

ECOSOC – SUBSTANTIVE SESSION 2008:
HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT
BUILDING CAPABILITIES AND CAPACITIES AT ALL LEVELS FOR TIMELY
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,

The General Debate of the Humanitarian Segment of this ECOSOC session provides us with an important opportunity to address some key challenges ahead, such as mitigating the humanitarian consequences of the global food crisis as well as the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General for this session. We would further like to take this opportunity to thank Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes and OCHA for their outstanding work during the last months, in particular with regard to the global food crisis and humanitarian assistance in Myanmar.

Mr. Chairmen,

We are deeply concerned by the dramatic increase in food and commodities prices witnessed since the beginning of 2008. This poses dramatic challenges for countries that rely heavily on food imports. Some 850 million people around the world are affected by food insecurity, and up to another 100 million are at imminent risk to also be affected. The causes for the food crisis are complex and interlinked, and must be addressed without delay by all States and relevant international organizations. We therefore welcome the establishment of the Task Force on Global Food Security by the Secretary General and the development of a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) as a guide for global and local actors to meet urgent needs and contribute to sustainable food security. It is imperative that the CFA be further developed and constantly updated by relevant UN actors to reflect the future developments. We also support the full implementation of Declaration of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security in Rome of 5 June 2008.

Emergency measures must be put in place to mitigate the devastating effects of poor harvests, natural disasters, high oil prices and commodity speculation. At the same time, State-imposed policies must not exacerbate the current structural rise in food prices. The export restrictions imposed by large exporters of staple foods and the large scale opening up of markets by large importers to secure local supplies over

short terms can have fatal consequences. Food supplies needed for humanitarian purposes must be allowed to circulate without hindrance. UN organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) are particularly struggling with the sharp increase in commodity costs. It is crucial to further strengthen the flexibility of the World Food Program by providing more non-earmarked contributions, thus allowing for more effective responses to immediate crises. Liechtenstein provided 50 % of its latest contribution to the WFP as non-earmarked funds.

Mr. Chairman,

We are alarmed by the recent deadly attack on the joint United Nations-African Union force in Darfur that killed seven peacekeepers and wounded twenty-two, seven of them critically. Deliberate attacks against UN missions in the field lead to unacceptable constraints in the access to populations in need. The safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel is therefore of utmost importance both for the United Nations and for the millions of people suffering from humanitarian emergencies. We thus welcome that the draft resolution clearly urges Member States to ensure that perpetrators of crimes committed on their territory against humanitarian personnel do not operate with impunity and are brought to justice as provided for by national laws and obligations under international law. At the same time, we regret that the text does not stress the fact that locally recruited humanitarian workers are most vulnerable to such attacks. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General on this topic, most staff members who lost their lives were locally recruited. We hope that future resolutions will reflect this reality on the ground. We also welcome the submission of the report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of UN Personnel and Premises Worldwide and call for the urgent reflection of its recommendations by the Secretary-General and Member States.

I thank you.