

STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, AT
THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE PLENARY ON THE UN HIGH
LEVEL PANEL REPORT: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
20 JUNE 2007

Mr. Co-Chair,

We thank you for organizing the informal consultations on the section on humanitarian assistance in the report of the UN High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence. We congratulate you on your appointment as Co-Chairs. Your two colleagues in the case of UN Security Council reform were only given the title of persons. Possibly the implication was that the majority should try to be as close to being non-persons as possible. Since you are Co-Chairs and not just persons, we hope that this would not be the aim of the System-wide coherence reform. We need to ensure that we do not seek to ameliorate humanitarian disasters through an institutional disaster. System-wide coherence should not obliterate particularities through a post-post modernist dystopia. We support the positions expressed by the Joint Coordination Committee of NAM and G77. As a country contributing to CERF and to disaster relief in our region, permit me to make a few observations.

These informal consultations come not a moment too soon. We are currently engaged in the preparations for the ECOSOC and are discussing the draft of the UNDP Strategic Plan. The recommendations of the HLP report touch upon areas covered by both these processes. The draft UNDP Strategic Plan draws upon the ideas contained in the HLP report. UNDP has proposed that it should be adopted in September 2007. If the Plan is adopted as proposed, there would be little point in discussing those sections of the HLP report that would have been incorporated in the Plan. Our discussions would then amount to trying to lock the barn door after the horse has bolted.

Mr. Co-Chair,

As with the other sections of the report, we have several questions on the section pertaining to humanitarian assistance. While some of the report's recommendations are not in keeping with existing intergovernmental agreements, others need further clarification. At the beginning of any discussion on UN humanitarian assistance we need to recall GA resolution 46/182. The annex to this resolution provides the Guiding Principles for the provision of UN humanitarian assistance. While emphasizing the importance of humanitarian assistance to the victims, the Guiding Principles recognize the need to fully respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States. They recognize that the affected State has the primary role in initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory. The Panel appears to have overlooked these Guiding Principles when it recommends the coordination and leadership role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator at the global level and the humanitarian coordinators at the country level. In line with the above, we do not agree with the formulation regarding the partnerships between the UN, national governments, and NGOs. We believe in the lead role of the affected government in such relationships. We look forward to developing our understanding on this issue during our discussions.

The report recommends higher funding for humanitarian assistance, as well as for early recovery. While we support these recommendations, we find the report does not expand on where these additional resources would be raised from and how. We would welcome further clarification on this aspect.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We disagree with the report's recommendation asking the humanitarian agencies to clarify their mandates and to enhance their cooperation on Internally Displaced Persons. The mandates of UN agencies are clarified by Member States. It is not for the agencies to assign mandates to themselves, or to shed them. We are confused about the segregation of one issue, namely the issue of IDPs. The report does not clearly define the term as it was understood by the Panel and we are not sure if there is a clear definition of this term in the UN context. Moreover, IDPs are the citizens of the country in which they are located and hence the responsibility of the government.

We support the focus on early recovery in the Panel's report. However, we would believe that the discussion on transition from relief to development should not end at early recovery. There is need to

focus on the continuum from relief to recovery, to reconstruction and development. In fact, GA resolution 59/250 on TCPR emphasizes the element of planning the transition to development from the beginning of the relief phase. There is also need to clarify what the report means when it recommends that UNDP should take the lead in early recovery. Is this lead role envisaged in the context of a 'cluster approach' or is it meant to provide a clear and over-riding mandate to UNDP. This clarification also has a bearing on the UNDP Strategic Plan. Moreover, we need to clarify the question of mobilization of resources for transition.

Mr. Co-Chair,

The Panel report's section dealing with humanitarian issues provides some interesting ideas, especially on the issue of transition from relief to development. However, there is much in this section that needs to be further clarified. It is also useful to remember that the purpose of this exercise is to improve the UN's coordination of humanitarian assistance. The intention is not to re-write existing intergovernmental agreements.

Thank you Mr. Co-Chair.

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