2015 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

Title: Casualty Recording for Humanitarian Action
Sponsors and Organizers: Government of Colombia and Every Casualty Worldwide
Time and Date 8.15-9.45, June 19th 2015
Room XXIV, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year’s theme: The future of humanitarian affairs: towards greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness.

Background and objectives

The meeting arises from increased support for a civil society call for states, in partnership with other actors, to recognise every casualty of armed violence by ensuring that all casualties are promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. It follows that casualty recording should be integrated into humanitarian practice. The basic principle at the heart of this call is that no individual anywhere in the world should die as a result of armed conflict without his or her death being properly recognised. It is necessary because in many situations casualties go unrecorded, yet the benefits of doing so are numerous: for upholding the rights of victims and survivors, to understand and avoid tactics that lead to civilian death, for reparation and reconciliation. In the humanitarian context, one important contribution it can make is for the safe and targeted delivery of relief.

A core component of effective casualty recording is the compilation of comprehensive information, including who the victims were as well as details of the incident in which they died. Experience confirms the importance of such human detail for families and the bereaved. In many conflicts casualty recording is left to small, local, civil society organisations, who also exemplify current best practise, but often have to work without state assistance or support of any kind. However awareness is growing amongst states and intergovernmental organisations that states can and should share responsibility for casualty recording. As one Member State asserted, for example, “the practice of casualty recording is in line with the principles of humanitarian law, primarily by its relationship with some of the most basic values of human dignity” and also for “its potential to identify and contribute to effectively address civilian harm.” Global support for the principle of casualty recording will help to bring it more firmly and consistently on to the humanitarian agenda.

The proposed side event serves as an opportunity to inform and update Member States about progress in establishing and spreading casualty recording as a universal practice with significant intrinsic as well as operational benefits, and for practitioners to elaborate specific examples from the field and gather best practices of how governments, civil society and the UN may work together to document casualties in a way which will contribute to immediate as well as longer-term humanitarian response.

Discussion points
Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following:

- Explaining what casualty recording is and what its universal benefits are.
- Drawing lessons and perspectives learned from casualty recording in different contexts.
• Considering how Member States and civil society can help to make casualty recording a standard part of the humanitarian imperative.

**Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations**

Through this event, we hope that Member States will gain a greater appreciation of casualty recording as a universally applicable principle, as well as an important component of humanitarian action. The immediate action that some member states could take, as an outcome of this event, would be to participate in the emerging casualty recording forum in Geneva, coordinated by Every Casualty, to collaboratively work on building broad-based state support to make casualty recording part of standard humanitarian practice in conflict situations.

**Format**

**Chair/Moderator:**
- Mr Everett Ressler, formerly Chief of Early Warning and Preparedness at UNICEF

**Panel composition:**
- Mr Hamit Dardagan, Co-Director of Every Casualty
  http://www.everycasualty.org/about/team
- Mr Marc Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, Director and Founder of Nigeria Watch

**Background Material**

The UN and Casualty Recording: Good practice and the need for action

Counting the Costs: Casualty recording practices and realities around the world.

Every Casualty Call & Charter
http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign
http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign/charter

**Contact**

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