



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

UN ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

New Zealand statement

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Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to participate in this year's ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment. We thank Ambassador Hilale for his briefing and agree that in the context of COVID-19, this year provides a critical and timely opportunity to reinforce the importance of global solidarity.

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption and challenges to global health systems and economies. For those countries and people already greatly affected by humanitarian crises and climate change these challenges are greater than ever. The pandemic has highlighted inequalities and exclusion. Already marginalised and vulnerable people including women, older persons, persons with disabilities, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender, and refugees and internally displaced people have been particularly impacted by COVID-19. We acknowledge the commitment of humanitarian workers who continue to provide life-saving assistance in increasingly complex and dangerous operating environments.

COVID-19 has also served as a reminder of the inherent resilience and adaptability of people all around the world. In the Pacific, our neighbours have effectively managed the dual challenges of a destructive cyclone season and COVID-19. The Pacific, and other Small Island Developing States, have unique needs as they respond to COVID-19. It is important that these states are not left behind in the humanitarian response. Climate change continues to pose a threat to the safety and livelihoods of Small Island Developing States, and globally. Until the drivers of climate change are acknowledged and addressed, intensified natural disasters and degradation of resources will lead to increased loss of life, destruction, and require expensive large scale responses.

Delivering humanitarian assistance has never been more challenging, with the new demands created by COVID-19 compounding pre-existing needs. The violent targeting of humanitarian

and medical workers in conflict settings persists in clear violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). New Zealand calls on all parties to conflict to respect IHL and encourages the international community to hold perpetrators to account. Warfare continues to be urbanised with devastating consequences for civilian life and infrastructure. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is particularly devastating on civilian populations and infrastructure.

We, the international community, must recognise these ongoing challenges and the impacts of COVID-19 on the world's most vulnerable populations including those communities displaced and devastated by conflict. However, in the absence of political solutions to conflict the vast majority of global humanitarian needs will persist.

New Zealand applauds the response by the United Nations and its partners, led by OCHA, to address the impact of COVID-19 in humanitarian settings. An effective response requires global solidarity, international cooperation, and multilateralism, and New Zealand is committed to playing our part. We welcome the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and are pleased to provide an initial contribution of \$7 million to the plan through the CERF, heeding calls by Under Secretary-General Mark Lowcock to provide flexible funding.

We reiterate the importance of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) in all settings, including in humanitarian contexts. SRHR are a vital component of quality essential health care services. Reliable and safe access to sexual and reproductive health services is essential to ensuring the health and well-being of all people, especially women and girls. We are concerned about the increasing politicisation of human rights in regards to women and girls and we are committed to defending these hard-won rights.

As we prepare to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we encourage the UN system to build on the positive reforms of recent years and continue to embrace the collaboration that has enabled a rapid global response to COVID-19. We welcome increased

partnerships between humanitarian and development systems, including on funding, and the willingness to bring health, humanitarian and development responses together effectively. This pandemic continues to devastate lives and communities; but it has also catalysed new ways of working. We encourage the international community to take stock of these new approaches and move forward as a stronger and more adaptive system.

Thank you.