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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance
of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of
the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster
relief assistance

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. It is also submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 61/34.

The present report describes the humanitarian developments of the past year, provides an overview of key initiatives to improve the humanitarian system and analyses two thematic issues of concern: the use of military assets in natural disaster relief and needs-based humanitarian financing, including the Central Emergency Response Fund. The report ends with a series of recommendations for further strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations based on the conclusions contained in the report.

* A/62/50.

** E/2007/100.

I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 61/134 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/81.

II. Humanitarian developments

A. The year in review

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5. Conflicts also continue to affect populations throughout the Middle East. In Iraq, the civilian death toll now averages more than 100 per day. An estimated 8 million civilians are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including 2 million internally displaced, some 800,000 of whom have been displaced since February 2006, and 2 million who have fled to the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 972 residents were killed as a result of the continuing conflict; of these, 274 were victims of internal fighting. In the same period, 16 Israelis were killed and 15 injured by home-made rockets fired from the Gaza Strip. The 34 days of military strikes in Lebanon and Israel during the summer of 2006 resulted in more than 1,000 Lebanese civilian deaths and 43 Israeli civilian deaths, the

displacement of more than a million people in Lebanon and 300,000 in Israel and the registration of some 900 cluster munitions sites across south Lebanon.

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Humanitarian access

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15. ... In the occupied Palestinian territory, internal political divisions, Israeli economic and military pressure and an increasing number of obstacles to movement have resulted in an aggravated humanitarian situation, including a 13 per cent rise in food insecurity. The reasons for limited access are many; they include fighting, bombing, banditry, and other criminal activity, the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons, excessive bureaucratic requirements and inadequate respect for humanitarian principles. Whatever the reasons, restricted access limits the ability of humanitarian organizations to do their work effectively.

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Emergency response funds

68. Like common humanitarian funds, emergency response funds are country-level pooled funding mechanisms that offer small grants to humanitarian assistance actors on the ground. Since 1997, the six emergency response funds in Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Liberia and Somalia have disbursed \$65.78 million and financed 538 projects for a wide range of activities. Efforts are under way to establish additional emergency response funds in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and southern Sudan.

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VI. Conclusions and recommendations

76. The activities and challenges identified above suggest that an increase in the demand for humanitarian activities is likely. The incidence and severity of disasters associated with natural hazards may increase due to climate change and vulnerability linked to population growth, urbanization, desertification and environmental degradation. Weak governance, armed conflict, political, religious and ethnic tensions, competition over scarce natural resources and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other pandemics may further compound their impact.

77. As the demands on the humanitarian system grow, United Nations humanitarian agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organization partners may find it increasingly difficult to respond adequately. Establishing partnerships, creating capacities within national and local governments, regional organizations and civil society groups and better defining needs are critical investments in addressing humanitarian vulnerability more effectively in the coming years, and in doing so impartially.

78. It is thus of paramount importance to ensure that humanitarian agencies and their partners are given the space, access and security to provide life-saving assistance to those in need. It is also essential to promote respect for humanitarian principles and a better understanding of the role of humanitarian workers in support of Governments and their populations.

79. Based on the above, Member States may wish to consider the following:

- (a) Governments are urged to recognize that access to vulnerable people and the security of humanitarian staff are prerequisites to any effective humanitarian response. Governments are also urged to initiate and, where agreed with humanitarian actors, fully implement, concrete measures to facilitate the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and the delivery of humanitarian supplies and equipment. The United Nations stands ready to assist in this regard;
- (b) United Nations humanitarian agencies should strengthen their engagement and capacity-building efforts with regional organizations to help bolster humanitarian responses in support of the efforts of national Governments and regional organizations;
- (c) When regional concerns are at stake, Member States are encouraged to recognize and support regional responses, including in intergovernmental forums;
- (d) Member States are urged to prepare and update disaster preparedness plans at all levels and promote regular disaster preparedness exercises in accordance with priority five of the 2005 Hyogo framework for action;
- (e) Member States are invited to work with the United Nations to strengthen humanitarian standby arrangements, including by participating in humanitarian response networks, by maintaining standby directories of the central register of disaster management capacities and by facilitating standby arrangements with the private sector;
- (f) The United Nations is encouraged to review, in consultation with Member States, the use of military assets for disaster relief, with the aim of improving the predictability and use of these assets, based on humanitarian principles;
- (g) Member States should consider integrating the guidelines on the use of military and civilian defence assets for natural disaster relief into national preparedness plans;
- (h) United Nations humanitarian agencies and organizations should improve the accuracy of data on beneficiaries, needs and performance by agreeing on commonly accepted definitions, indicators and methodologies for data collection and needs assessments and standards for information management systems;
- (i) Member States, relevant United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations should provide timely and accurate information on contributions and uses of humanitarian funds through the financial tracking service;
- (j) Member States contributing to pooled funds are encouraged to work with the United Nations to improve the complementarity and management of these funds, including by harmonizing donor policies and reporting practices;

(k) Member States are invited to make and increase multi-year contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund, so that it may reach its \$500 million target by 2008;

(l) Member States are also invited to make and increase flexible, multi-year contributions to all other pooled funds and humanitarian funding mechanisms, including consolidated and flash appeals and the emergency funds of various agencies.
