



**STATEMENT BY MRS. RUCHI GHANASHYAM, MINISTER, ON AGENDA
ITEM:5 SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF
ASSISTANCE AT THE SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL ON JULY 13, 2005**

Mr. President,

We congratulate you on your able guidance of the Humanitarian segment. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77. We thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reports prepared for this segment, including the one on the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster.

We appreciate the self-critical approach of the reports that seek to identify the gaps and to learn from the shortcomings in the humanitarian response system perceived in the aftermath of major natural disasters, including the recent Tsunami disaster. The reports show that during the past year, some of the key humanitarian developments and challenges, particularly those relating to capacity gaps, have been experienced in both complex emergencies and natural disasters. The report does not bring out the different dynamics of complex emergencies and natural disasters, even though the nature of the UN humanitarian assistance and coordination processes in post-natural disaster situations would be clearly different from those in complex emergencies. The Panel Discussions of this morning were helpful in this regard.

The report recommends that attention be paid to mobilising and supporting existing capacities, knowledge and institutions through transfer of technology and know-how, as also higher investment in disaster preparedness. It calls for greater support from Member States for funding of neglected emergencies, under-resourced sectors and funding gaps, particularly for post-disaster recovery.

One of the important gaps identified by the report in extending humanitarian assistance is that of resources, be it insufficient resources distributed unevenly, or the failure to meet the basic needs of the affected population in a timely way. Despite generous pledges from donors to the major crises during the past three years, funding

for humanitarian assistance continues to be low, delayed and unevenly applied. Funding is identified by the report as being particularly important in making an impact on post-disaster recovery. Nowhere is this illustrated more dramatically than in the case of Africa. We have spoken repeatedly about the insipid response to Africa's needs. Of the 14 appeals for Africa, eight have received less than 20 percent of the requirement so far and, barring one, the others have received less than 40 percent. Updating the Central Emergency Revolving Fund established by General Assembly resolution 46/182 and expanded by General Assembly resolution 56/107 to include disaster response, has been identified as a way of responding to gaps. The Fund's current configuration as a revolving fund seems to be useful but limited as a financial instrument for humanitarian response. The report indicates that the expansion of the Fund would, *inter alia*, address unanticipated needs as well as core needs in under-funded emergencies. The report recommends its expansion to include a grant facility component. This proposal requires serious consideration.

The report recommends clearer and more formal coordination procedures and agreements with the military. At this stage, it would perhaps be useful to make an assessment of the extent to which military assets are made available to the UN humanitarian system for its disaster response. For this purpose, the UN humanitarian system would need to coordinate with the Governments that have indicated the willingness to provide military assets for the purpose. The use of military assets in disaster response should be at the request of, and with the consent of, the receiving State and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the international and national laws.

Mr. President,

We are concerned at the attempt to dilute the principle of State sovereignty in the area of protection of civilians. Paragraph 53 of the report on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (E/2005/78) states that "though the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians rests with States, international assistance is often required, with the consent of national governments, or when the State cannot protect its citizens alone". We strongly believe that it is important to avoid politicisation of the UN humanitarian system. Assistance by the UN humanitarian system must be extended with the consent of the affected State unless it has been agreed by the international community as a whole that the State can no longer protect its citizens on its own.

The same paragraph also gives the impression that protecting and assisting the internally displaced, either on account of conflict or of disaster, may arise from a situation where consent of the national Government may be expendable. We do not agree with this assumption, as the internally displaced persons, especially in post-disaster situations, are within the jurisdiction of the affected State and its laws and regulations. In our view, well-functioning and stable governments with strong national and legal institutions are perfectly capable of taking care of their internally displaced persons. We believe that the recommendation contained in the report on the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster (E2005/77) seeking to extend the UN Guidelines for Internal

Displacement to natural disasters would need further consideration and discussions among Member States. The report itself recognises the difficulty in using the Guidelines on a standard basis and refers to the specific context of each disaster.

Moreover, the report "Transition from relief to development" (E/2005/79) speaks of humanitarian agencies continuing to substitute for national authorities rather than develop national capacities in post-conflict transitions. Paragraph 96 of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on "Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the Operational Activities for development of the UN System" stresses the need for transitional activities to be undertaken under national ownership through the development of national capacities at all levels to manage the transition process. The effort of the UN humanitarian system, we believe, should be to develop national capacity instead of attempting to substitute for them.

We would reiterate the need for humanitarian assistance to be guided by the principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, especially that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. We believe that the affected State has the primary role in the organisation, coordination and delivery of all humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President,

We take this opportunity to recognise the efforts being made by the UN system in the post-Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster. The report prepared in this context highlights several important issues and measures taken by the affected countries and brings out the need for adequate financing for post-disaster recovery, while stressing the important issues of national ownership and leadership. We appreciate the efforts of former US President Bill Clinton, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, who has mobilised the post-Tsunami recovery effort through a "Global Consortium" of affected Governments, UN agencies, international organisations, international financial institutions and non-governmental organisations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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