

ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 23 – 25 June 2021

General discussion: Statement by Sweden

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This year's Humanitarian Affairs Segment takes place at a critical juncture. One in 33 people worldwide now need emergency assistance and protection. Some 174 million people have been pushed into acute hunger and 39 million people are just one step away from starvation. As a matter of fact close to half a million already live in famine-like conditions. By the end of last year, an unprecedented 82.4 million people around the world were forcibly displaced.

2021 will mark 30 years since the humanitarian omnibus resolution, facilitated by Sweden, was first adopted in the UN General Assembly, marking the very foundation of the UN humanitarian system. More than ever, Sweden remains steadfast in our commitment to strengthen the humanitarian system and deliver assistance to those most in need, even in the hardest-to-reach settings, in accordance with the humanitarian principles.

Excellencies,

Humanitarian funding has increased over time but continues to be outpaced by skyrocketing needs. As a result, the number of underfunded humanitarian crises is growing. Sweden is deeply concerned about this development. We must redouble efforts to broaden the donor base, but also be more innovative and effective with the funding at our disposal.

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that flexible, unearmarked, multi-year and front-loaded funding is fundamental for organisations to act fast and forcefully and to allocate resources where they are most needed. Sweden is

proud to be a top donor of flexible funding to several UN agencies and to the Red Cross movement.

Excellencies,

Conflicts, COVID-19, extreme weather due to climate change and a loss of biodiversity, have together pushed millions of people to the brink of starvation. If we do not take immediate and decisive action, we will witness multiple famines and indeed a hunger pandemic.

Famines are man-made and entirely preventable. The catastrophic effects of the vicious cycle of conflict and hunger are evident. Sweden brought this link to the attention of the UN Security Council, leading to the adoption of Security Council resolution 2417, which for the first time recognised the need to prevent and end conflict-induced hunger.

The award of the Nobel Peace prize to the World Food Programme last year was an urgent reminder that we now must transform those commitments into actions.

Excellencies,

Neither can the links between climate change, extreme weather event and humanitarian impact longer be ignored. Almost three out of four natural disasters are water-related, like floods and drought. And more than three out of four of the displacements last year were triggered by natural disasters.

The case for more anticipatory humanitarian action is evident. Better warning systems and high-quality data are required, but also sufficient and pre-agreed financing. A significant scale up of anticipatory funding was also one of the key

recommendations from the high-level meeting 'Anticipate and Act' that Sweden co-hosted last October. Early action is not only more humane, it is also more cost-efficient.

Excellencies,

Over the past year, we have witnessed an unprecedented reversal of decades of development achievements. To turn the tide of hunger and hardship we must simultaneously address the needs, the triggers, and the root causes and move the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace actors from words into deeds.

Humanitarian actors need to better prepare the ground through catalytic and time-limited interventions that enable a transition to development actors. Development actors also need to step in at an earlier stage to seek synergies and complementarities with humanitarian assistance. In addition, conflict-sensitive programming that incorporates conflict analysis throughout planning and implementation is crucial. Local actors must be involved in early warning, identifying tensions, threats and societal mobilisation.

Excellencies,

In closing, the Covid-19 pandemic has hit the poorest and most vulnerable people the hardest, the ones most often already in need of lifesaving assistance. As member states and aid organisations, we must never forget the humanitarian imperative to help and protect those most in need.

Thank you.