General Assembly Sixty-ninth Session
11 December 2014

Item 69: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian affairs and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Statement by the Hon. Ms Philippa King
Deputy Permanent Representative
Australian Mission to the United Nations

Check Against Delivery

Mr President

Australia welcomes the adoption of this year’s UN General Assembly Resolution on strengthening the coordination of the UN’s humanitarian assistance.

Effective and coordinated international assistance is essential at a time when the humanitarian system is confronted by unprecedented political, operational and financial challenges.

The magnitude and complexity of crises has changed the global humanitarian landscape. We can no longer talk about a linear transition from response to recovery.

The proliferation of conflict and protracted humanitarian crises are taking an incalculable toll on civilians. More than 52 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced from their homes— the highest number since World War II.

At the same time, humanitarian actors are working in increasingly hostile environments, with more killed in 2013 than ever before.

Further, violent extremism, as witnessed most starkly in Iraq over the last twelve months, has made humanitarian action even more dangerous and complex.
Women and girls are being disproportionately affected, facing a higher risk of sexual and gender based violence. Sexual violence must not be accepted as an inevitable consequence of crises.

We must improve prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, including through trauma, health and sexual and reproductive health-care services.

Mr President

Affected people must be at the centre of humanitarian action. Effective humanitarian action starts with accountability to affected people – this means engaging affected people in determining needs and in the allocation and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

We should also recognise that women have lead roles to play in peace and recovery efforts and as human rights defenders, particularly in humanitarian settings.

Mr President

Donors are providing record levels of funding for humanitarian relief. Yet we are not keeping up with spiralling needs. We cannot confront today’s humanitarian challenges with a ‘business as usual’ approach.

We must use innovation – such as building on cash transfer technologies – to find new efficiencies in humanitarian assistance.

We must bring in new donors and facilitate a greater role for the private sector.

In all these endeavours we must ensure the consistency of these approaches with humanitarian principles.

Mr President

The political drivers fuelling today’s entrenched crises are multifaceted and cannot be solved by humanitarian actors. We need political solutions that support conflict resolution and work to restore peace and security.

The international peace and security architecture plays a major role in conflict resolution and in facilitating with the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Australia has used its term on the Security Council to ensure better access and protection for humanitarian actors, placing this at the centre of Security Council debates.

We will continue to call for full compliance with international humanitarian law, including unfettered access to civilians.

The targeting of humanitarian workers and arbitrary denial of humanitarian assistance must cease immediately. UNSC Resolution 2175 was unambiguous in sending this message.
Mr President

Reducing disaster risk and building resilience to disasters saves lives and must be an integral part of our strategy. It is also integral to sustainable economic development. We must continue to push for greater support of economic activity even within protracted crises.

Australia has consistently advocated that the post-2015 Hyogo framework for disaster risk reduction reflect a new paradigm where disaster risk reduction is seen as **investment in a resilient future**, rather than an optional cost.

Mr President

The **World Humanitarian Summit** is an opportunity to galvanise global support to address the pressures on the international humanitarian system. We encourage all Member States to actively support all voices — large and small — to come together to find solutions to the most pressing humanitarian challenges. We are pleased to support regional consultations in the Pacific, in partnership with New Zealand and OCHA.

In closing, Australia would like to convey our deep gratitude to Valerie Amos for her professional and steadfast leadership as the **Under-Secretary General**. Her tireless efforts and deep commitment to improving the lives of those who rely on the international humanitarian assistance, has resulted in real and meaningful change.

She has always sought to draw our attention to the impacts of crises on the lives of people. This is her legacy, and the challenge, she leaves with us all.

Thank you.