



United Kingdom
Mission to the
United Nations

United Kingdom Written Statement

ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 9-11 June 2020

Excellencies,

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is facing an unprecedented global emergency. All over the world we are seeing the devastating impact of this invisible enemy – both on global health and economies. For many countries, the pandemic comes on top of severe and sustained humanitarian crises, driven by conflict, instability, poverty and climate change. Last year, the UN estimated that in 2020 nearly 168 million people in 53 countries will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This represents 1 in every 45 people in the world, the highest number in decades. COVID-19, and its secondary impacts will exacerbate these existing vulnerabilities and significantly increase these numbers.

As a leading donor to the COVID-19 global response and one of the biggest humanitarian donors globally, the UK is working with our partners to stop the spread of COVID-19, support fragile economies, find a vaccine, and save lives around the world. We are ensuring that our support goes to those who need it the most, including refugees, women and girls, and other forcibly displaced populations. We have so far **pledged up to £764 million of UK aid, and will continue to do our bit to support the global response.**

The global humanitarian system saves millions of lives every year. Everyone around the virtual table has a key part to play in that, and we should all be proud of the work we do. We would like to pay special tribute to aid workers on the frontlines around

the world currently supporting the COVID 19 response – your work is invaluable and we are all grateful to you. Now, as needs are at a record high, and the risks we face become more complex, it has never been more important for all of us to work together and harness our human and financial resources and ideas in support of those in need.

A key priority for the UK is to support fragile health systems and the health response to COVID 19, including by supporting access to essential supplies to save millions of lives and reduce the risk of future waves of infection.

We also know that the secondary impacts of this crisis will be significant. We are therefore working to prevent the humanitarian impact from deepening in existing crises. Humanitarian crises like Yemen, South Sudan and DRC continue, with emerging issues such as the locust outbreaks in East Africa. These crises will be further impacted by COVID-19. It is therefore essential that we work to maintain lifesaving humanitarian operations and funding, and ensure that, as far as possible, essential services continue, including for health and nutrition, and for water, hygiene and sanitation.

The UK is absolutely committed to ensuring that our assistance reaches the most marginalized and vulnerable people who will be the worst affected by this crisis, such as forcibly displaced populations. This includes our commitment to work with others to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, advance sexual and reproductive health and rights and meet the needs of people with disabilities and marginalised groups, and we will continue to push for these issues to be central to humanitarian response, including the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP).

In order to meet this humanitarian challenge, an efficient and effective humanitarian system has never been more important. As we confront need on a scale that vastly outpaces the resources available, it is vital that we take a strategic approach to making resources go furthest. This needs to be driven by data, focused on contexts

with the greatest and most severe need, held accountable by affected populations, inclusive of marginalised groups and ensuring the most effective responses, including greater use of cash where possible.

A range of actors will be indispensable in this endeavour; as well as national governments and the UN, local and grassroots organisations and the Red Cross network will be key. It is important that we put our support behind local and community leadership in decision-making, and see evidence of an uptake in community participation in and shaping of appeals going forward.

And while it is essential that we focus on action that will save lives, we also need to avoid longer term damage to access to education, health systems, food security, livelihoods and political instability. We need to work in strong partnership with International Financial Institutions and development actors at the global and at the local level on the immediate COVID response, as well as to ensure a strong focus on preparedness and resilience-building, and long-term recovery. The COVID 19 pandemic, devastating as it is, provides an opportunity for us to reflect, recalibrate and take forward actions to ensure we can be as prepared as possible for future crises.

In partnership together, we can drive necessary change and protect the most vulnerable from existing humanitarian crises and better prepare for the future.

This must be a global effort. The world cannot afford to wait.

Thank you.