

Norges innlegg under ECOSOC humanitære segment (HAS) 2020

‘Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles’

We are halfway into 2020, a year that could set yet another record for the number of people affected by humanitarian crises. The ECOSOC HAS provides us with an opportunity to discuss how we can work together to reinforce humanitarian action. As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, let us take this opportunity to remind ourselves of our collective responsibility to do more to support people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance. We believe the themes chosen for this year’s HAS reflect issues of the utmost importance in today’s humanitarian climate.

Let me start by commending Dr Tedros, Mark Lowcock and their colleagues at WHO and OCHA for the leadership and coordination they have provided during the pandemic. The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan addresses the needs of the world’s most vulnerable people. Norway will continue to support the coordinated international effort, including by providing financial support for the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) and humanitarian appeals issued by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

While it is vital for the international community to respond to the direct humanitarian impacts of COVID-19, it is equally important that we do not forget the many ongoing humanitarian challenges. We would like to highlight some areas of particular concern to Norway:

Firstly, continued focus on protection is essential, especially in conflict-related crises, where it is crucial to ensure that all parties respect international humanitarian law. This includes granting safe and unhindered access to civilians in need of protection and assistance.

COVID-19 is further aggravating current protection challenges: according to UNFPA, 47 million women and girls risk losing access to contraceptives, and 31

million women and girls are at risk of becoming victims of domestic violence due to the pandemic. We are therefore pleased to see that the gender dimension has been integrated into the GHRP - including the need to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services.

We must maintain the momentum of our efforts to make the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence a key humanitarian priority. The conference on ending SGBV held in Oslo last year helped change the way we address this challenge. Countries and other stakeholders pledged to provide substantial resources, and made hundreds of other commitments relating to operational support, prevention and response services, leadership and coordination. By working together, we can achieve better results. Norway encourages more states and organisations to join the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies.

Secondly, the coronavirus crisis has clearly shown that we need a holistic approach. Both the direct and the indirect consequences of the pandemic must be addressed. We are particularly concerned by the rise in the number of people facing acute food insecurity and hunger. The UN and its partners must work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. While responding to immediate humanitarian needs in line with the humanitarian principles, we should also aim to strengthen health systems, education sectors and food security in order to build resilience for the future.

Thirdly, we should build on lessons learned and use the COVID-19 situation to further strengthen local humanitarian action. Norway consistently stresses the key role played by local, frontline humanitarian workers. In particular, we recognise the unique role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It is important that resources reach first-line responders quickly so that they are able to take action to mitigate the immediate consequences of the pandemic.

Fourthly, we need to maintain a particular focus on refugees and internally displaced people. In the current crisis, there is an increased need for protection, shelter, food, water and basic healthcare services. While the main

responsibility for protection of IDPs rests with national governments, we need to draw attention to their situation and increase international support. Norway has championed the establishment of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement. We support the Panel's request for an extended mandate in light of the impact COVID-19 has had on its work. We look forward to the report of the High-level Panel, with its recommendations on how to deal with what is one of the major humanitarian challenges of our time. We encourage Member States to step up their efforts and provide financial resources to enable the panel to deliver on its mandate.

Fifthly, we need to give priority to innovation and the development of new working methods that will lead to better and more effective results for people affected by conflict and crisis. In our humanitarian innovation efforts, Norway is focusing on protection and green response. We need new tools, methods and approaches to protect people from violence and abuse. We need innovation to provide refugee settlements and host communities with access to sustainable, modern forms of energy.

The ECOSOC humanitarian resolution is an important guiding document. At a time when international collaboration and solidarity are more important than ever, it is regrettable that we, yet again, were unable to reach consensus on the resolution.

We are pleased by the inclusion of important references to the COVID-19 pandemic in this year's resolution. At the same time, we strongly regret the fact that women's rights to sexual and reproductive health continue to be challenged. We see that it is proving difficult to make constructive progress each year, and we question the added value of the negotiation process. We therefore call on member states to consider making the ECOSOC resolution biennial.

Norway stands in solidarity with people across the world who are affected by humanitarian crises and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. No country can

address these challenges alone. As we mark the 75th anniversary of the UN, I can assure you that Norway will continue to do its part.

Thank you.