



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - New York

## Italian National Statement ECOSOC-HAS

Mr. Chair,

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Despite the considerable efforts that the international community has made to improve our collective action in tackling humanitarian crises, we are nowadays confronted with a growing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance, as a consequence of enduring conflicts and violence, more frequent and intense natural disasters, extreme weather events and the present pandemic. Covid-19 has further exacerbated the need for humanitarian assistance, also leading to an increase in the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. This gloomy scenario, coupled with increasingly shrunk humanitarian spaces and overstretched financial recourses, calls for a collective stepped-up effort by the humanitarian community. On the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the public and global nature of the COVID-19 points out that only by coordinating our efforts globally and supporting the multilateral approach of the UN system we will manage to overcome this emergency.

The dire consequences of the pandemic are even more catastrophic in those countries already facing a humanitarian crisis, namely because of armed conflicts. Italy fully supports the Secretary General's call for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world and is strongly in favor of referring to this appeal in all relevant UN resolutions and documents. It is time to put armed conflicts on lockdown and focus, all together, on the fight against the coronavirus.

Humanitarian action cannot replace political solutions and this is why Italy considers imperative to ensure the unconditional respect for International Humanitarian Law, in all circumstances, in international and non-international armed conflicts, by guaranteeing that the principles set by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are fully implemented. As pointed out by the Secretary General in this year's thematic report, civilians continue to account for the vast majority of casualties in armed conflicts, including targeted attacks. Therefore, a more coordinated and effective effort in promoting and ensuring the enforcement of international humanitarian law - especially of those provisions aimed at protecting civilians and civilian infrastructures - is strongly needed in order to mitigate the consequences of armed operations on the suffering of the affected population.

New and complex challenges lie ahead for the respect of IHL, namely the non-international armed conflicts, the proliferation of non-state armed groups associated with the dilution of responsibility and chain of command, and the growing difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and civilians, terrorism and cyber-attacks. In this context, where systematic violations persist and are not likely to decrease, the international community has a moral duty to step up its humanitarian response. Civilians in conflicts must be protected at "360 degrees". Protection must not be limited to ensuring that civilians are not directly involved and targeted in military operations. It should also reflect a "fundamental human-rights" approach, based notably on the right to life, the right to basic health and the right to education.

Mr. Chair,

Many national health systems and safety nets, especially in fragile contexts, seem not able to cope with the challenges posed by the current COVID 19 crisis. It is crucial to ensure that nobody is left behind in receiving the proper medical treatment and assistance.

In this regard, the pandemic is increasing the risk of gender-based violence and is further limiting women's access to education, legal protection and health services. We have to ensure that women are put at the core of the international

response to the pandemic, in order to avert the risk of a dramatic step backward in gender equality and women empowerment.

Italy is also actively and restlessly committed to the protection of children in armed conflicts. In order to create positive and long-lasting results for the protection of the rights of children, Italy presented an open pledge on the occasion of the 33rd Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent to guarantee that children can live safely and enjoy their rights even in conflict situations. We pledged, among other things, to ensure that humanitarian actors are given unimpeded access to children and to guarantee the continuation of education in situations of armed conflict. Without education, there is no future for societies affected by humanitarian crises and this is why Italy fully supports the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enormously impacted humanitarian logistics. As countries adopt restrictive measures to prevent the disease from spreading, humanitarian operators struggle to deliver the necessary assistance. As a result, many people now risk not receiving the aid they desperately need. This seems particularly true in the food sector, where thousands of people relying on humanitarian aid now risk being severely affected by the pandemic-induced disruptions to supply chains. It is of paramount importance that humanitarian and health cargoes and personnel can move smoothly and without restrictions between and within countries. For this reason, Italy has committed to advocate for a full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and has launched a “Food Coalition” to tackle hunger.

Italy fully endorses the Plans and the Appeals launched by numerous international institutions, such as the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) put forward by the United Nations or the Appeals of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Moreover, Italy firmly supports the initiatives carried out by the European Commission, especially the TEAM Europe approach as well as the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge (“EU HAB”).

Mr. Chair,

Conflicts and violence are not the only causes of humanitarian crises. A relevant quota of our emergency action is nowadays channelled to respond to natural disasters or extreme weather events.

These natural phenomena represent a wake-up call and should induce us to strengthen our efforts in disaster risk mitigation, both at the national and international level. Immediate actions in disaster prevention and preparedness have never been more important. A cultural shift in approaching natural disasters is needed: while not underestimating or neglecting the need to reinforce the international capacity to respond rapidly and in a coordinated manner to natural disasters, more emphasis must be put into prevention and preparedness actions. Due to the geomorphological fragility of our territory, over the last years, Italy has developed valuable competence both in prevention/preparedness action and in emergency response and recovery. This allows us not only to support our partners in their emergency responses but also to share with them our know-how to build up or reinforce their resilience and their technical capacities.

In the logic of “prevention rather than intervention”, Italy is also looking with great attention to new ways of more strategic humanitarian financing, based on the fact that some drivers of humanitarian crises, such as specific climate events or epidemics, have a certain degree of predictability.

The protection of forcibly displaced people must be a priority of today's humanitarian action. This requires a holistic and multilevel approach, aimed not only at providing life-saving basic services - such as access to food and health - but also at investing more in education in emergencies, resilience-strengthening and income-generating activities. Such investments are key to build more resilient societies, which can then protect themselves more effectively from the so-called “aid dependency” trap.

In this context, Italy attaches the utmost importance to the “localization” of the humanitarian response. Humanitarians need to go “as local as possible” to the beneficiaries of humanitarian actions, in order to better focus on their actual needs and priorities. Furthermore, the localization of the response is key in fostering social dialogue and cohesion. In this respect, it is necessary to make sure that the implementation of sanctions or counter-terrorism legislation does not undermine or hamper the “localization” of the humanitarian response.

Together with its support to the international response, Italy is currently adapting and reorienting its humanitarian programs all over the world, in order to make sure that pre-existing projects can cope with the impact of Covid-19 while still pursuing the objectives for which they were conceived.

Today, more than ever, Italy reaffirms its commitment to come to the aid of vulnerable populations with a people-centered approach.