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**ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT 2009
CLOSING REMARKS**

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Madame Vice-President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

First and foremost, let me thank you all for your dedicated engagement during this Humanitarian Affairs Segment. The debates and discussions have particularly been rich and valuable. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all concerned for their commitment and support to the humanitarian cause.

In particular, I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to the many distinguished panelists, moderators and participants, who during the panels and side events have enriched our discussions with their real-world perspectives and expertise.

In addressing this closing session of the Segment, I would like to highlight some of the specific points that I have taken from our deliberations and perhaps mention one or two others that have not received the attention they deserve. In doing so, I would like to reassure Member States that in due course we will respond to all the points and issues raised to us during the segment.

Madame Vice President,

It is sobering that this year we are still discussing many of the same issues as we had done in previous years. It is regrettable that we still need to call for respect for and adherence to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is horrifying that we need to report to you an ever increasing number of attacks on humanitarian workers across the globe. It is worrying that the struggle for full and impeded access in some instances remains the main focus of humanitarian workers, rather than the delivery of much needed life saving assistance. So we must all exert our utmost efforts to promote respect for humanitarian principles, timely access and better protection for humanitarian workers on the ground. And I hope we can get away from too much sterile debate on whether humanitarian assistance poses a significant challenge to national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Humanitarians are not challenging, and could not challenge, these fundamental building blocks of the international community. In any case, the issues should not arise at all in the context of a classic natural disaster. But in complex emergencies, situations where the government is party to an internal conflict, or where humanitarian assistance appears to being denied to people in dire need, invocation of sovereignty cannot be enough in itself, and internationally agreed norms and principles have to find their place in the discussion and in finding the right balance between national and international responsibilities and obligations. At the same time, I recognise the need to

respond to the question of accountability for those who transgress humanitarian principles. The best accountability route is of course national, wherever possible.

Let me also say in this context that one issue we have not discussed extensively or specifically this week has been the protection of civilians in armed conflict, even if it is implicit in many of our debates. POC is fundamental to modern humanitarian practice. It is an area where international acceptance of norms and principles has come a long way. But it is also an area where lip service to those norms and principles is too often not reflected in what happens on the ground, where millions of innocent civilians continue to suffer grievously. So we have to work harder to make sure norms are translated into real-life behaviour in a much more systematic way. It is appalling, for example, that the scourge of sexual violence continues unabated in so many conflict areas, most of all in Eastern DRC where the recent upsurge in fighting has even led to a further upsurge in the already appalling high levels of reported cases of rape in North and South Kivu, and as we are all well aware, reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg. We have a comprehensive strategy to combat this but have to do much more to give it effect on the ground. Accountability is of course key in this area too - the prevailing culture of impunity is what makes such phenomena so hard to reverse.

Global Challenges: Disaster Risk Reduction & Capacity Building

Madame Vice-President,

It is also obvious from our discussions during these past two days that humanitarian needs are changing and evolving. The panel devoted to this brought out clearly how the daunting scale of humanitarian needs generated by the combined impact of global mega-trends such as climate change, population growth, urbanisation and the economic and financial crisis itself will require us 'to do more and to do it better'. We will continue to report back to you on the impact of these challenges on increasing humanitarian vulnerability and how we must respond to it. The biggest single issue is how we tackle the chronic vulnerabilities on the scale we fear may now be emerging. At the same time, as I have tried to bring out, this is an opportunity to bring together the humanitarian and development actors in a new way, and to overcome the artificial barriers that currently exist. But as the panel yesterday reminded us, we must also be constantly on the look out for innovation, technological or institutional, for flexibility and for promotion of resilience to a new multiplicity of hazards.

In terms of 'doing more', an important consensus emerging from the speeches of delegations, participants and side events is the need to focus more on capacity building for prevention and preparedness, as well as response, at the local, national and regional levels. A side event on the issue of national capacity building organised by IFRC and UNICEF emphasised, for example, the importance of clear priorities and national leadership in mapping a capacity building path towards strengthened preparedness and disaster risk reduction infrastructure. This event also highlighted the need to continue capacity building efforts even during humanitarian emergencies, and the need to allocate additional donor resources to this.

Strengthening national and local service provision infrastructure is without a doubt the most sustainable way to address chronic vulnerability, as is demonstrated by the examples

of Indonesia and Nicaragua highlighted at different points in this segment. Moreover, investment in disaster risk reduction is no longer a choice, in this time of increasing hazards - and as graphically illustrated by the representative of Munich Re in yesterday's panel 'rising risk', even without climate change- it is a necessity. It must become a local, national, regional and international priority. In this regard, I welcome the statements from stakeholders during the UNISDR event, including national NGOs, in support of the outcome of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction. The stakeholders stressed the imperative to strengthen the links of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, while also highlighting the benefits of disaster risk reduction for poverty reduction. Let me repeat that we need to make sure that the importance of climate change adaptation, and the role of disaster risk reduction within that, are fully reflected in the climate change negotiations before and at Copenhagen, and that resources are agreed to for this in those negotiations.

Humanitarian Principles: Access, Safety And Security

In doing what we do *better*, many Member States and parties have repeatedly expressed the importance of humanitarian principles. These are not an ideological luxury but a practical necessity to help ensure timely access and the safety and security of humanitarian staff.

It was therefore, particularly valuable to hear the speakers, during the panel devoted to this, bring out the operational significance of the humanitarian principles. The ICRC representative demonstrated, using country examples, how their neutrality has allowed them access to communities in need in remote locations, and more importantly allowed them to raise protection of civilians concerns with all the parties. The importance of the political will of parties in respecting international humanitarian law was underlined by the speaker from Mexico. There was consensus among the panelists and from the floor that the onus is on the parties to conflict to guarantee that the needs of communities under their control are met; including through facilitating the safe, timely and unimpeded movement of humanitarian actors.

Discussion on the problems of respecting humanitarian principles in Afghanistan and Somalia provided us with interesting insights. In Afghanistan, ACBAR, a local NGO, talked convincingly and in detail about the blurring of lines between military and civilian actors, and how distribution of assistance, for example by PRTs could even be skewed in favour of some communities, thereby putting at risk the efforts of genuine humanitarian actors trying to show full respect to the humanitarian principles. In Somalia, we heard how insecurity has disrupted the lives and livelihoods of 3.25 million persons, while the global economic crunch has reduced remittances into Somalia by 25%, causing major damage to this informal social safety network. The complex, difficult and dangerous environment in South and Central Somalia poses particular challenges for those trying to operate in full respect of the principles, but even there all concerned are doing their best to do so. This raises again the point I made in my opening speech about reminding non-state actors of their responsibilities under IHL. Somalia also presents an interesting example as to how variations in funding can themselves place constraints on our ability as humanitarians to uphold the principles of humanity and impartiality, for example when the food sector is well covered by the recently revised consolidated appeal, but the water, health and sanitation remain poorly covered. This leads

me to urge all donors and supporters of humanitarian assistance to ensure that this assistance itself is impartial and equitable.

CAP Mid-Year Review & Funding

Madame Vice-President,

Adequate resources are of course absolutely fundamental to any hope of providing an adequate humanitarian response. Many concerns have been expressed about the effects of the economic and financial crisis on funding levels for humanitarian causes.

Yesterday we launched the Mid Year Review of the Consolidated Appeals. This year we have 16 current appeals and so far two flash appeals. Humanitarian funding requirements have increased by 1.5 billion US dollars since the start of the year, bringing the total 2009 target to 9.5 billion dollars, compared to 6.3 billion at the same point last year. But it is a strikingly positive fact that donors' response to these appeals in 2009 is now the best ever at mid-year, at \$4.6 billion, 49% of requirements.

Despite this positive response, we must recall that the unmet humanitarian requirements are also at their highest levels ever at some \$4.8 billion. If the global recession is putting pressure on donor governments' aid budgets, it is of course putting even greater pressure on vulnerable communities across the globe. Let me again take this opportunity to appeal to all Governments to maintain your generosity and to contribute to ending the suffering and restoring the dignity of the 43 million people the appeals are trying to help this year, which is 15 million more people than at the same time last year, itself a striking illustration of the way humanitarian needs are already rising.

I would also like to request donors to look at appeals in an integrated way and to try to ensure more even funding between the clusters, as we discussed yesterday. The different panel discussions and side events have illustrated the equal importance of all humanitarian sectors to the saving of lives and the restoration of dignity. Let me also take this opportunity to point out that the CERF, while not in itself a donor but a pooled fund bringing together the contributions of very many donors, aims to practice optimal donor behaviour, examining funding levels among crises to target the least-funded, and examining sectors within crises and appeals to target the most urgent under funded actions.

Partnerships & Transition

Madame Vice President,

The discussions over the last few days have brought out clearly how humanitarian needs today are more acute and larger in scope than ever before, and likely to become more so still. The need for better coordination of all our efforts and better partnerships is therefore also increasing all the time.

Whether we are discussing the advancement of gender equality, improving humanitarian health action or the transition from relief to development, as we have done this week, the complementarity between national and international actors is clear. The best

practices we have heard about have at their base strong national leadership supported by a well funded, well organised and well capacitated international humanitarian operation. There are no inherent contradictions or frictions between local, national, regional and international actors; each set of actors brings their own added value to operations. We must capitalise on this to ensure maximum efficiency of humanitarian response.

ECOSOC Resolution and Legislative Mandates

Madame Vice-President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to congratulate all Member States on achieving the consensus resolution you have just adopted. I would like to add my thanks to the co-facilitators, for all their hard work on this year's – at times – difficult discussions. This resolution is a statement to the world of our shared humanitarian concerns and our commonality of purpose. The absence of a resolution would have sent an opposite message. Today's resolution will make a valuable contribution to the body of UN legislation on humanitarian assistance issues – not least on coordination. This body of legislation that you the Member States have given us and steadily enriched over the past eighteen years, is the normative framework within which humanitarian action and coordination takes place.

In this context, the side event co-hosted by the Swiss Government and OCHA this morning presented the findings of an OCHA commissioned study on the normative progress achieved by UN legislative bodies on issues such as principles, protection of civilians in armed conflict, disaster risk reduction and preparedness among others. The study shows that since the adoption of GA Resolution 46/182 in 1991, which is at the heart of our norms and practices, considerable progress has been achieved on new issues such as internal displacement, protection and financing while limited progress has been achieved on matters such as access, transition from relief to development and national and regional capacity building.

I hope Member States will look at this study carefully, in particular at the way in which it highlights areas that require further inter-governmental action. In this regard, I would like to note that Member States or rather some Member States have expressed some interest in considering a change to the timelines or regularity of the ECOSOC 'humanitarian' resolution. I would like to reassure Member States that whatever they decide, we on our side stand ready to support them. I would also like to add, that in any case we - as a system - appreciate the annual opportunity of the Humanitarian Affairs Segment to listen to Member States, capture emerging issues and trends, and to highlight our own achievements and concerns. The opportunity for a vibrant debate between Member States and humanitarian practitioners is certainly invaluable.

Madame Vice President and Colleagues,

I hope as many as possible will be able to attend the final side event of this segment on 'ending internal displacement'. This will give you an opportunity to discuss durable solutions to a fundamental problem that affects tens of millions and is at the heart of many of our contemporary humanitarian concerns.

In conclusion, I would like to thank again all Members of this Council and indeed all UN Member States for their support to humanitarian actors and to our efforts in strengthening the provision and coordination of humanitarian assistance. I hope the momentum we have generated during this Humanitarian Affairs Segment of ECOSOC can be used to ensure that the fruits of our collective thinking are put into action for the benefit of all people in need. What counts at the end of the day are how many lives we can save and how much human suffering we can lessen, not how many fine words we can utter.

Finally, I would like to thank you personally, Madame Vice-President, for your distinguished and able leadership of this session, your stewardship during the difficult moments of this year's resolution negotiations and your personal commitment to the humanitarian cause.

I would also like to thank those who have worked with you, particularly the Bureau, and all those behind the scenes, notably the interpreters, who have done so much to make this year's Humanitarian Segment the success I believe it has been.

I wish you all a good and disaster free summer.

Thank you.