



799 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA
NEW YORK, NY 10017

UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

General Statement Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council

**United States of America
June 11, 2020
New York, NY**

The United States is pleased to participate in this year's Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We thank all the participants for their continued commitment and leadership in improving effective and efficient humanitarian assistance. The role of the United Nations, its partners, other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations is especially critical this year in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing, equally critical, humanitarian responses around the world.

Unfortunately, the ECOSOC body was not able to make progress on the Humanitarian Affairs Segment resolution during the negotiations this year due to the inclusion of divisive language. Despite the lack of progress, the United States remains steadfast in our commitment to the coordination of assistance to vulnerable populations impacted by conflict and by COVID-19. We are ready to work with the facilitators, future ECOSOC leadership, and other Member States to ensure that divisive language does not continue to undermine the overarching goal of providing life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The United States is pleased to join other Member States in supporting the "Call to Action in support of humanitarian response in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic," put forward by this year's Chair, Morocco. During these unprecedented circumstances, all of our best efforts must focus on addressing this pandemic to ensure recovery and progress toward a better tomorrow.

In this regard, while we support efforts to support and fund a unified international response, we remain concerned with elements of the Secretary-General's Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Accordingly, the United States underscores that, within the GHRP, each Member State can contribute to the crisis response in a manner it sees fit pursuant to its own national laws, means, and preferences. The United States stands ready to help those in need, but will not compromise our values, laws, and policies in the face of a crisis, nor support or endorse the inexcusable use of a crisis to advance a policy agenda that does not enjoy Member State consensus, that is controversial, and which runs counter to U.S. policies. The United States rejects any interpretation of international human rights to require any State

Party to provide access to abortion. In short, there is no international right to abortion, nor is there any duty on the part of States to finance or facilitate abortion.

The United States strongly condemns violence against or exploitation of women and girls at all times, including during humanitarian crises. We defend human dignity and support access to high-quality health care for women and girls throughout their lifespan. We emphasize that health care should focus on health promotion and prevention, consistent with national legislation and policies. At the UN and elsewhere, the United States will continue its work to build consensus on clear terminology that would better promote women's health without also promoting abortion.

The United States is the most generous nation in the world, and we continue to lead in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The American people have given more than \$11 billion that will benefit the global response to COVID-19, and we continue to ensure that the substantial U.S. funding and scientific efforts on this front remain a central and coordinated part of the worldwide effort against the disease. We will continue to offer our assistance to those in need, working within the international system, with our bilateral partners and allies, and through the private sector and non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, to save lives and alleviate human suffering.

The United States has capabilities greater than any other country and is proud to use them in humanitarian emergencies for those who need it. In Fiscal Year 2019, we provided nearly \$9.3 billion globally in humanitarian assistance. On average, the United States responds to over 65 disasters each year in more than 50 countries providing assistance to people affected by rapid-onset disasters – such earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods – and slow-onset crises, including drought and conflict. We are also the largest provider of food assistance in the world. While we address the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must not forget the historic number of people already suffering from the effects of humanitarian crises around the globe.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States is concerned about the spread of COVID-19 in countries already experiencing major humanitarian crises, as well as the continued obstruction of humanitarian access by parties to the conflict and unacceptable attacks on humanitarian workers. In Syria, the risk of a severe outbreak is heightened by the country's already fragile health system, continued displacement, high population density in areas of significant displacement such as northwest Syria, low levels of sanitation and lack of cross-border access in the Northeast following the removal of UN access to the Yaroubia crossing from Iraq. In Yemen, the spread of COVID-19 comes as the Yemeni people already suffer from obstruction of humanitarian aid by the Houthis, a health system ravaged by war, and unacceptable levels of food insecurity impacting nearly 17 million people. In Venezuela, COVID-19 continues to spread as the regime cracks down on medical providers and journalists working to respond and report on the situation. The pandemic is also affecting the more than five million Venezuelans forcibly displaced in the Americas, who are increasingly unable to access lifesaving services including health care and social protection, as well as livelihoods opportunities. We are incredibly concerned with ongoing humanitarian crises across Africa, a continent already suffering from multiple natural and man-made disasters.

While conflict remains the greatest driver of humanitarian needs, we also are facing a pandemic that impacts all humankind and notably exacerbates the vulnerabilities of those already at risk. This public health emergency requires innovative and multi-sectoral responses to address the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 without compromising financial support and global attention for ongoing humanitarian interventions.

The United States continues to be a leader in pursuing the collective advancement of effective, principled, and accountable humanitarian action. We are committed to leveraging our resources to respond to humanitarian crises, lead in humanitarian diplomacy, and lead donors to the global humanitarian system. However, we also strongly encourage other donors to increase their support commensurate with the vast humanitarian need. The United States provides far more than its fair share of the funds disbursed, not just pledged, in many crisis situations. We need other donors to do more.

Finally, the United States will continue to advocate for significant progress on efforts to reduce unnecessary and duplicative costs within UN agencies. With the number and severity of complex humanitarian crises outpacing global capacity to respond, the U.S. Government also seeks significantly improved coordination within the humanitarian system on joint needs assessments and joint analyses that inform and improve prioritized humanitarian response plans and appeals. The U.S. Government expects that all UN agencies engaged in humanitarian assistance should make significant advances in each of these areas. We also urge improved collaboration between humanitarian, peace-building, and development actors in crisis-affected and fragile contexts.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our priorities, and we request that this statement be made part of the official record of this meeting.

END STATEMENT