

# OCHA on Message: General Assembly resolution 46/182



## What is General Assembly resolution 46/182?<sup>1</sup>

When the international humanitarian community provides emergency assistance, it is guided by UN General Assembly resolution 46/182 “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations”. The resolution outlines a framework for humanitarian assistance and a set of guiding principles.

The General Assembly adopted the resolution on 19 December 1991. This decision was influenced by world events at that time.

The resolution includes 12 guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, which include the following:

- Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.<sup>2</sup>
- The sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country [...]
- Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory.
- States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of these organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance [...]

### Recommending reform

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) was created in 1992 to support the new humanitarian coordination arrangements. However, in 1997 the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan,

During the Gulf War, the UN’s humanitarian assistance to conflict-displaced people was uncoordinated and led to duplicated efforts. This highlighted the need for an organization with the specific mandate to coordinate assistance to affected people in emergencies.

GA resolution 46/182 established new arrangements for humanitarian coordination. It strengthened the existing position of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator (DRC)

and renamed it the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). The DRC role had a limited mandate that did not include complex emergencies. GA resolution 46/182 helped remedy this gap by creating the ERC position with nine areas of responsibility. They include coordinating humanitarian assistance, facilitating access to emergency areas, organizing needs-assessment missions, preparing joint appeals and mobilizing resources, among others.

Resolution 46/182 also established the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (which in 2005 became the Central Emergency Response Fund - CERF) and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). These mechanisms have all been refined and expanded, and are important elements of the current humanitarian system (see *OCHA on Message CAP* and *OCHA on Message CERF*).

advocacy role. Thus, in 1998 DHA was transformed into the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Resolution 46/182 remains the basis of OCHA’s mandate.

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed review of the normative evolution of humanitarian coordination, please visit: [www.unocha.org/what-we-do/policy/thematic-areas/OCHAs-work-with-governments](http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/policy/thematic-areas/OCHAs-work-with-governments)

<sup>2</sup>The principle of independence was added to these principles by UN General Assembly resolution 58/114, 2003.

<sup>3</sup>A/51/950 Renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform. Report of the Secretary-General, 14 July 1997.

*“This year also marks the 20th anniversary of General Assembly resolution 46/182, which remains the common basis for the provision of humanitarian assistance. In the resolution, Member States set out the principles that guide humanitarian work, whether it is undertaken by States, the United Nations, or other humanitarian agencies such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations.”*

- Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Opening remarks for the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 2011.

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## What is OCHA’s role?

Each year, Member States negotiate a number of humanitarian resolutions in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. These humanitarian resolutions build on GA resolution 46/182 and add to the norms and guidance that support humanitarian action. During the negotiations, OCHA advises Member States on the challenges to humanitarian assistance and coordination. Over the

years, the resolutions have added detail on issues including field-level coordination, CERF, civil-military coordination, protection of civilians, common needs assessments, and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

In 2009, OCHA published a reference guide that gives an overview of changes in resolutions on humanitarian assistance and coordination over the years (see link

below). The guide is intended to help Member State delegations, OCHA staff and other humanitarian professionals to understand the existing framework. It also encourages an accountable and effective humanitarian response in accordance with humanitarian principles. A revised version will be published by the end of 2011.

## What does OCHA say?

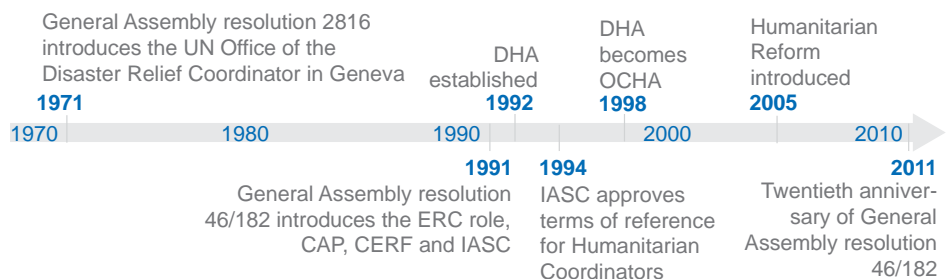
**1.** General Assembly resolution 46/182 created a framework for humanitarian assistance and coordination.

**2.** In 2011, the humanitarian community celebrated 20 years of GA resolution 46/182 and its achievements.

**3.** Effective humanitarian action in accordance with humanitarian principles is a shared responsibility. OCHA aims to support Member States and national and international humanitarian stakeholders to ensure effective emergency preparedness, and coordinated and timely emergency response.

**4.** OCHA and the wider humanitarian community must continue to respect, adhere to and promote the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and subsequent resolutions.

**Major events**



## To find out more

- To see all General Assembly resolutions, visit [www.un.org/en/documents/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/documents/index.shtml) (using the “search” field).
- Reference Guide on normative developments on the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182: <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1112153>
- An analysis of normative developments in humanitarian resolutions since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182: <http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1112151>