



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

at

**The United Nations Economic and Social Council
Humanitarian Affairs Segment**

United Nations

New York

11 June 2020

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by thanking Morocco for chairing the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the ECOSOC, and for its efforts in facilitating the ECOSOC humanitarian resolution during these challenging times.

We regret that the silence was broken by the United States on the agreed references to sexual and reproductive health, and on other agreed text elements.

Undermining consensus on this resolution can only have negative consequences, affecting first and foremost the most fundamental rights of the women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance. We support a strong emphasis on realising gender equality, empowering all women and girls, including through access to health services as part of the humanitarian response and recovery efforts.

There was wide agreement on the Chair's proposal to have light negotiations this year due the challenges related to COVID-19. We agreed to limit our discussions to seven relevant paragraphs. We therefore fully support the Chair's decision to proceed with the draft resolution as it was initially put under silence. This resolution has always been adopted by consensus, a strong sign of collective action. This is even more important this year, when humanitarian needs are higher than ever before and the humanitarian system is strained in an unprecedented manner. The vast challenges presented by COVID-19 call for the unity and solidarity of the international community. We need to lead by example.

Given the dramatic **impact of COVID-19** in fragile countries and regions affected by conflicts, we would have liked the resolution had made an explicit reference of support to the SG's call for a global ceasefire. We also would have liked stronger language on the need for rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

Mr Chair,

We live in challenging times for many millions of people across the globe. Humanitarian needs were already on the rise before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The 2020 Global

* *The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Humanitarian Overview projected this year to be a difficult one, due to protracted conflict, forgotten crisis, and the increase of the impact of climate change and natural disasters. At the beginning of the year, 168 million people were expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020, requiring 28.8 billion dollars. Now, 5 months later, an additional 6.7 billion dollars is urgently needed due to the rapid deterioration of humanitarian needs caused by the impacts of COVID-19. While the pandemic is affecting everyone across the globe, its impact will be most devastating in countries that were already facing a humanitarian crisis. **Global solidarity** is now more needed than ever before.

The EU and its Member States encourage a collective response to the COVID-19 crisis in the spirit of effective multilateralism. We support the UN's central coordinating role in emergencies and welcomes the joint UN approach behind the **Global Humanitarian Response Plan** to ensure the most effective and efficient humanitarian response. We also encourage strong cooperation with other relevant actors, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and INGOs, local implementing actors and CSOs. This is the moment to demonstrate strong collaboration and synergies, providing assistance as efficiently and effectively as possible. Given the long-term socio-economic impact of this crisis, a strong **humanitarian-development-peace** nexus in the design and implementation of the response, in line with the UN reform, is indispensable; this should be reflected also in the work of the Executive Boards of the UN Funds & Programmes.

The EU and its Member States as the world's leading humanitarian aid donors are demonstrating commitment to assume our part of the shared responsibility of the international community to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve human dignity.

We launched **#Team Europe**, to support countries in tackling the impact of COVID-19 around the world, including the most vulnerable in conflict zones. Such as the 70 million forcibly displaced people around the world, many of whom find themselves caught between armed conflict and the pandemic. Or countries with weak health systems, without access to clean water and sanitation for all and where conflicts have destroyed infrastructure. In such environments, the consequences of the pandemic are devastating.

The EU has also set up a temporary **Humanitarian Air Bridge** to facilitate the delivery of emergency supplies and the transport of humanitarian aid workers for the COVID-19 response to the most critical areas around the world, providing a lifeline for some of the most vulnerable.

The EU's global **COVID-19 pledging marathon** has been ongoing since early May, raising 9.8 billion euros so far to accelerate the development and deployment of effective diagnostics, treatments and a vaccine. Without them, every country in the world remains vulnerable.

Mr. Chair,

This year, we celebrate the **75th anniversary of the United Nations**. The current state of the world, in which too many lives continue to be uprooted due to conflict, poverty, climate change, natural disasters, as well as COVID-19, is a stark reminder of the continued relevance of the UN.

A collective response to address the needs of the most vulnerable, through **effective and coordinated multilateralism**, with the UN playing a central role, remains critical,

We fully support the **UN Secretary General's leadership** in regard to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We support the UNSG's call for a global ceasefire in light of the pandemic and reiterate our support to the coordinating role of the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in the global public health response.

While the vast majority of humanitarian needs today can be traced to conflict situations, COVID-19 is exacerbating pre-existing needs. The EU and its Member States remain concerned about **violations of International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian access impediments**. In their efforts to prevent the spread of the pandemic, governments have taken measures restricting movement and access, which in some cases unintentionally impede humanitarian operations, in particular by restricting the movement of humanitarian and health workers and material assistance. We call on all Member States to take action to proactively and rapidly address barriers to humanitarian action while continuing their efforts to protect public health.

COVID-19 has created not only a global health crisis, but has also had a severe impact on the protection of civilians, exacerbating existing inequalities and humanitarian needs. Protection risks have increased, especially for women and girls, including risks of child, early and forced marriage and sexual and gender-based violence. Children, especially girls, are particularly vulnerable, not only to direct protection risks but also to long-term consequences, such as those related to the lack of quality education in emergencies, exacerbated by the closing of schools during the COVID-19 crisis. Due to the pandemic, schools are left empty or abandoned, with an increasing risk of becoming military targets. Out of school children, especially in armed conflict, are also more at risk to become victims of violence, abuse, and recruitment. We have to prevent this.

Rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access remains critical, as well as the free flow of critical humanitarian goods and personnel within and across countries, and the **safety, security and protection of humanitarian and health workers**.

We also echo the SG's call for action on **mental health**. Integrating mental health and psychosocial support in the COVID-19 response will help people and communities to recover better.

Special attention to the most vulnerable remains crucial. We should also keep in mind that persons in vulnerable situations should not only be seen as victims; emphasis should be given to their full participation and inclusion.

Mr. Chair,

These are challenging times, requiring a coordinated "UN as one" approach. The EU remains a strong supporter of the system of global governance, with an effective and efficient UN at its core. You can count on our continued support.

Thank you.