

MISSION OF
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National Statement on Behalf of Brazil on the occasion of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment 2020.

This year's ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment has been convened under unique circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic is, as expected, at the forefront of current concerns, and has made it necessary for this year's Segment to be undertaken in an entirely digital format. Brazil commends the Chair, OCHA and other UN agencies, Member States, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other participants for the successful adaptation of this important event to current circumstances.

While COVID-19 has rightfully demanded the international community's intense attention in all fields of action, it must be recalled that when the pandemic began the humanitarian system was already under enormous stress, as highlighted by the Global Humanitarian Overview for 2020. Even before COVID-19, close to 170 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, an unprecedented number that is set to grow according to our capacity to respond to the pandemic. The preexisting needs portrayed in the Overview should not be eclipsed by new requirements related to COVID, be it in terms of action, funding or attention. They should also figure prominently in the planning of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions, so that the reaction to this crisis does not exacerbate existing humanitarian needs.

While it is anticipated that the brunt of the pandemic's sanitary impact in humanitarian contexts is still to be felt, COVID-19's secondary impacts, especially in the economic arena, have already reached every sphere of humanitarian action. The efforts undertaken by governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other partners to adapt to these circumstances has been admirable. This extraordinary endeavor is laid out in detail in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19, which gives us an objective and comprehensive overview of the impact of the pandemic in humanitarian settings.

Brazil is doing its utmost to respond to these new challenges, notably as they relate to preexisting humanitarian demands, especially those arising from the influx of Venezuelan migrants and refugees through our northern border, who are tended to by "Operação Acolhida", or Operation Welcome, a multi-agency task force led by the Federal Government. The response to COVID-19 in this context has been multi-dimensional, with protection and prevention concerns being incorporated into all assistance procedures. In coordination with civil society organizations, international agencies and affected people, Operation Welcome has developed a wide-ranging response plan which includes adaptation of shelters to mitigate transmission risks, community alertness initiatives, the expansion of a field hospital tending to migrants and refugees, additional sanitary protocols for their integration into host communities throughout the country and specific measures targeted at indigenous groups. In addition to measures targeted at migrants and refugees, the Brazilian Government has integrated these groups into national initiatives, such as the emergency basic income program created in response to the pandemic.

In spite of having been chosen before the pandemic, the overarching theme of this year's HAS, "Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles", and the topics chosen for each of the high-level panels were very appropriate for current circumstances. The discussion concerning "Addressing the increasing complexity of health challenges in humanitarian contexts" highlights the urgency of further developing conceptual, legal and institutional humanitarian tools to face health challenges on a global scale. This is an opportunity to explore possible advances and innovations, ensuring that these instruments are put to use efficiently in the current crisis, but also that they are actively enhanced in preparation for future challenges.

Concerning the topic of "Improving humanitarian effectiveness through new technology and innovation: opportunities and challenges", Brazil recognizes that innovation has provided new tools and revitalized old ones in different aspects of humanitarian assistance, from logistics to family

reunification and cash transfers. Technology should not be seen as a universal cure for humanitarian challenges, and cannot be adopted acritically. A realistic approach to risks and vulnerabilities, such as those regarding the preservation of data, should be a permanent concern. In addition, inclusivity must be guaranteed - the most advanced tools are fruitless if they cannot be operated by their intended users, be they local communities, governments or NGOs, and digital exclusion is a reality in many humanitarian contexts. It is also essential to guarantee the commitment of private sector actors and other partners to the overarching principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Having a high-level panel on “Mobilizing action to improve humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons and achieve durable solutions” is also a fitting and timely choice, in light of recent advances in this issue, especially the launching by the United Nations Secretary-General of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, which due to the COVID-19 pandemic faces logistical challenges to its operation. Brazil believes affected countries should be front and center in this issue, and that the international community should undertake an approach based on cooperation towards practical and durable solutions.

Brazil welcomes the holding of the high-level event “Combatting and preventing sexual and gender based violence in humanitarian crises”. Humanitarian crises have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, and while sexual and gender-based violence is not its only underlying cause, it is certainly one of the most disturbing and impactful. It is especially cruel when humanitarian assistance operations become opportunities for sexual and gender based violence, and thus prevention and disciplinary mechanisms should be a major concern, especially in the response to conflict situations. Brazil issued in 2017 a National Plan of Action regarding Women, Peace and Security, and has consistently supported multilateral initiatives in this field, from the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, in 2000, to Resolution 2467, approved last year, which encourages a survivor-centered approach in this field. Brazil recognizes that women are actors of change and agents of peace, and should not be seen merely as victims.

COVID-19 and other topics selected for discussion in this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment represent new challenges that demand creative and forward-looking solutions. Nonetheless, the basic realities that underpin humanitarian action and that will be the foundation for these solutions have not changed. The humanitarian principles are still the cornerstone of all institutional, legal and conceptual tools in this field, and respect for International Humanitarian Law remains paramount. Those principles are a fundamental expression of our collective strength and solidarity, and will remain so in the fight against the pandemic and all other humanitarian challenges.