India-Sweden Joint Statement

on the

Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance of the United Nations

at the

69th session of the UN General Assembly

by

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New York

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Mr. President,

It is my honour to deliver a Joint Statement on behalf of India and Sweden on the Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance under agenda item 69 (a) to (c).

Mr. President,

Through the annual adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly on Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, we welcome the role of the United Nations in coordinating and responding to the growing global humanitarian needs. On behalf of Sweden, which facilitated the negotiations of the resolution and on our own behalf, I would like to thank member states for their cooperation in achieving a consensus resolution on this important issue.

Mr. President,

We would like to emphasize that our joint statement is a reflection of our common endeavour to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance by the United Nations. The several ongoing humanitarian crises in different parts of world reflect the need for closer coordination and cooperation between member states on humanitarian assistance.

India and Sweden would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report presented under this agenda item. The report provides a substantial overview of the issues and challenges faced by the humanitarian community. The challenges are evidenced by the unprecedented number of mega crises being dealt with at the moment. We believe there is a significant need for broad and inclusive partnerships to meet these challenges, and to strengthen the coordination of UN humanitarian assistance. Our joint statement today is one example of broadened partnerships, but there are many other examples and further possibilities at global, national and regional levels.

One example highlighting the centrality of partnerships in humanitarian action is the efforts required for tackling the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The Ebola outbreak is a multifaceted crisis with a humanitarian dimension, which has demonstrated the importance of increased international, regional, national and cross-sectoral collaboration to deliver a coherent and effective response. India and Sweden have both stepped up their efforts by providing specific financial and
human resources to contribute to the effort to end this crisis. It is significant that India and Sweden are among the top four financial contributors to the Ebola Trust Fund set up by the United Nations Secretary General.

**Mr. President,**

India and Sweden believe that the importance of partnerships will be a key component in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2016. We welcome this initiative and look forward to participating actively in the consultation process together with all other stakeholders.

**Mr. President,**

India and Sweden reaffirm that humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law provide the basis for humanitarian assistance. The essence of resolution 46/182 is the call for collective efforts by the international community in which the United Nations has a central role. We are committed to preserving respect for, and adherence to, the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence outlined in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182. We also strongly emphasize another guiding principle, namely that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and that the humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country. We would also like to emphasize that the primary role and responsibility of providing protection and humanitarian assistance in a crisis situation lies with the affected state.

**Mr. President,**

Affected populations are at the centre of all humanitarian action and we encourage the international community and the United Nations to continue to enhance their accountability to, and work closely with, affected people in order to ensure an inclusive process and to promote a sense of local ownership.

The UN and its international partners should strive to make better use of its local partners. Their role should be expanded from merely implementation to participation in strategic planning; only then can we make the best use of their knowledge of the local context.
We would also like to highlight the need for continued efforts in placing protection at the centre of any humanitarian response. This includes being mindful of the different protection needs of women, men, girls and boys – not least when it comes to sexual and gender-based violence.

Mr. President,

We would also like to note that resolution on ‘Safety and Security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel’, which is expected to be adopted today by consensus, has commended the courage and commitment of those who take part in peace operations, including peacekeeping operations. It also condemned attacks intentionally directed against personnel involved in a peacekeeping mission and reaffirmed the need to prosecute, penalise and punish those responsible for such acts. India has contributed more than 180,000 peacekeepers to UN Peacekeeping operations and 156 of our peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice while serving in UN peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President,

Another important issue is the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and goods to people in need. We have noted that despite examples of good practice and the clear obligations imposed by international humanitarian law, access is frequently delayed, impeded or denied. This is a problem and must be recognized as such.

Mr. President,

India is part of the Dialogue on Humanitarian Partnerships, co-chaired by Sweden and Brazil. This Group consists of 24 Member States and meets informally to discuss issues of humanitarian relevance. In the last year, the Group has discussed issues such as risk management, early warning and other preventive measures; lately we have also discussed the importance of innovation in the humanitarian field. We believe that the Dialogue on Humanitarian Partnership is a good example of the type of broad and inclusive partnerships that are needed to tackle the challenges of the humanitarian community today.

Mr. President,

Despite its own resource constraints, India made contributions of US $ 500,000 each to St. Vincent and Grenadines and St. Lucia and US$ 300,000/- to Commonwealth of Dominica, for providing disaster relief assistance in the
aftermath of the flash floods that had struck these islands on 24th December 2013. India also contributed US$ 500,000 in 2014 to CERF taking our total contribution to US $ 5 million.

Sweden remains one of the world’s largest humanitarian donors. Mindful of supporting an effective and well-functioning humanitarian system, Sweden not only provides significant targeted contributions to most of the world’s humanitarian crisis it is also one of the largest donors of core funding to the UN’s humanitarian agencies and funds. Sweden also remains deeply engaged in matters related to humanitarian policy and reform.

Mr. President,

Delivery in-country saves lives, and coordination makes that delivery more effective. This is especially true in a time of increased international solidarity where we find an increasing number of new and emerging humanitarian actors. India and Sweden sincerely value the coordinating capacities of the United Nations system as mandated by this General Assembly, through the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and encourage all actors to continue enhancing their support for the office. OCHA’s report “Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow” gives us good food for thought on how to increase our efforts on managing risks and prevent crises from happening in the first place. We welcome the improvement of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, including the development of Strategic Response Plans and Humanitarian Needs Overviews. We believe that the Humanitarian Programme Cycle is an important tool to ensure more effective and coherent humanitarian responses, thereby leading to better support to people in need of assistance.

As supporters of the Central Emergency Response Fund, our two countries welcome its continued achievements in providing timely and predictable response to humanitarian emergencies. We call upon more donors to provide support to this effective fund.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, we would like to draw attention to the huge challenges we are now facing. In today’s world, an increasing number of people around the globe in need of humanitarian assistance, often in complex and/or protracted situations. We remain confident that collectively we will be able to effectively contribute to addressing these challenges through enhanced cooperation and by fostering
broad consensus among Member States on the promotion of effective and inclusive humanitarian action. Supporting the UN to become more efficient in its actions will remain our endeavour.

I thank you for your attention.