

73rd UNGA

Agenda item 75 (a) to (c)

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

JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF INDIA AND SWEDEN

Delivered

By

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Deputy Permanent Representative**

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Mr. President,

It is my privilege to deliver this Joint Statement on behalf of India and Sweden on this important issue.

2. India and Sweden share strong commitment to strengthen the United Nations system to respond to complex and diverse humanitarian emergencies of our time.

3. We are deeply concerned that humanitarian emergencies, primarily driven by natural disasters and armed conflicts, reached a new high last year, as more than 131.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian funding requirement in 2019 is nearly US \$ 22 billion according to the Global Humanitarian Overview.

Mr. President,

4. The Increasing number of forcibly displaced people due to humanitarian emergencies remains an area of concern.

5. The 'Global Compact on Refugees' and 'Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration' which are both soon to be formally adopted, as well as 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provide frameworks for enhanced international cooperation to mitigate displacement and reduce human suffering resulting from such displacement.

6. The UN agencies and other partners have been responding to several complex emergencies in a commendable manner. However, attempting to address different forms of humanitarian emergencies through a coherent and comprehensive approach remains a significant challenge. Greater coordination and complementarity in action among various humanitarian actors, need to be achieved to undertake effective responses which are context-based, also enabling greater participation of local actors.

7. We must adopt a victim-centred approach to humanitarian response with respect for human dignity and provide flexibility to make choices on the goods and services that they need most. We also need to continue our efforts in developing a multi-sectoral needs assessment as well as building strong databases to enhance effectiveness, accountability and transparency of humanitarian action.

8. While the need for enhanced complementarity between humanitarian action and development cooperation is well recognized, especially in the context of today's multi-dimensional crisis situations, development action by national governments and international community must focus on reducing risk and vulnerability which will contribute to building resilience and capacity, and to prevent conflict.

9. Humanitarian action must focus on addressing more immediate and acute challenges while contributing to collective outcomes.

Mr. President,

10. Persisting gap in humanitarian funding, for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which both India and Sweden are long-standing donors, remains an area of concern. We call upon Member States to consider increasing their contribution to UN humanitarian assistance system, including CERF and the country based pooled funds.

11. We need to have more non-earmarked flexible funding so that the money could be utilized by the humanitarian agencies in the most effective manner catering to the specific needs of the affected people.

Mr. President,

12. Issues of concern also include those relating to access for and protection of humanitarian workers, especially in the situations of armed conflict. These require serious attention. We welcome the resolution on 'Safety and Security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel', which we are adopting here today.

13. Repeated violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law remain one of the most persistent challenges. The parties to armed conflicts, including the non-state actors continue to flout the international humanitarian law and perpetrate egregious abuses of human rights with impunity. Women and children remain the most vulnerable and need special measures for their protection. We must strengthen framework for international cooperation to bring perpetrators to justice.

14. All humanitarian actors need to strictly adhere to the policy of zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that the victims are afforded adequate protection. We appreciate Secretary-General's deep commitment in this regard.

Mr. President,

15. As we work towards strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, we remain committed to preserving the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in responding to all humanitarian situations. The primary responsibility of providing protection and assistance in humanitarian crisis lies with the country concerned.

16. In addressing the specific needs of the affected people, the international humanitarian assistance must be provided impartially, in accordance with the guiding principles in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Madam President,

17. Sweden is one of the single largest donors of core funding to UN humanitarian agencies and provides significant support to the world's major humanitarian crises. Sweden's overall humanitarian budget has increased in last five years in line with growing global humanitarian needs. In 2018 Sweden has taken a decision to provide WFP, UNRWA, UNHCR and CERF with multi-year core funding for the period of 2018-2021.

18. Sweden's humanitarian assistance is adapted to the growing humanitarian needs and available financial resources, and is committed to the Grand Bargain. The Grand Bargain's concrete targets provide a vehicle for effectiveness and efficiency reform of the humanitarian system. Flexible humanitarian funding has continued to be a top priority for Sweden as it enables more principled support and increased effectiveness. Flexible funding, such as core and pooled funding, allows for timely, independent, effective and efficient humanitarian action.

19. India continues to assist its friends and partners in relief efforts, particularly when facing situations of natural disasters such as Tsunami, earthquakes or cyclones. These efforts have ranged from immediate supply of relief materials to emergency evacuation of very large numbers of persons of various nationalities from danger zones. In the last four years, India has rescued 90,000 people including from 50 other countries caught in natural disasters or strife.

20. India provided emergency aid of US \$ 200,000 as well as US \$ 2 million for rehabilitation projects to CARICOM countries affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria last year; and US \$ 1 million to cyclone affected Tonga through India-UN Development Partnership Fund. We have increased our annual financial contribution to the core budget of UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from US \$ 1 million in 2016 to US \$ 5 million in 2018. India is also playing an active role in regional disaster management through forums such as ASEAN and BIMSTEC.

Mr. President,

21. The UN should continue to play a central role in providing leadership and coordination to the efforts of the international community to support the strengthening of the response capacity in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Mr. President,

22. In conclusion, let us not overlook the core of what we are talking about - human beings. The essence of humanitarian response is to save their lives, to alleviate their suffering and to maintain their dignity in the face of situations of natural disasters and violence. We call on all states to respect and honour International Humanitarian Law and the humanitarian principles.

23. India and Sweden remain committed to working with all parties to address the world's humanitarian challenges in an effective and comprehensive manner.

Thank You.
