

Italian National Statement ECOSOC-HAS 2021

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 scale up our collective action in tackling humanitarian crises, we are nowadays confronted with an ever-growing number of people in need of assistance. This is a consequence of new and enduring conflicts and violence, more and more frequent and intense extreme weather events, further exacerbated by the primary and secondary consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. This dire global humanitarian scenario, coupled with increasingly shrunk humanitarian access and overstretched financial recourses, calls for a collective enhanced effort by the international community to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid, also through the increasing involvement and empowerment of local actors.

Italy considers imperative to ensure and promote the unconditional respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), 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, armed conflicts continued to be characterized by high levels of civilian death, injury and psychological trauma, sexual violence, torture and disappearance, as well as damaged and destroyed homes, schools, markets, hospitals and essential civilian infrastructure, such as electrical and water systems. 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. In addition, 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.

Food insecurity, malnutrition and undernourishment remain a serious threat in most humanitarian contexts, causing victims, deepening the vulnerability of population in need and often generating migrants', refugees' and IDPs' flows. Preventing famine through the provision of safe, sufficient and nutritious food, as well as through activities aimed at favouring access to food and at protecting livelihood is therefore a top priority of Italian humanitarian assistance. For this reason, we fully share and support the G7 Famine prevention and humanitarian crises Compact.

Food security can connect all elements of the humanitarian-development-peace Nexus. Conflicts are the main driver of food insecurity. Contributing to peace and strengthening the resilience of fragile households are therefore crucial to fight hunger. In line with this view, the G20 development Ministers' meeting that Italy will host on June 29 will be dedicated to food security.

The protection of women and girls in emergencies represents a priority of Italy's humanitarian action, in the awareness that, both in situations of conflict and in emergency contexts following natural disasters, women and girls are disproportionately affected and are in conditions of extreme vulnerability. Italy is also aware that 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 at the core of the international humanitarian response, in order to avert the risk of a dramatic step backward in gender equality and women empowerment. Moreover, we also need to recognize that girls and girl children with any form of disability are among the most vulnerable: they must overcome physical and cultural barriers to access education, are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and to greater risk of violence, including sexual violence. Italy looks at women and girls in emergencies not only as a beneficiary of needed assistance, but, more importantly, as a powerful factor of change. Gender-responsive recovery strategies are therefore essential to making up for the ground lost during 2020. In this regards, Italy actively joined the G7 Declaration on "Girls' education: the heart of Covid-19 recovery and unlocking Agenda 2030". With this declaration, the G7 Member States including Italy are committed to place gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the heart of our work to build back better.

Italy is also actively committed to the protection of children in emergencies. We are aware that humanitarian crises expose children to proportionately greater and prolonged suffering, which, if not addressed, can undermine the human development of individuals and, consequently, the social and economic development of the communities themselves. In order to create positive and long-lasting results for the protection of the rights of children, we are working with determination to implement the open pledge we presented on the 33rd

Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, which aims to guarantee that children can live safely and enjoy their rights even in conflict situations. Among our commitments, we are engaged in outreach and awareness raising initiatives on the importance of ensuring the continuation of education also in situations of armed conflict, as an element not only to alleviate the scars of the wars but also to foster future peace and stability. This is why Italy fully supports the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, also in view of the forthcoming fourth Safe Schools Conference. Education in emergencies therefore represents a top priority sector of Italy's humanitarian action. Italy adopts an overarching approach, aimed at combining a wide range of activities such as infrastructural rehabilitation of school buildings, school feeding programs as an incentive tool to school attendance, supply of school material and training of teachers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also proven, once again, that global preparedness and response capacity is key to ensure prompt and efficient delivery of emergency relief aid. In this context, we believe that the international humanitarian logistics plays a key role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. Based on lessons learnt in 2020 and in view of potential future health and humanitarian crisis, Italy is committed to enhance global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity. To this end, within the framework of the Italian G20 Presidency, Italy is honored to host next 30th June, in the premises of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Brindisi, Italy, the ministerial event "*The role of logistics in preparedness and response for the Covid-19 pandemic and future humanitarian and health crises*", aimed at strengthening international cooperation in international humanitarian logistics. In this regards, we believe that an enhanced cooperation should aim at building shared operating procedures, simplify administrative procedures for humanitarian cargoes importation, enhance pre-stocking of emergency supplies. Italy is also committed to further strengthen UNHRD Brindisi's storage, training, research and innovation capacities.

Conflicts and violence are not the only causes of humanitarian crises. A growing part of our emergency action is nowadays channeled 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. A cultural shift in approaching natural disasters is needed: 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 a valuable competence in early warning, early action and recovery activities. This allows us not only to support our partners in their emergency responses but also to share with them our expertise to build up or reinforce their resilience and their technical

capacities. In the logic of “prevention rather than intervention”, Italy is also looking with greater attention to new ways of humanitarian financing, such as “anticipatory financing” and “forecast-based financing”, based on the assumption that some drivers of humanitarian crises, such as specific climate events or epidemics, have a certain degree of predictability. Finally yet importantly, we believe it is of paramount importance for the humanitarian community to begin engaging in the “greening of humanitarian action”, in terms of reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid itself.

The progressive exiting from COVID emergency will hopefully allow us next year to engage in a full negotiation of the Resolution “*Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*”, in order to update and further improve its contents.