational terms. "We need to advance meaningfully on this agenda", he said, adding that both the opportunity and the political will currently existed to make real changes in the Sahel.

"The insecurity we see in the Sahel is a political failure" and a failure of development, he stressed. Political insecurity in the north of the region, if left unchecked, constituted the single greatest threat to the region's long-term health and stability. In that respect, political solutions needed to be inclusive, with marginalized people supported. Concluding, he said that the humanitarian response community was working to build resilience, including by building the region's capacity to treat nutrition going forward.

Next, Mr. NDIAYA outlined what went wrong in previous crisis management in Niger. The former Government had been late in responding to crises and had not recognized the national early warning system. The previous Government was also "difficult" to work with. Moreover, coordination was lacking among key stakeholders and at community, national and regional levels. Other failures had occurred in the areas of communication, logistics, funding, capacity and access among others. Given lessons learned from past crises in Niger and the wider Sahel, it would be too costly to continue with "business as usual".

Compared with the 2005 and 2010 crisis, there was indeed evidence that the attitude of the Niger Government, donors, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations had changed, he said. The Government had expressed concerns over the situation as early as August 2011, mobilizing some of its own resources in response. The Government had the necessary strategies in place to tackle the medium and long-term development needs through the 3N programme, which sought to address structural issues.

He said that the United Nations had reacted in a coherent, concerted and efficient manner to the crisis both at the conceptual and operational levels. The Organization supported the International Symposium on Food and Nutritional Security in Niger in March 2011 and supported Niger to develop and implement the MDG Acceleration Framework, which had identified bottlenecks.

Building the resilience of families, communities and institutions at the local, national and regional levels could break the cycle of chronic vulnerability in the region, he said. The mid-February visit to Niger by high-level United Nations officials, including Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, had helped draw attention to the urgent need for concerted and rapid action for the people of Niger.

It was important to take a holistic approach spanning security, peace and development while dealing with such emergencies. There was also a need for a change of culture by understanding and learning from the local communities' coping mechanisms. Lastly, he said that it was a vital to build strong and long-term alliance between all actors, including the private sector and local communities, with the Government having the leading and coordination role.

Ms. LARLEM recalled that, in recent decades, Chad had experienced several armed conflicts and a coup, which had caused instability from its cities to its small towns. There had also been conflicts between farmers and livestock raisers, as well as conflicts spilling over from neighbouring Sudan, the Central African Republic and Libya. There had been food insecurity and weak preventative efforts by the State. All those factors led Chad into a series of crises that had required the assistance of the international community.

For their part, national non-governmental organizations had contributed at several levels,

including in the response to immediate needs, support in the medium and long terms and awareness-raising. He said that national non-governmental organizations lacked the available resources to provide appropriate relief, but by coordinating with the United Nations system and other international partners, they had been able to make a contribution towards the distribution of foodstuffs and the support of livelihoods.

Women, particularly in the north of the country, were frequently the household breadwinners. Therefore, non-governmental organizations were focusing on them in order to achieve better results, she said. They were also raising awareness about harmful traditional practices, hygiene and sanitation and rights and duties; and they were supporting access to means of production. Another focus was advocacy work, in which civil society organizations were conducting field missions and preparing reports. In one case she cited, a field mission was carried out “while a village was still burning” following an attack. The report that was subsequently drafted had recommended specific, strong actions in support of the people that had been displaced from the village. The Government had allocated funds as a direct result of the report.

Chadian civil society was aware that one-time humanitarian assistance would not provide relief for the chronic, cyclical crises facing the region. What was needed was “commensurate aid” from international and national bodies, working with communities and local actors, to help them meet the direct needs of the people. Another challenge was weak operational capacity at the level of State and local services. Consequently, strengthening the technical capacity of non-governmental organizations was critical.

Building resilience was another major need, as, currently, “fragmented” humanitarian funds did not take into account development issues. Funding should be geared to national non-governmental organizations in order to build their capacity. There was also the problem of cultivatable land in the south of the country, she said, which had been reduced as large corporations took over more land for oil production. “We’re sounding the alarm”, she concluded, stressing the need to move towards action on all those fronts.

During the ensuing dialogue, speakers agreed that, without efforts aimed at building resilience, the international community’s work in the Sahel region would ultimately be in vain. Many said that it was heartening to see that the international community was in agreement about the actions that were needed in the region, and that the recent crises had seen a relatively early response. Development assistance, in particular, should focus more intensely on increasing resilience, many added.

The representative of Mexico underscored the relevance of the present session’s theme, which represented the commitment of all Member States to building the resilience of the Sahel region. At the recent Los Cabos Group of Twenty (G-20) summit, he said, countries had committed themselves to strengthening support for the crises in the region, in particular through the WFP. As there were frequent complaints about divisions between the development and humanitarian sectors, the concept of resilience was particularly valuable because it helped to link the two sectors together.

The representative of the Republic of Korea said that, like in the Sahel, the 2011 earthquake in Japan had shown the importance of building resilience at all levels. The food crisis in the Sahel was a reminder of the need to improve the collective capacity of the international community, he stressed. Enhancing capacity for preparedness was also essential for rapid response. Those changes were not merely an option, he said, but an “absolute necessity”. He, therefore, encouraged the scale-up of coordination between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations funds and programmes and other actors, stressing, meanwhile, that preparedness efforts should be led at the national level. Disaster risk reduction should be included as one of the major development targets in the post-2015 framework, he added.

In that vein, the representative of the United States stressed that the scope and complexity of the crisis required a “robust” response, and said that he firmly believed in the value of partnerships to support that response. He also supported the United Nations decision to create the position of Resident Coordinator, and wondered whether David Gressly’s appointment would continue beyond the initial period of six months.

A number of relevant international organizations also took the floor, including the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), who stressed that increasing the level of investment in agriculture was critical to combating the food security crises affecting the Sahel. “Resilience is clearly the order of the day”, he said, but those mechanisms must be built before the stress reached a crisis level. Farmers and pastoralists made daily decisions, and were not free to think far into the future. The challenge for the development and humanitarian communities was to be

reliable supporters of those facing risks on a daily basis.

Responding to several comments and questions, Mr. DIALLO said that, at the national level, instruments, tools and procedures were needed to allow countries to take the lead in the resilience building. Countries needed to create a framework for partnerships, as well as for dialogue, with donors. At the regional level, initiatives were already under way with regard to information and early warnings. The FAO, the WFP and other agencies had been meeting to assess the situation at the end of every harvest season. With regard to the local level, resources were frequently made available on a “cash for work” basis, and there was, therefore, an opportunity to meet immediate humanitarian needs.

In a similar vein, Ms. COUSIN stressed that such projects needed to be scaled up to a level where they could make a difference for many people. The right kinds of transition agreements were needed at the highest levels of the United Nations in order to have more impactful activities across the system. Meanwhile, Mr. SORENSEN added that, at the international level, the right framework was in place, but it was time to “inject the resilience approach” into it. Examples of existing links between development and humanitarian actors existed in the recent crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as in a “few bright spots” in Haiti’s reconstruction efforts. Details of the AGIR Sahel strategy were available on the internet, he said, noting that the session was short on time.

Meanwhile, Mr. GRESSLY said that the several agencies were deepening their ability to work in both the humanitarian and development areas. The Resident Coordinator system encouraged such efforts, as well as resilience-building efforts on the national level. There was a good working relationship between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Organization’s West African office, known as UNOWA. Medium-term activities and flexible financing to fund them were becoming a growing focus, he said, especially in partnership with the AGIR Sahel initiative.

Addressing systemic changes needed in the United Nations system, Mr. NDIAYE said that the message about resilience and coherence should be stressed “across the board”. It was important to strengthen the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator systems, and more resources were needed in that respect. Lastly, it was important to use the discussions around the post-2015 development framework to lead more “pragmatic” efforts towards building resilience. Ms. LARLEM closed out the discussion by stressing that resilience could not be properly considered without putting communities at its centre.

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