

Statement

by Nikolai V Chulkov, Deputy Head of the Permanent Representative
of the Russian Federation to the UN on item 39 of the agenda
of the 59-th session of the UN General Assembly on the
“Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief
of the United Nations including special economic assistance”)

11 November, 2004

Mr. President,

The Russian Federation positively appraises the UN activities with a view to strengthen coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. We note the leading role played in this process by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We stress, in particular, the efforts aimed at enhancing efficiency of respective coordination mechanisms and instruments taking account of new humanitarian activities environment related first of all to increased global terrorist threat and risks taken by humanitarian workers “in the field”.

The problem of ensuring physical safety for the humanitarian personnel has recently become particularly vital. In this connection, we press for the need to take effective measures in this area in accordance with the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We also deem it necessary to work for a broader scope of legal protection of the UN personnel by finalizing the Protocol to the above Convention. We note the efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in elaborating a general framework for establishing relations between humanitarian and military organizations in complex emergency situations. It is vital to stress that the humanitarian community in quest for an adequate response to new challenges and threats should be invariably guided by humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and

impartiality. Alongside, as was justly stressed in the Secretary General's report, the humanitarian personnel should observe accepted, locally agreed security practice and be sensitive to national and local customs.

Mr. President,

Of late, protection of civilians in armed conflicts has been among priority problems in the international humanitarian agenda. In spite of a whole range of international instruments on human rights and international humanitarian law, now available, still it is innocent civilians, including children, women and elderly or those usually referred to as vulnerable groups who are the first affected in armed conflicts. The situation regarding protection of civilians calls for systematic coordinated measures at the international, regional and national levels. It should be taken into account that the problem of protecting civilians has both the human rights and humanitarian aspects. It is obvious that the humanitarian component is now highly in demand especially as an element of an overall strategy of crisis prevention and at various stages of post-conflict settlement. There is no doubt that humanitarian work should be based on the norms of the UN Charter and basic humanitarian principles, and its effectiveness is largely dependable on how it is inscribed in the efforts of international community on political settlement.

Mr. President,

Post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation, pushing to the forefront the problem of transition from relief to development, are still particularly topical issues. In our view, an effective and smooth transition is a key to success in international humanitarian and post-conflict peace-building efforts and for laying groundwork for a dynamic economic development. We believe that already at the stage of deploying a humanitarian operation necessary attention should be paid to planning and programming of development-oriented elements of assistance. All that requires an adequate and coordinated response on the part of the international community, with the UN playing a leading role.

We note an increased interaction between the ECOSOC and the UN Security Council with regard to post-conflict situations. We believe that this will help the UN system organizations to balance and coordinate their efforts in this area.

Mr. President,

In the current situation there is a growing need to predict emergencies, take preventive measures and ensure a timely response on the part of both national and international humanitarian agencies. In this regard adequate measures should be provided in cooperation with national governments to reinforce planning mechanisms for emergencies.

We support continued efforts to strengthen national early warning systems, assess damage and mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. All this should facilitate the creation of a global network for urgent warning in case of major emergencies in order to ensure coordination among national rescue agencies and adjust the mechanisms allowing effective use of the available national potential in international rescue operations.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to global efforts to implement the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and we consider commitment to its purposes is a key prerequisite to attain the MDGs especially in vulnerable countries and regions of the world. We welcome the work done by the ISDR Secretariat to prepare the World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held on 18-20 January 2005 in Kobe. We believe that the Conference should become an important stage in international efforts to reduce the threat of disasters, to further improve the UN work in this area through a global assessment of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World. Russia actively participates in the preparation of the Conference and makes a concrete contribution to its organization.

Mr. President,

One of the key tasks in the humanitarian activities today is to further improve tools for the mobilization of funds and, at the same time, to enlarge donor base. Consolidated

Inter-Agency Appeals remain the main mechanism in this process. Their preparation procedure and structure should be further enhanced. Besides, quite a number of them still lack resources. In this regard it would be expedient to provide the appeals with flexibility allowing untraditional donors, including those who are ready to render humanitarian assistance in kind, to increase their participation in international humanitarian cooperation.

Mr. President,

Russia positively appraises the UN efforts to draw the attention of the international public opinion to the problems of the so-called “forgotten emergencies”. We share the opinion that such situations cause human sufferings no less than those that are closely followed by the international community. We are primarily guided by these motives making our possible contribution to mitigate the humanitarian situation in a number of countries and regions of the world: in 2003 Russia provided humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, China, Algeria, Ecuador, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Moldavia for a total of more than 6.2 million dollars, and also made a voluntary contribution to the WFP to provide assistance to the DPRK and Angola and to the UNHCR for the region of South Africa in the amount of 11 and 2 million dollars respectively. Next year we are going to maintain our contribution to the WFP in the amount of 11 million dollars. These figures also prove that our country is gradually restoring its donor potential.

Mr. President,

To a great extent it is through its humanitarian activities that the UN has wielded its political and moral authority. And it is within our possibilities to further reinforce its role in the world.

Thank you.