



25 May 2020

Excellences,

In my capacity as the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Chair of the Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS), I have the pleasure to invite your delegation to attend this year's HAS, which will take place from 9 to 11 June 2020.

As decided by the ECOSOC in March 2020, the theme of this Segment is *“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”*.

This year's HAS comes at a critical juncture. It is a time for global solidarity and unity. It is also a time for reinforcing the critical work of the United Nations in preventing and responding to the spread of COVID-19, which comes on top of an already highly challenging humanitarian landscape. As we prepare to commemorate 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, global solidarity and the role of our Organization in addressing humanitarian challenges is centrally important to the world's future.

The Opening Session of the HAS on 9 June will provide a more forward-looking discussion about the humanitarian landscape considering impacts of COVID-19, coupled with the global trends and emerging challenges. We will consider how the United Nations and humanitarian partners are adapting and responding and examine what lies ahead.

In light of the exceptional circumstances, this year's HAS will take place in a fully virtual format. It will comprise several high-level events, including:

- A first high-level panel on *“Addressing the increasing complexity of health challenges in humanitarian contexts”* will happen on 9 June. This panel will focus on critical next steps needed to better respond to increasing needs, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic; recognizing the evolving landscaped marked in recent years by disease outbreaks and epidemics (Ebola, cholera, measles). The panelists will discuss how international actors are adapting to new challenges and risks, identify emerging needs, strengthening operations and building partnerships to combat the humanitarian impacts of this pandemic.

- A second high-level panel on *“Improving humanitarian effectiveness through new technology and innovation: opportunities and challenges”* will take place on 10 June. This panel will discuss and showcase concrete ways in which the humanitarian sector is improving humanitarian effectiveness in today's changing landscape using new and emerging technology and innovation. It will also discuss how the humanitarian is managing risks such as data protection.

- A third high-level panel on *“Mobilizing action to improve humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons and achieve durable solutions”* will be held on 11 June. This panel will explore concrete ways the international community can better support internally displaced persons, host communities and governments to move towards durable solutions to internal displacement considering ever-growing numbers of people who are uprooted within their own countries. It will discuss the intersecting challenges driving displacement, including conflict, increasing food insecurity, climate change and implications of COVID-19; and what durable solutions look like in face of those other drivers.

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
Economic and Social Council
New York

- A high level event will be convened under the theme “*Combating and preventing sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises*” on 9 June. This event will highlight the disproportionate impact of emergencies on women and girls and reinforce the importance of prioritizing their experiences, protection, capacities and leadership, their experiences of sexual and gender-based violence.

Preceding the HAS, the annual joint ECOSOC Event on Transition from relief to development will take place on 8 June. It will consider “*The multidimensional and interconnected challenges in the central Sahel region: reducing needs, risks and vulnerabilities for people through closer humanitarian, development and peacebuilding collaboration*”. The panelists will examine the challenges faced in this region, progress made to date in tackling these challenges, and consider concrete actions and recommendations to increase collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors, to strengthen efforts to reduce humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.

In addition, several side-events will take place throughout the week of 8-12 June, covering a range of priority humanitarian issues that will enable us to discuss in more detail some of the key operational and policy challenges humanitarian actors face and efforts to strengthen results on the ground. Based on our consultations with Member States and the humanitarian community, this year’s side-event topics will include: community engagement; food insecurity; protection, including children protection concerns and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse; climate change; anticipatory action; implications of counter-terrorism measures; inclusive humanitarian responses; mental health and psycho-social support, and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

In view of constraints linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, the General Discussion will not take place. Therefore, Member States and other stakeholders are invited to submit their written statements in advance to the Secretariat (ochaecosochas@un.org). The formal statements will be posted on the HAS website. The views and main points presented in these statements will be reflected in the Chair’s Summary of the HAS.

I strongly encourage delegations to participate at the highest level possible, including at the Ministerial level, given the critical importance of humanitarian work in saving lives and alleviating suffering and the need for ongoing action-oriented solutions to today’s and tomorrow’s humanitarian challenges.

The full programme for the week is attached. More information and any updates to the programme can be found at the following website: <https://www.unocha.org/ecosoc-2020>. A Participants Guide with more information on the virtual platform registration and logistics can also be found at that website.

Questions related to the HAS can be addressed to the focal point at the Permanent Mission of Morocco: Mr. Omar Rabi (rabi.mission.morocco@gmail.com). You can also contact the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (ochaecosochas@un.org) for queries on arrangements and logistics.

I look forward to your active participation and productive engagement at senior level to support humanitarian action and coordination for those people in need.

Yours sincerely,

Omar Hilale

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN
Vice President of ECOSOC and Chair of HAS