

**STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 21: STRENGTHENING OF THE  
COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF  
ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BY MR. A. GOPINATHAN, DEPUTY PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE, AT THE 57<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE UNGA ON  
NOVEMBER 25, 2002**

Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary General for the reports which have been submitted under this agenda item. We have found the reports useful.

We note from these reports that the disturbing upward trend in the occurrence and impact of natural disasters continues unbroken. There is, however, a decline in the resources available with regard to the levels of need. The proportion of humanitarian assistance channeled through the Consolidated Appeals Process has also decreased over the years. The Economic and Social Council, in its substantive session this year, has noted with concern that while the CAP process remains one of the most significant mechanisms for humanitarian resource mobilization, it has suffered consistent shortfalls. ECOSOC has also encouraged the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue to examine in greater depth the reasons for this disturbing trend and its implications. The examination will be important and we hope it will allow us to constructively examine this issue of common concern.

The Secretary General points out in his report, correctly in our view, that vulnerability of societies to natural disasters poses a major threat to sustainable development. The clear linkage drawn in the report between poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters is also completely valid. My delegation has, therefore, often made the point that development assistance, in the

long term, reduces the need for emergency humanitarian assistance and has highlighted the importance of drawing a distinction between natural hazards and natural disasters. Drought is a natural hazard and, therefore, unavoidable. It need not, however, inevitably lead to disaster. Famine can be avoided through long term development assistance which will make the socio economic system resilient to the impact of natural disasters. That, truly, would be a culture of prevention.

We note the interest which seems to exist for addressing the gap from relief to development. We agree with the assertion in the report of the Secretary General that “-- without any significant increase in humanitarian funding, transitional activities will need to draw on money from traditional development budgets. Donors are urged to find better ways of accessing these resources, perhaps funneling them through the CAP---”. A similar conclusion was also contained in the report of the High Level Panel on Financing for Development.

Mr. President,

We note from the Secretary General's report that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is taking the lead in the development of International Disaster Response Law. The report states that this “will provide a legal framework, based on existing hard and soft law, covering situations of natural and technological disaster and incorporating a right to security from natural and technological disasters”.

The idea of a 'right to security from natural and technological disaster' needs further study and exploration, particularly with regard to its enforceability and obligations. We are of the view that this process would benefit from inter-governmental oversight, particularly with regard to its principles, scope and objectives. We would look forward to an opportunity for providing such oversight through an appropriate inter-governmental mechanism in the United Nations.

The Secretary General has, in his report, referred to a 'culture of protection'. In our statement in the substantive session of ECOSOC, we had shared with other member States our understanding of this term. We will limit ourselves today to pointing out that this concept, variously known as "responsibility to protect" or "humanitarian intervention" has not found acceptance among the vast majority of the membership of the United Nations. The Secretary General had himself so acknowledged in his report to the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly on the work of the Organization. It is our understanding that the concept still does not find favour in the membership of the United Nations. Our perception in this regard has been guided by the discussions which have taken place in ECOSOC and in the General Assembly. Further discussion of this subject would, in our view, be infructuous and would divert attention from issues which are of real concern to most member States.

The Secretary General has, in his report, referred to the guiding principles on Internal Displacement as 'legal' principles.

We must again point out that these principles were not negotiated in an inter-governmental process but drafted by a team of technical experts and NGOs. This process does not qualify them to be referred to as 'legal' principles. We note, in this regard, that the Secretary General has, very rightly, referred in his report to the Unit on Internal Displacement as a 'non-operational' entity. This qualification needs to be reiterated as the Secretariat would otherwise be transgressing its mandate.

The report refers to the need for ensuring that the humanitarian, human rights, political and development dimensions of an emergency are addressed in a coherent manner. It is important, in this regard, to also point to the need for maintaining the distinction between these different aspects of the work of the United Nations. This is crucial if the trust which the UN system enjoys in the field of humanitarian assistance is to be retained.

We would, in conclusion, refer to the Guiding Principles for Humanitarian Assistance which have been so clearly outlined in section 1 of the annex to resolution 46/182. These notably are those of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, with full respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States. They also state that humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and on the basis of an appeal made by it. These principles are valid, time-tested and their continued application would contribute towards success in relieving pain and suffering.