



**Statement to the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment by
Ambassador Stuart COMBERBACH, Permanent Representative
of Zimbabwe to the United Nations and other international
organisations in Geneva - 23 to 25 June, 2021.**

Chairperson

Zimbabwe would like to acknowledge and to thank you for your strong personal commitment to humanitarian affairs since assuming the post of Vice President of ECOSOC and, of course, for your role in the preparations for this Session. We are confident that you will steer us to a successful outcome.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Burkina Faso on behalf of the Africa Group. We fully appreciate the theme of this year's Session - namely ***strengthening humanitarian assistance to meet the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilising respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships.***

These issues lie at the very core of today's humanitarian affairs discourse and are being discussed at a time when some 235 million people across the globe are in need of humanitarian assistance of which a significant percentage of them are in urgent need of both food and shelter.

Chairperson,

As we look to strengthen humanitarian assistance, both as a collective and indeed as individual members, perhaps we need to introspect about our role in mobilising assistance for the victims of armed conflict, natural disasters - including those associated with climate change and of course the millions so severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What stops us, Chair, as the humanitarian affairs segment, from calling upon all parties involved in armed conflicts to end them? Wars and other conflicts currently account for more than half the globe's 30 million refugees, and a similar percentage of our world's 80 million displaced.

Chairperson,

We should also be vociferous advocates for more robust climate change interventions. Manifestations of global warming such as cyclones and prolonged droughts lead not only to the significant displacement of people but also to extreme hunger, thereby further deepening global poverty levels.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we should also be strong advocates for vaccine equity.

We all acknowledge that the pandemic has triggered a global recession of a magnitude not experienced since the 1930's. Already, millions across the globe have lost jobs and livelihoods. Already, more than 100 million people have been pushed back into extreme poverty.

If the virus is not brought under control, in a sustained and fully equitable manner, in all of our countries, a further massive increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is simply inevitable. Antonio Guterres' stark reminder

that ‘none of us is safe until everyone is safe’ must be more than just a simple mantra. It must, for all of us, be a call to action.

Simply appealing for more resources for humanitarian assistance is not enough. It will not, on its own, solve the myriad and worsening global humanitarian challenges.

So, Chairperson, as the Humanitarian Segment, let us also add our voices to calls to end wars and conflicts, to mitigate climate change and to equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines to stop the spread of the virus.

Chairperson, outside the UN system Zimbabwe supports the resolution adopted by the ICRC and the IFRC, at the 33rd International Conference in 2019, for the strengthening of international humanitarian law.

Zimbabwe also supports the two organisations’ joint Environment and Climate Charter for Humanitarian Organisations launched in April of this year. This is an apt example of partnership in the context of a broader approach to humanitarian assistance. Indeed, the charter addresses climate change, a phenomenon inextricably linked to forced displacement.

Chairperson, the issues of inclusion, gender and innovation are integral components of an invigorated global humanitarian assistance framework. Indeed, all vulnerable people ought to be assisted. Research has established that women and children are the most vulnerable and that they need special attention. At national level, many countries have embraced cash transfers to the vulnerable, by way of secure mobile-money platforms.

In Zimbabwe, notwithstanding the harsh economic environment, we continue to prioritise humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable, most especially women and children.

Indeed, strengthened humanitarian assistance and social protection are key deliverables under our National Development Strategy (2021-2025) - a national development blueprint which fully embraces human-centred development in parallel with economic growth.

Just last week, the Government of Zimbabwe approved the Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report submitted by the multi-stakeholder Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) - itself a good example of effective partnership on humanitarian affairs.

Apart from partnership, however, this detailed Assessment demonstrates and underlines the centrality of research and empirical data to any strengthening of humanitarian assistance.

This recent Assessment Report shows a reduction in the prevalence of food insecurity in Zimbabwe's rural areas from 56% in 2020 to 27% this year. This is attributable to a combination of a good agricultural season and government interventions under the umbrella of our new National Development Strategy.

Finally, Chairperson, Zimbabwe is supportive of all efforts to strengthen humanitarian assistance and, within that context, to more effectively address the root causes of large displacements.

I thank you.