

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR MS. VALERIE AMOS
OPENING REMARKS AT ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT**

19 July 2011, 15:00, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Conference Room XIX

Mr. Vice-President, Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Mr. Vice-President, thank you for your opening remarks.

It is a pleasure to be here to open this year's ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment. The Segment represents a rare opportunity for us to come together with you, ECOSOC Member States, to discuss some of the most pressing humanitarian issues and developments. The theme you have chosen this year – “Working in partnership to strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance in a changing world” – underscores a critical area for improving humanitarian response.

We need to continue strengthening existing partnerships – at the international, regional, national and local levels. We must also build new ones with innovative private sector actors, and others perhaps not traditionally involved in humanitarian assistance. We need to harness their ideas and capacities, and focus on responses that address not only the immediate humanitarian needs at hand, but the underlying factors and in a way that improves the resilience of people and communities in the future. This ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment is the perfect opportunity for us to strengthen these partnerships.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of General Assembly resolution 46/182, which remains the common basis for the provision of humanitarian assistance. In the resolution, Member States set out the principles that guide humanitarian work, whether it is undertaken by States, the United Nations, or other humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies and non-governmental organisations. It also created the position of Emergency Relief Coordinator and the precursor of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

We have come a long way in those twenty years. While 46/182 remains a cornerstone of the humanitarian framework that guides our work, the humanitarian system has continued to evolve over the years and is larger and stronger than ever before. It is also more predictable and accountable. Coordination has been

strengthened. Financing mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Response Fund have been upgraded, and preparedness efforts at all levels have been improved. Later this evening, we will have the opportunity to reflect on these achievements, as well as, the challenges we see for the future of the humanitarian system - during the commemorative event to celebrate 20 years of resolution 46/182. I hope that many of you will join us for this important occasion.

As we saw in 2010, two large-scale emergencies in Haiti and Pakistan, as well as other humanitarian emergencies across the globe, stretched the capacity of international humanitarian response to the limit. And we foresee that humanitarian needs will continue to rise. Global challenges - such as climate change, volatile food and energy prices, migration, rapid population growth, urbanisation and environmental degradation – continue to increase people’s vulnerability and humanitarian needs.

Some of these global challenges and the impact on humanitarian needs were highlighted during the side-event on global challenges today. The world’s population will reach 8 billion by 2025, and a 50 per cent increase in food production will be required by 2030, when international prices of key staples are expected to have risen by 120 to 180 percent.

A combination of food price increases and fuel price spikes in the second half of 2010 resulted in a net increase of 44 million more people living in extreme poverty. The increase in food prices has also led to increasing poverty for many of the 1.2 billion people who were already living below the extreme poverty line of \$1.25 a day. The high costs of coping have made many poor households more vulnerable to future shocks.

We are also well aware of the increasing number and intensity of natural hazards that kill thousands of people every year and uproot many millions. A total of 373 natural disasters – more than one a day - were recorded last year - compared to 328 in 2009 – and they killed nearly 297,000 people. This year has already seen the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan, while recovery efforts in Haiti remain ongoing. In addition, heavy rains during 2010 caused not only the worst floods in the history of Pakistan, but also affected many people in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, much of Southern Africa, and Colombia. Cyclones struck Australia, the Philippines, and Myanmar. The latest drought in the Horn of Africa is already affecting over ten million people.

In addition to emergencies caused by natural hazards, conflicts have continued to affect tens of millions of people. Over 27 million people remained internally displaced by conflict at the end of last year - an increase of 400,000 compared to 2009. Renewed conflicts such as in Côte d'Ivoire have caused significant humanitarian needs, while protracted conflicts around the globe continue to be of concern, for example in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Sudan, where renewed violence has affected tens of thousands.

Mr. Vice-President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's 2011 report *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations* spells out some of these trends. It shows how humanitarian caseloads continue to increase - due to the combination of protracted complex emergencies, the increase in frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and increasing vulnerabilities due to global challenges. Between June 2010 and May 2011, the United Nations responded to more than 30 emergencies, working closely with humanitarian partners in support of governments.

The report goes on to say that given the challenges ahead, the United Nations and its partners will have to continue to adapt, which will require strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, especially governments. This will also help us shift from a reactive system that responds to emergencies to a more prepared and anticipatory system. It will also mean that we will have to work with our development partners. Humanitarian financing will have to change, especially to ensure predictable and adequate funding for preparedness activities and an effective transition between relief and longer-term recovery. It is timely that the ECOSOC Segment will be discussing two key areas for improving humanitarian assistance that are highlighted in this year's report: how we can make the existing humanitarian financing system fit for the future, and how we can strengthen resilience, preparedness and capacity for response.

In tomorrow's panel, we will be discussing how to improve the humanitarian financing system. In the face of rising humanitarian caseloads, humanitarian funding requirements are increasing. This year's Consolidated Appeal Mid-Year Review, which will be presented in detail tomorrow over lunch, outlines humanitarian requirements of US\$7.9 billion. Many of you have continued to give generously to humanitarian work. Last year, governments, as well as private sector organizations and individuals, contributed a total of approximately \$15 billion in funding - both within and outside the consolidated appeals process. This represents an increase of \$4

billion compared with 2009. An increasing number of Member States are providing resources for humanitarian aid, including some that have been or still are aid recipients themselves. We will need to work together to continue to improve this trend and seek out new donors in the private sector and other areas.

In addition to addressing challenges to overall funding availability, the humanitarian community must also ensure that the humanitarian financing system can continue to evolve to strengthen the predictability, sustainability, capacity, coordination and speed of delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Over the past years, much progress has been made in making humanitarian financing more timely, predictable, flexible and needs-based. Pooled funds have been an important part of this endeavour – including the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and country-based pooled funds. Consolidated appeals are also increasingly aligned with the outcomes of coordinated needs assessments.

Despite these improvements, challenges remain, in particular in funding preparedness and in situations where countries emerge from conflict. Appropriate, innovative, and well-resourced financing systems need to be put in place, in partnership with development agencies and international financial institutions. Beyond that, innovative solutions are required to ensure that financing is both adequate to meet needs, as well as strategic and effective to have the most impact – not least through public-private partnerships.

The second main topic which we will be discussed in Thursday's panel, is strengthening the capacities of responders ahead of crises. Preparedness is essential-- it saves lives; and it is more cost-effective than response. National and local authorities are central in this regard – they are the first responders in every emergency, and we have to focus on further strengthening their knowledge and capacity so that they can respond better. This is consistent with the spirit of GA resolution 46/182.

While international humanitarian organizations have to continue to improve their own preparedness for response, we need to better define the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of the humanitarian system in support of building national and local response capacities. Partnerships will also have to be improved with development agencies, so that we can ensure that preparedness actions are appropriate. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is currently discussing

this. The ultimate aim is to help countries decrease their reliance on international assistance.

In addition, states also need to invest more in early warning systems, and we all need to increase our efforts to monitor global challenges in order to make us better at anticipating future crises, and at predicting where vulnerabilities lead to new or exacerbated existing humanitarian needs.

The Secretary-General's report also raises a number of other challenges. Findings from recent evaluations have confirmed that--despite the improvements made through the cluster system--coordination needs further strengthening. And we must do a better job of including national counterparts and local people.

Strengthening the humanitarian coordinator system and the capacity of humanitarian country teams is also essential, as is the need to increase the accountability of international actors to those we help. Maintaining respect for humanitarian principles, the cornerstone of our work; resolving constraints on access; finding ways to stay and deliver even in complex security environments and to ensure the civilian character of humanitarian aid when militaries get involved are other issues we need to keep in mind.

Mr. Vice-President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

During the next few days, in addition to the main panels, we will be discussing a number of important areas for the humanitarian community in various side-events organized by partners. I encourage you to take a moment to look at the programme of events and to attend and engage actively and constructively in these discussions.

I have already mentioned the commemoration of GA resolution 46/182 tonight and the CAP Mid-Year Review launch tomorrow. In addition to the events earlier today on household energy needs in crisis settings; demographics, urbanisation and migration as well as education in emergencies, there are side events organised on the use of military and civil defence assets to support humanitarian response, on financial trends in humanitarian assistance, protection in natural disasters, the importance of disaggregated data for assessing humanitarian need, food insecurity, gender equality and improving accountability.

I am confident that the work of ECOSOC will help improve the effectiveness, coordination and operational coherence of humanitarian response. We all need to work together to ensure that we forge stronger partnerships in serving those in need.

Only by creating partnerships and integrating each others' experiences, comparative advantages, and capacities will we be able to create the sense of solidarity with the most vulnerable and help to turn humanitarian assistance into a truly global agenda to address the enormous challenges and increasing caseloads which may face us over the *next* twenty years.