Statement on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations

Statement by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski

Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations

New York, December 11, 2014

Mr. President,

Humanitarian crises devastate the lives of millions around the world. This year we have seen an unprecedented number of IDPs and refugees reported and it has also been the most dangerous year for humanitarian personnel in more than a decade. The 2014 United Nations coordinated appeal requested a record total of US$16.9 billion, reflecting this vast scale of needs. A third of this request remains unmet. The growing gap between needs and available resources, means that strengthened coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance is integral.

The humanitarian resolutions adopted by the General Assembly offer us an opportunity to address the challenges we face and to build on accomplishments in the provision of humanitarian assistance. The consensual adoption of these resolutions should denote a willingness to work together in ensuring that real results are achieved to reduce the suffering of those most in need.

In this regard, we are pleased that this year’s General Assembly resolutions on humanitarian issues have underlined the importance of promoting the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, including for healthcare personnel who are providing essential medical care to affected communities. However it is utterly unacceptable that with the unprecedented number of people in need, the Member States of the UN are unable to come together and recognize the capacity of local communities to participate in their own recovery. Canada will continue to support flexible, iterative approaches to programme delivery based on interaction and feedback with the beneficiaries. We will also continue to underline the fundamental importance for humanitarian organizations to be able to reach people in need and provide rapid and unimpeded assistance to the most vulnerable. Being able to provide life-saving assistance to people affected by armed conflict or natural disasters is the basis for humanitarian response.

Mr. President,

The on-going humanitarian crises in Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Iraq, amongst too many crises, continue to damage the lives of millions each day. The Ebola epidemic has posed a unique public health emergency for the region, and as the United Nations Security Council has recognized, poses a threat to international peace and security. The world, including Canada, is responding, but major challenges remain as we work together to overcome the crisis.
As the year closes, we should applaud the urgency and professionalism with which frontline humanitarian personnel, national authorities and impacted communities are working to turn the tide in our fight against the Ebola outbreak.

We wish to congratulate and thank the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Baroness Amos, for her dedicated efforts to this end and her tremendous service to the international humanitarian community and to people in need.

Canada will continue to focus on operationalizing the 3 pillars of the IASC Transformative Agenda of leadership, coordination and accountability in the field.

Mr. President,

To face these growing challenges and the increasing scale of needs we welcome opportunities provided by the UN Secretary-General’s decision to convene a World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Canada is actively engaged in the process, including as a member of Western Europe and Others Regional Steering Group.

Recognizing the critical importance of preventative action, Canada has recently committed $500 million with the goal of providing vaccines for impoverished children around the world. The international community can make a vital difference in the long-term health of children by ensuring that they are protected from preventable disease. Reconstruction efforts to help affected communities recover from crises are equally important. One year after the devastating Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, Canada is engaged in programming initiatives to help restore the livelihoods of those affected, committing $20.6 million over a period of four years for reconstruction efforts. This was in addition to the over $85 million provided by the Government of Canada as part of its promise to match every eligible dollar donated by individual Canadians to registered Canadian charities.

Mr. President,

We express our deepest gratitude and sincere condolences to the families, friends and organizations of those who have given their lives in order to save others. Canada remains committed to playing its role with key partners to ensure the protection of vulnerable populations, and to help build a world in which humanitarian values are fully respected.

Thank you.