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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

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Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [46/182](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to Assembly resolution [73/139](#) and Economic and Social Council resolution [2018/11](#). The period covered by the report is 1 January to 31 December 2018.

The report contains an outline of efforts to improve humanitarian coordination and response and reduce the levels of need, risk and vulnerability, information regarding humanitarian trends, challenges and measures taken and recommendations, including on respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, on addressing severe food insecurity, the threat of famine, forced displacement, disasters and climate-related impacts and on anticipatory financing in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leaving no one behind.

* [A/74/50](#).



I. Introduction

Overview of key trends

1. Humanitarian crises are affecting more people than ever, with tens of millions of people forced to flee their homes, losing their livelihoods and facing hunger, disease and an uncertain future. Despite global economic and development gains, humanitarian crises are lasting longer than ever.

2. Global trends, including increasing poverty, inequality, population growth, conflict, climate change and pandemics, have eroded resilience, making people susceptible to shocks. Crises also exacerbate the situations of vulnerability of women, children, older persons, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the poor.

3. In 2018, humanitarian response plans targeted a record 97.9 million people. Humanitarian funding requirements peaked at \$25.1 billion. A record \$15.2 billion was generously provided, however, the funding gap hovered at 40 per cent, as it has done for five years.¹

4. Conflicts and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have had devastating effects, including on children. In some conflicts, civilians were routinely killed or maimed and civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities and schools, were damaged or destroyed in targeted or indiscriminate attacks. People were cut off from food and water supplies and life-saving assistance. Conflict-related sexual violence remained prevalent in many conflict situations. The toll of conflicts and protracted crises on mental health and psychosocial well-being has been immense. The year 2019 marks the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949; it is a powerful opportunity for reinforcing their continuing relevance and effective implementation.

5. By the end of 2017, war, violence and persecution had uprooted 68.5 million people, including over 40 million internally displaced persons.² Internal displacement is an increasingly urban phenomenon, requiring new approaches for identifying, assessing and addressing needs.

6. Protracted crises are prevalent, with the average humanitarian crisis lasting over nine years. Those situations cannot be solved through short-term approaches. Against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Goals, with the promise of leaving no one behind, ending deprivation by reducing risks and vulnerabilities is critical.

7. Although the world is better at predicting, preparing for and responding to disasters, disaster risks continue to increase. Disasters increase humanitarian needs and reverse development gains. In 2018, 312 disasters affected some 65.6 million people.³ From 2008 to 2018, disasters displaced an average of 24 million people annually.⁴ Climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and variability of extreme weather events, which threaten and destroy lives and livelihoods, including agricultural production, and weaken resilience. Climate change is a threat multiplier that can precipitate and exacerbate conflict, displacement and water and food insecurity. It poses an existential threat to some small island developing nations.

¹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2019". Available from <https://hum-insight.info>.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends Report 2017*; and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018*.

³ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, EM-DAT database, excluding epidemics and insect infestations (accessed on 19 April 2019).

⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018*.

8. Food insecurity is rising, driven by conflict, climate variability and economic downturn. In 2018, 113 million people were experiencing crisis-level food insecurity or worse.⁵ Those numbers could increase in 2019, due to further shocks and stressors, with 143 million people on the verge of crises-level food insecurity.⁶ Accelerating initiatives to address food insecurity, such as the global network against food crises, remains important. In 2017, the combination of conflict, drought and acute food insecurity left over 20 million people facing or on the brink of famine in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. Although the international community mobilized following the Secretary-General's call to action, 2018 was marked by staggering levels of hunger. In 2019, rising food insecurity is of particular concern in Yemen.

9. The breakdown of health systems in fragile settings increases risks of outbreaks and epidemics. Many recent outbreaks had animal sources, including Ebola virus disease and H5N1 highly-pathogenic avian influenza virus disease. Recent events have highlighted the challenges of controlling outbreaks and epidemics in complex humanitarian contexts and the importance of early mobilization of integrated responses.

10. Against such challenges, humanitarian organizations continue delivering, saving millions of lives and reducing suffering. In 2019, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations require \$25.2 billion to assist 105.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.⁷

11. Addressing the underlying causes of crises and making progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a concerted effort to leave no one behind. Humanitarian actors and the repositioned United Nations development system must accelerate their collaboration to address needs, risk and vulnerability through combined, complementary responses. There are opportunities to reduce vulnerability in the context of the Secretary-General's prevention and management reform agenda, the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the climate summit called for by the Secretary-General, the high-level review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the sixth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

II. Overview of humanitarian emergencies in 2018

A. Complex emergencies

12. The United Nations and its partners responded to several complex emergencies in 2018, including those in which violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continued, humanitarian access was impeded and the protection of civilians and combating sexual and gender-based violence remained serious concerns.

13. In Yemen, over 22 million people, including 2.4 million displaced persons, needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Nearly 18 million people, two thirds of the population, were food-insecure, including 8.4 million people who were severely food-insecure. Yemen continued to face the largest cholera outbreak in modern history, and also faced acute watery diarrhoea outbreaks, worsening rates of malnutrition and serious protection concerns.

⁵ Food Security Information Network, *Global Report on Food Crises 2019*.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian InSight* (<https://www.hpc.tools/>) (accessed on 24 April 2019).

14. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over 13.1 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Although almost 1 million people returned home in 2018, 2.1 million people were newly displaced. A total of 815,000 Congolese refugees and asylum seekers remained outside the country. Response activities to contain the Ebola virus disease outbreak, declared in August 2018, were hindered by insecurity.

15. In the Syrian Arab Republic, some 13 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access remained a significant challenge. The protection of civilians remained a grave concern. Indiscriminate attacks on populated areas and civilian infrastructure, including medical and education facilities and water and electricity supplies, and medical and humanitarian personnel continued, although there was a relative reduction of violence in several areas over the second half of 2018.

16. In Afghanistan, some 6.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance by the end of 2018. Drought led to a steep increase in food insecurity in rural areas. Some 690,000 people were newly displaced, with a total of 1.2 million internally displaced persons.

17. In the Central African Republic, some 2.9 million people, 63 per cent of the population, needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. A quarter of the population was displaced, and 1.9 million people were food-insecure.

18. In Chad, some 4.9 million people, almost one third of the population, needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Over 620,000 people were displaced. Chad was host to 445,700 refugees and asylum seekers. Some 4.4 million people were food-insecure.

19. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, some 10.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. The ability of humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving assistance was challenging, due to the unintended effects of the sanctions regimes and low levels of funding.

20. In 2018, some 2.8 million Haitians required humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian response focused on reducing food insecurity, ending cholera transmission and strengthening disaster preparedness and response.

21. In Iraq, some 6.65 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Despite the return of nearly 4.2 million internally displaced persons to their places of origin, some 1.8 million such persons remained displaced. Protection needs remained central, alongside support to basic services and livelihoods.

22. In Libya, in 2018, some 823,000 people needed humanitarian assistance, including 241,000 children. Half of those in need were Libyans, either internally displaced or host communities, whereas the other half were migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. Abuse, including sexual abuse, and exploitation, including in detention centres, remained a serious concern.

23. In Myanmar, some 941,000 people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. By December 2018, over 909,000 refugees were in Bangladesh, the vast majority being stateless Rohingya. In Rakhine State, Myanmar, some 128,000 internally displaced persons, almost all of whom were Rohingya, remained confined in camps. The Rohingya, including around 470,000 living outside the camps, continued to face discriminatory policies and practices and restrictions on their basic human rights. In Kachin and Shan States, conflict escalated in 2018, temporarily displacing over 35,000 people. Humanitarian access remained challenging and the level of access decreased in some areas, hampering the delivery of assistance and protection services.

24. Some 2.5 million people needed humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2018. The protracted protection crisis continued, and humanitarian needs in Gaza grew. The upsurge in casualties, deep funding cuts, an

electricity crisis and increased restrictions, resulted in the near collapse of the health system and undermined the provision of essential services.

25. In Pakistan, some 2.9 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Humanitarian assistance delivery and access to services remained challenging in federally administered tribal areas, with some 47 per cent of returnees relying on unsafe drinking water and 36 per cent facing moderate to severe food insecurity.

26. In the Philippines, over a year after the conflict ended in Marawi city, over 73,000 residents remained displaced in Mindanao province and were unable to return.

27. In the Sahel region, 23 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Some 10 million people were food-insecure and some 3 million people remained displaced in 2018. The crisis in the Niger worsened, with 2.3 million people in need of assistance. Some 1.9 million people were internally displaced in north-eastern Nigeria in 2018. In Cameroon, 2.1 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2018. Cameroon continued hosting nearly 260,000 refugees from the Central African Republic. In Mali, insecurity spread, in particular in the northern and central regions, with 5.2 million people needing humanitarian assistance. In Burkina Faso, the number of internally displaced persons increased to 47,000.

28. In 2018 in Somalia, some 4.2 million people required humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian needs reduced by 32 per cent during 2018, partially due to improvements in food security, however, the humanitarian situation remained fragile, in particular among the 2.6 million internally displaced persons.

29. In South Sudan, years of conflict, violence and destroyed livelihoods left some 7 million people in need of assistance in 2018. Gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, increased. Some 7 million people were estimated to be severely food-insecure by mid-2018. By the end of 2018, about 4.2 million people were displaced, of whom nearly 2 million were internally displaced.

30. In the Sudan, some 5.5 million people needed humanitarian assistance. Improvements in security and access led to aid reaching new areas. However, a challenging economic situation put pressure on the delivery of food needs, and sporadic fighting in Darfur caused new displacement. The Sudan hosted over 768,000 refugees from South Sudan.

31. In eastern Ukraine, some 3.4 million people needed assistance in 2018. Freezing winter temperatures exacerbated acute humanitarian and protection needs, including for women and children, who were disproportionately affected, and for the older persons, who accounted for 30 per cent of those in need.

32. The International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) appointed a joint special representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region, and established a regional inter-agency coordination platform to respond to the needs of over 3 million refugees and migrants who had left the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the end of 2018. A regional refugee and migrant response plan was launched in December 2018. United Nations agencies expanded ongoing programming in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 2018, in order to respond to increased humanitarian needs.

B. Disasters associated with natural hazards

33. In Asia and the Pacific, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.5 affected 544,000 people in Papua New Guinea. Tropical Cyclone Gita caused extensive flooding and damage in Fiji, Samoa and Niue and affected 80 per cent of the population in Tonga. Tropical Cyclones Keni and Josie affected over 77,000 people in Fiji, causing

significant flooding. Volcanic eruptions in Vanuatu led to repeated displacements. Two typhoons hit the Philippines, displacing some 2.13 million people. An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 hit the Central Sulawesi province in Indonesia, triggering a tsunami, landslides and soil liquefaction, affecting 1.5 million people. Following the series of earthquakes, over 300,000 people were displaced. A tsunami hit the Sunda Strait region in Indonesia, leaving over 400 dead.

34. Drought resulted in around a 45 to 57 per cent reduction in annual wheat production in Afghanistan, affecting over 4 million people. In Pakistan, drought affected over 5 million people. Flooding in Kerala state, India, left 500 dead and displaced over 1 million people, causing damages and losses of \$3.8 billion.

35. In southern Africa, the 2018/19 lean season began early in many areas, due to erratic rainfall, which led to poor harvests, leaving an estimated 10.8 million people severely food-insecure. The situation will likely be compounded by a late start of the 2019 rainy season and the strong probability of an El Niño event occurring.

36. Despite a generally favourable rainfall situation in Ethiopia in 2018, flooding affected some 419,000 people and some 190,000 people were forced to leave their homes in search of livelihood opportunities, food, water and pastures. There was an increase in internal displacement in Ethiopia in 2018, with nearly 2.6 million people displaced by intercommunal violence and over 500,000 people displaced by disasters, at year end.

37. In Nigeria, around 2.3 million people were affected by severe flooding. In Mali, over 70,000 people were affected by floods. In the Niger, some 250,000 people were affected by flooding, and 8,500 hectares of agricultural lands were lost.

38. Further details and recommendations on disasters are addressed in the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development.

III. Key themes of humanitarian response in 2018

A. Upholding norms

Strengthening respect for international humanitarian and human rights law

39. Armed conflicts remain the primary driver of humanitarian needs. Lack of respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precautions in, and against the effects of, attack, has become a pattern across many conflicts. Attacks directed against or indiscriminately harming civilians and civilian infrastructure lead to death, injury, illness, hunger and displacement, with thousands of people remaining unaccounted for. The surveillance system of attacks on health care of the World Health Organization recorded 706 such attacks in 2018, causing 151 deaths and 860 injuries. Countless schools, places of worship and civilian infrastructure and objects were targeted or recklessly damaged in 2018.

40. Of particular concern is the impact of armed conflict and violations of international humanitarian law on hunger. In 2018, civilians were deliberately or recklessly cut off from fields, livestock, food sources and livelihoods. Parties to conflict have damaged or destroyed factories, water and sanitation facilities, irrigation networks, fishing boats and fields. In the most extreme cases, although strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law, the starvation of civilians has been used as a method of warfare. In its resolution [2417 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council recognized the link between armed conflict, violations of international humanitarian

law and hunger, called for monitoring and reporting and encouraged those with influence to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. It is important that Member States and parties to conflict swiftly take action to implement the resolution.

41. With growing urbanization, armed conflicts are moving to cities and densely populated areas, affecting millions of civilians. Fighting in urban environments considerably increases risks for civilians. Of particular concern is the pattern of unacceptable harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. When air-launched and ground-launched explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 92 per cent of those who were killed or injured were civilians. The destruction of housing, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation systems and other crucial infrastructure severely affects the civilian population in the long-term. The urbanization of warfare and the increased use of improvised explosive devices have also increased numbers of civilian casualties.

42. This underscores the urgency to act. Ongoing efforts to develop a political declaration establishing a commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas should be supported.

43. The protection of the wounded and sick and medical personnel and facilities meant to provide impartial medical care is at the core of international humanitarian law. The destruction of hospitals in direct or indiscriminate attacks, threats against medical personnel and patients and the removal of medical items from aid convoys have become common features in many conflicts, however. Such acts must be condemned. Counter-terrorism measures are increasingly weakening the protection of the medical mission. It is equally important that Member States and parties to conflict take concrete action to prevent and respond to such acts, in line with international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#).

44. On a positive note, in 2018, some parties to conflict and Member States took practical steps to respect and ensure respect for the rules of war and enhance the protection of civilians, including steps such as the training of armed forces, adopting national frameworks on the protection of civilians, halting or conditioning arms exports or other forms of military support on the basis of compliance with the laws of war and investigating and prosecuting war crimes. Some Member States began reviewing their national frameworks to bring them into line with Security Council resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) and/or joined the political declaration on the protection of medical care in conflict. Building on those good practices to encourage others in taking practical steps to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians is critical. Strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflict is of urgent concern and must be at centre of the global agenda.

Operationalizing humanitarian principles, negotiating humanitarian access and pursuing acceptance

45. Impediments to access for affected people to assistance and the delivery of humanitarian relief are leaving millions without aid. Insecurity, denial of humanitarian assistance, violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, interference, diversion and misappropriation of aid, restrictions on movement within and into countries and bureaucratic impediments continue hindering humanitarian access and principled humanitarian operations.

46. At the field level, the acceptance of humanitarian workers is increasingly challenged. Looting, misappropriation and violence against and the detention and abduction of humanitarian workers, mainly national staff, continue. In 2017, 158 major incidents of violence against humanitarian operations occurred, in 22 countries,

affecting 313 aid workers.⁸ Current armed conflicts, which are characterized by a multiplication and fragmentation of parties, present a major challenge for humanitarian organizations. The politicization of humanitarian access compounds those challenges. The arbitrary withholding of consent for and placing impediments to relief operations cause increased suffering and death and impede operational effectiveness.

47. Attempts to conflate humanitarian and political, security or counter-terrorism objectives are multiplying, undermining the perception of humanitarian action as neutral. Donor conditionality continues, in some cases, to inhibit impartial humanitarian action and may constitute unmanageable requirements. Without express assurances from national law enforcement bodies to the financial sector, the practice of “de-risking” restricts humanitarian access for organizations to banking services and leads to fears of legal or reputational risks.

48. Those dynamics have an impact on humanitarian needs, increase delivery costs and affect programme quality. In some contexts, there may be the need to resort to remote management programming, because of the impossibility of maintaining sustained humanitarian presence, which has a direct impact on affected populations.

49. Restoring an environment that preserves the impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian action, including space for engagement and negotiation with armed groups, and that is conducive to rapid, safe and sustained humanitarian access is imperative. Some Member States have shown willingness to work towards safeguarding impartial humanitarian action. The European Union included a general humanitarian exemption in its March 2017 directive on counter-terrorism. The General Assembly and the Security Council have clarified that counter-terrorism measures should comply with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. Member States should take practical steps to implement those decisions, including in line with Security Council resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#). Cases of impediments and arbitrary denial of access must be effectively addressed and the parties responsible must be held accountable. Developing clear, simple and swift procedures for the entry and deployment of humanitarian personnel, goods and services will improve the level of access. Humanitarian organizations should continue strengthening their systems to prevent and respond to risks of aid diversion or misappropriation.

B. Reducing displacement

Addressing and reducing forced displacement

Internally displaced persons

50. Over 41 million people remained internally displaced due to conflict and violence at the end of 2018.⁹ Two trends are notable, that most internally displaced persons live in situations of protracted displacement with no or limited access to durable solutions and that a growing number, if not a majority, of internally displaced persons are displaced in urban areas. The impact of internal displacement on host communities, including with regard to access to basic services and livelihoods, is often significant, impeding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals or threatening to reverse development gains. Better solutions are needed. While addressing short-term emergency needs, humanitarian organizations must adopt a longer-term perspective from the outset of the response to work with national and

⁸ Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. & Czwarno, M. “Aid worker security report: figures at a glance” fact sheet, Humanitarian Outcomes (2018).

⁹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018*.

local authorities, host communities, internally displaced persons and development counterparts to reduce vulnerabilities, rebuild livelihoods, increase resilience and achieve durable solutions.

51. In its resolution [72/182](#), the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to work with Member States and the United Nations system to explore ways to better address the long-term needs of internally displaced persons and support host communities. In 2018, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons spearheaded a multi-stakeholder three-year plan of action, focused on collaboration at the national level. The plan, launched in April 2018 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the issuance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, is aimed at fostering exchanges of good practices among Member States and humanitarian and development organizations, including on disaster-induced displacement and durable solutions. It focuses on four key areas: law and policy, data, the participation of internally displaced persons, and protracted displacement and durable solutions. In the Central African Republic and Ukraine, workshops used the methodology of the study on breaking the impasse to propose a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the short- and long-term aspects of internal displacement. It is a positive first step, but more efforts are required.

52. October 2019 will mark the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, a legally-binding instrument providing an opportunity to promote further ratification and implementation and share initiatives and best practices.

Refugees

53. In its resolution [73/151](#), the General Assembly affirmed the global compact on refugees, which is grounded on the international refugee protection regime and seeks to ensure more predictable and equitable burden-sharing and responsibility-sharing among Member States. In 2019, UNHCR will host the Global Refugee Forum to garner pledges and contributions, including on financial assistance, resettlement allocations and the right to work.

54. By the end of 2018, 15 Latin American, African and Asian countries had rolled out a comprehensive refugee response framework, leading to improvements in response to refugees and host communities, including measures for self-reliance and social cohesion.

Migrants in vulnerable situations

55. At least 4,667 people died or went missing along migratory routes in 2018.¹⁰ Migrants in vulnerable situations face overwhelming risks, including loss of life, disappearance, violence, exploitation, trafficking, abduction, extortion, lack of access to services and arbitrary detention. Xenophobic political narratives about migration have become more prevalent. The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration reinforces the needed actions.

56. Humanitarian partners continued rolling out the guidelines of the migrants in countries in crisis initiative and developing migration response plans, regional response plans and mixed migration working groups to improve response to migrants in vulnerable situations. The new United Nations network on migration will support

¹⁰ International Organization for Migration Missing Migrants Project (<https://missingmigrants.iom.int>).

the implementation of the Global Compact, as a complement to existing coordination systems.

Displacement in the context of disasters and the impacts of climate change

57. In 2018, 17.2 million new displacements associated with disasters were recorded, in 142 countries and territories.¹¹ In the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration displacement is recognized in the context of disasters and the need to reduce risks and increase preparedness. In the global compact on refugees, it is recognized that environmental degradation and disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of the movement of refugees. In September 2018, the task force on displacement established by the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts provided recommendations on integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement relating to the impact of climate change. United Nations agencies and partners are supporting efforts to address the impacts of climate change and strengthen climate resilience, including through the Secretary-General's climate resilience initiative and work to foster climate risk management in areas of great humanitarian need. In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, shifting to a risk management approach, improving collection and use of data, disaggregated by relevant factors, and monitoring risks are critical.

C. Advancing humanitarian and development collaboration and linkages to peace

58. Humanitarian crises are increasing in number and duration. Since 2015, appeals for crises lasting five years or longer have spiked and now command most of the funding received and requested (80 per cent).

59. The need for closer collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to achieve collective outcomes and decrease vulnerability is now widely recognized. Governments are increasingly linking efforts to reduce humanitarian needs with those to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Donors are adapting their systems to provide better aligned humanitarian and development aid, and the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development issued a recommendation on the humanitarian-development nexus.

60. The Secretary-General is mobilizing United Nations principals and country leadership, as well as the World Bank, towards shifting the response to crises to more joined-up approaches, fostering prevention and achieving progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration works to ensure greater coherence of humanitarian and development action in crises and transitions to long-term sustainable development and in reducing vulnerabilities in order to build resilience.

61. The Joint Steering Committee prioritized high-level support to the field in seven countries, namely, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, the Niger, Nigeria and Somalia, where progress was made working towards collective outcomes, such as reducing food insecurity and malnutrition, enhancing basic service delivery and finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons, in line with the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals.

62. The Joint Steering Committee carried out a review in the above-mentioned countries to assess progress, good practices, support to country leadership and the

¹¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2018*.

remaining gaps in and bottlenecks to achieving collective outcomes. Among the main challenges were the need for: strengthened leadership; predictable and less fragmented funding; reinforced capacities, in particular in the offices of resident coordinators; strengthened multi-sector data analysis; and the use of collective outcomes to inform planning frameworks and related financing. High-level advocacy to further strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions and the African Union and collaboration with Governments remain key components. The review will result in recommendations targeting systemic and country-specific issues requiring further high-level attention and support of Joint Steering Committee members.

63. The Joint Steering Committee supports ongoing reform processes and informs decisions aimed at strengthening the leadership of resident and humanitarian coordinators and effective coordination between humanitarian and development activities, taking into account their linkages to peace and fostering joined-up planning and programming. It also fosters robust engagement with the World Bank and other international financial institutions for flexible and sustained funding and financing for collective outcomes. The Joint Steering Committee ensures coherence with key coordination frameworks and mechanisms and will work closely with the Executive Committee, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and others.

64. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including through its task team, prioritized collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and, to that end, undertook such activities as peer-to-peer exchange, workshops and technical support.

65. The reform of the United Nations development system offers opportunities to further strengthen humanitarian and development collaboration. The reform is complementary to principled humanitarian action undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution [46/182](#).

66. Independent and empowered resident coordinators will be better equipped to provide leadership in reducing need, risk and vulnerability. A new generation of United Nations country teams will more effectively identify and work towards development results that reach the most vulnerable. The revision of development planning, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and analysis tools, such as a common country analysis, will allow development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors to contribute to joint analysis and ensure better connectivity and complementarity with the work of humanitarian country teams, humanitarian needs overviews, humanitarian response plans and other inter-agency plans and humanitarian appeals.

Localization

67. In the Agenda for Humanity, momentum was harnessed for localization with the call to reinforce, and not replace, local and national systems, which entails acknowledging local and national actors' capacities and comparative advantages, enhancing their technical capacity, removing funding barriers, increasing their decision-making role, promoting a contextualized response and working with them as equal partners.

68. There have been advances. Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance has included localization principles for over a decade and humanitarian coordination structures continue to include national and local non-governmental organizations. For example, 22 national and local non-governmental organizations and seven local authorities perform in leadership functions of subnational clusters in Somalia.

International actors have invested in local capacities through training and provision of technical assistance. Local and national actors can access more international funds, including country-based pooled funds and other pooled funds, including from the Start Fund.

69. Challenges remain with regard to localization. Local actors are often excluded from global decision-making processes. Structural barriers impede local actors from gaining access to international funding. There is a gap between global commitments on localization, such as those under the Charter for Change, and their application in the field. Progress will require leadership to address those barriers.

D. Humanitarian financing

Shifting from reaction to anticipation

70. To keep up with growing needs, humanitarian organizations are moving away from waiting to respond until crises are causing immense suffering towards managing risks and reducing vulnerability, thereby reducing the humanitarian toll. The shift will lead faster, more effective humanitarian relief. The anticipatory approach is gaining momentum and evolving in four areas.

71. The first area is leveraging funding for early action and preparedness. In South Sudan, country-based pooled funds were allocated to support preparedness activities against an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in 2018. Complementing those efforts, the Central Emergency Response Fund released \$10 million for time-critical readiness activities in Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, which helped to stem the spread of the deadly virus.

72. The second area is the use of contingency funding, which is increasingly being used to accelerate early action for predictable emergencies. By tying funding to pre-agreed triggers, response times can be cut from months to days. Examples of trigger-based contingency funding for early action include the forecast-based fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Start Fund's anticipation window and the World Bank-United Nations famine action mechanism. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is also implementing its early warning, early action, approach in 18 countries. Incorporating the results of ongoing testing, evidence-gathering and learning from the integration of stronger early warning data and predictive analytics into decision-making is critical in order to scale up predictive financing models and funding volumes for early action.

73. The third area is the use of insurance and structured risk financing to better protect against disasters, such as a company protecting agricultural production through sovereign insurance in regions vulnerable to drought, erratic rainfall and climate impacts. In another case, some 30,000 farmers covered through microinsurance under the rural resilience initiative of the World Food Programme have received \$1.5 million in payments against drought. An insurance facility in the Caribbean that covers beneficiaries when earthquakes, flooding or storms hit paid out over \$55 million in four countries after Hurricane Irma. Humanitarian and private sector organizations are examining the potential of structured risk financing solutions for complex emergencies, including ways to improve the impact of money spent in volatile settings.

74. The fourth area is improving the accuracy and rigor of needs assessments underpinning the forward-looking approaches outlined above. Risk-informed needs assessments are vital to maximizing the value of every dollar invested in relief. Developing a stronger focus on risk analysis and vulnerability is crucial to scaling up anticipatory financing, escaping chronic underfunding and reducing suffering.

Moreover, it provides a sustainable and nimble financial model that is fit for purpose now and will be for years to come.

IV. Developments in operations and the coordination of humanitarian response in 2018

A. Improving humanitarian coordination and response

Humanitarian needs analysis

75. In 2018, progress was made to improve joint and impartial needs analysis. A common methodology for humanitarian actors across sectors to jointly and holistically assess humanitarian needs and understand underlying causes was tested. The quality of estimates concerning the humanitarian population in need in humanitarian needs overviews and the analysis of the severity of unmet needs continued to improve. Further key developments are planned for 2019.

76. The Centre for Humanitarian Data continued to increase the use and impact of data, overseeing a record growth in the humanitarian data exchange platform, which hosts over 8,000 datasets from 200 organizations. The index for risk management initiative continued to support the development of shared open-source risk analysis. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is coordinating an inter-agency effort to improve the quality and availability of the baseline data underpinning preparedness and response efforts. Work continued through several initiatives to improve data, including interoperable data, on internal displacement. As data and technology expand, it is important for sensitive data to be protected.

Humanitarian response planning

77. Humanitarian response plans are increasingly based on strengthened planning processes, including a more systematic use of the analysis of needs, trends and risks, current response and constraints and the response capacity of government and development actors. Multi-year planning is increasing, with 11 countries using multi-year plans or strategies in 2019. Humanitarian response planning is increasingly connecting with other country planning frameworks, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and integrated mission planning.

78. Launched in 2018, Humanitarian InSight¹² is a web-based portal for humanitarian response planning and monitoring. It provides up-to-date, consolidated data on humanitarian needs, the number of people reached and funding, to inform decision-making.

79. In November 2018, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals endorsed the humanitarian system-wide scale-up protocols, which replaced the humanitarian system-wide emergency activation, response mechanism. The protocols help to ensure that the humanitarian system responds quickly and in a coordinated manner in rapidly deteriorating and sudden-onset crises.

80. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations continue to enhance accountability and transparency. In October 2018, an inter-agency humanitarian evaluation focused on the collective humanitarian response to recurring droughts launched in Ethiopia to support learning and accountability.

¹² Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian InSight.

Cash-based programming

81. Cash-transfer programmes to achieve humanitarian objectives continue to be scaled up, with over 10 per cent of humanitarian assistance estimated to be delivered through cash. The use of multi-purpose or sector-specific cash as dignified, flexible, effective and cost-efficient modalities is increasing. Further efforts are needed to ensure joined-up approaches to cash programming and delivery, including, where possible, by using national social protection systems for delivery. In December 2018, the World Food Programme, UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs committed to working towards a common cash system in crises globally.

B. Disaster preparedness and response

United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group

82. Since 1993, the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system has responded to over 285 emergencies in over 100 countries. In 2018, United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams provided tailored support to the government-led emergency response in Indonesia and to government emergency operations centres in Nigeria. In Papua New Guinea, United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams supported the government and the humanitarian country team with information management, situational analysis and coordination.

83. In 2018, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group continued to strengthen the urban search and rescue capacity of Member States, including through the provision of technical advice and region-wide simulation exercises. Over time, such support has contributed to some Member States developing their national capabilities to respond to earthquakes.

El Niño/La Niña episodes

84. In March 2018, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the inter-agency standard operating procedures for early action in response to El Niño Southern Oscillation episodes, which provide a framework for helping to mitigate and prevent impacts and catalyse early humanitarian and development action, including an outline of what actions to take, by whom and when, following warning signs of such an event.

85. In September 2018, following a warning about a possible El Niño event, a watch was triggered and an analysis cell was convened, in line with the standard operating procedures. A total of 25 countries at high risk were identified and regional and country teams initiated preparedness and early action measures and examined early action initiatives using pre-committed funding.

Partnerships with regional organizations and the private sector

86. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued rolling out the Inter-Agency Standing Committee emergency preparedness package across regions. The Office's regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean worked with partners to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season. The West Africa and southern and eastern Africa regional offices continued engaging with regional organizations, national disaster management agencies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to enhance preparedness and response. The Asia and Pacific regional office continued strengthening its partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, focusing on enhancing preparedness and disaster risk reduction efforts.

87. In 2018, seven private sector networks supported by the connecting business initiative responded to disasters. Partnerships with the private sector are also leading to innovative new programming. The Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies What Now Service is increasing the dissemination of disaster preparedness and risk reduction messages. The United Nations Development Programme is working to prepare airports around the world for disasters.

C. Centrality of protection in humanitarian action

88. In 2018, Inter-Agency Standing Committee organizations reiterated their pledge to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action. With the support of the global and field protection clusters, protection principles and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on combating gender-based violence were increasingly integrated and applied in coordinated assessments and joint analysis and planning. Protection actors placed greater focus on multi-sectoral solutions to address linkages between protection and food insecurity, medical assistance and education. Humanitarian workers are increasingly developing and using gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, community-based approaches to providing protection services to respond to the varying needs of affected people. In November 2018, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee global protection cluster led a stocktaking of the implementation of the protection policy, which identified areas for improvement.

Child protection

89. Crises in 2018 led to a deterioration of the protection afforded to children. Global efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children and their recruitment into armed forces or armed groups were scaled up, including by building on progress made by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Additional Member States endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration to reinforce the protection of education facilities from military use and safeguard students and education staff.

Sexual and gender-based violence

90. The call to action on protection from gender-based violence in emergencies, a multi-stakeholder initiative, continued to mobilize action and has helped to galvanize donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to prioritize combating gender-based violence, develop stronger policies and accountability mechanisms and mobilize funding. Continuing to strengthen efforts on protection reporting, including on gender-based violence incidents, and analysis remains paramount.

D. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse

91. The Secretary-General is committed to driving the full implementation of the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations and its partners, scaling up implementation at the country level and ensuring that victims/survivors have adequate protection, appropriate assistance and reliable recourse to justice.

92. In 2018, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals endorsed a comprehensive strategy to combat sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, with concrete actions to scale up safe and accessible reporting mechanisms, including community-based feedback mechanisms, and protection and assistance to survivors and to strengthen accountability. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee task team on

accountability to affected populations and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse is providing operational guidance and technical support to in-country networks for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and humanitarian country teams. Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners have accelerated measures to combat and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including through training courses, addressing gaps at the country level and strengthening vetting and reference checking processes to prevent the re-employment of perpetrators.

E. Accountability and inclusion

Accountability to affected persons

93. Collective accountability mechanisms continued to be established and strengthened. Guidance was produced for field teams on the inclusion of accountability to affected people in humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. Questions around accountability to affected populations were included in multi-sector needs assessments. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and partners conducted inter-agency workshops to develop joint action plans for accountability.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

94. In April 2018, the Secretary-General initiated a process to develop a policy, action plan and accountability framework to strengthen system-wide accessibility and mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities into the United Nations system. Humanitarian action was a cross-cutting issue at the Global Disability Summit held in London in July 2018, which generated significant commitments. The Security Council held its first-ever open discussion on persons with disabilities in armed conflict in 2018. Work continued on strengthening global and institutional capacity for inclusion of persons with disabilities, including on the collection and use of data disaggregated by disability.

95. Endorsed by 216 stakeholders, including 28 Member States, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action has increased political will for inclusive programming. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities will be finalized in 2019. Their operationalization will be key to bringing about change.

Youth in humanitarian action

96. Over 40 stakeholders have signed the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and are committed to addressing the priorities and needs and ensuring the rights of young people affected by crises and to meaningfully engaging with them at all stages of humanitarian action. The Compact is developing inter-agency guidelines on working with and for young people in humanitarian settings, which will be finalized in 2019.

F. Gender equality and empowering women and girls

Gender equality

97. Women are often the first responders to crises and play a central role in the survival and resilience of families and communities. Investing in gender equality and the participation of women and girls helps humanitarian programmes to serve the varying needs of affected populations more effectively.

98. The updated Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender handbook for humanitarian action was issued in 2018. Over 7,000 copies were distributed, in 43 countries. An accountability framework is being used to monitor the collective performance of the Standing Committee.

99. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender with age marker was launched in June 2018. It is a planning and monitoring tool that helps programme staff and management to determine how gender and age are considered at the various stages of the humanitarian programme cycle. The gender with age marker strengthens the original gender marker by including age and adding a monitoring component. It will replace the gender marker in the 2019 humanitarian programme cycle and will be reflected in the financial tracking service.

100. Gender capacity advisers provide advice and build capacity in gender mainstreaming and support the implementation of the gender with age marker. In 2018, the gender capacity standby project completed 18 field deployments of gender capacity advisers and the deployment of a Headquarters-based adviser to provide guidance system-wide on integrating a gender perspective into addressing sudden-onset emergencies and protracted crises.

Sexual and reproductive health

101. Sexual and reproductive health and rights can be overlooked during situations of conflict and disaster, with serious negative consequences. Pregnant women and girls risk life-threatening complications without effective access to reproductive health services, including skilled birth attendants. Limited or non-existent access to family planning in emergencies is a major challenge. Women and young people become more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. An updated inter-agency field manual on reproductive health in humanitarian settings, which is rooted in human rights principles, was issued in 2018, to support preparedness and response in conflict and disaster settings. The provision of sexual and reproductive health services in situations of emergency is life-saving and must be prioritized and adequately funded.

G. Humanitarian pooled funds

102. The Central Emergency Response Fund is a critical enabler of immediate, effective and coordinated humanitarian action. In 2018, it allocated over \$500 million, supporting humanitarian response in 47 countries. Country-based pooled funds channelled \$836 million in 2018, to 685 humanitarian organizations, in 17 countries. National and local organizations were direct recipients of one quarter of those funds. Donors generously provided record-breaking contributions to country-based pooled funds in 2018, totalling over \$950 million.¹³ The Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds continued strengthening their complementarity to leverage comparative advantages and maximize impact.

H. Strengthening human resource capacity

103. The Secretary-General's global human resources strategy is aligned with the principles of equitable geographical representation and gender parity. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is endeavouring for a workforce that represents a gender balance at all levels and geographical diversity reflecting the

¹³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, country-based pooled funds grant management system (<https://gms.unocha.org/content/cbpf-overview>).

communities it serves and which reaps the efficiency and productivity gains that come from having a diverse workforce. The Office's strategy in that regard includes action plans with annual indicators. Goals are set to increase the Office's workforce diversity with regard to representation of all regional groups. The strategy is aimed at achieving a work environment that promotes equality and inclusiveness and is free of bias.

104. United Nations agencies are implementing strategies to recruit a gender and geographically diverse pool of applicants. For example, the World Food Programme established a workforce analytics tool to allow real-time monitoring of the gender and geographical representation of its workforce. UNHCR introduced learning and development programmes to increase the readiness of women for leadership positions and focus management development on leading diverse, inclusive teams.

V. Recommendations

105. **On the basis of the foregoing, the Secretary-General recommends the following:**

(a) Member States, parties to conflict and humanitarian organizations should intensify their efforts to promote and ensure full respect for and adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence;

(b) Member States and parties to conflict should allow and facilitate the rapid, unimpeded and sustained access of impartial humanitarian relief, simplify and expedite procedures for the entry and deployment of humanitarian personnel, goods and services and adopt facilitation measures in line with the model agreement between Member States and the United Nations concerning measures to expedite relief consignments and possessions in emergencies;

(c) Member States and parties to conflict should urgently take all measures necessary to promote, respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law, ensure the protection of civilians and other protected persons and objects, develop national policy frameworks establishing clear institutional authorities and responsibilities for the protection of civilians, increase advocacy and bring to justice perpetrators of serious violations, including for violations and abuses perpetrated against children;

(d) Member States and parties to conflict should respect and protect medical and humanitarian workers and assets, including by refraining from direct attacks against them and taking constant care to spare them in military operations. They should take all practical measures necessary to protect humanitarian and medical missions, such as those defined in the recommendations made pursuant to Security Council resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#), including the non-criminalization of medical care and humanitarian assistance, incorporating into domestic law required protections under international law and sharing best practices and lessons learned;

(e) Parties to conflict should avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas and develop operational policies to that end. Member States should engage in efforts to develop a political declaration to address the complex, cumulative and long-term pattern of harm resulting from use of explosive weapons in populated areas;

(f) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should continue to collectively place protection at the centre of humanitarian

action, maximize protection outcomes and promote safety and dignity in humanitarian response, including by increasing capacity to design and implement programmes to minimize safety risks for affected populations and improve the protective environment;

(g) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should ensure that perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation are held accountable;

(h) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should increase their long-term investments and efforts to ensure that sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response services are in place from the onset of an emergency and that survivors have immediate access to critical services and tools to assist in their recovery, should systematically integrate prevention, risk mitigation and response into humanitarian response plans and should strengthen data collection and monitoring;

(i) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian and development organizations should develop and implement effective strategies to prevent and measurably reduce internal displacement and protect internally displaced persons, in line with international standards and in a way that ensures their participation in programmes and decisions that affect them, supports their resilience and self-sufficiency and achieves durable solutions;

(j) Member States should ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and do not impede principled humanitarian and medical activities;

(k) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should provide the human and financial resources necessary to deliver programmes that are responsive to the different, context-specific needs of affected people, including by ensuring the systematic collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, according priority to funding for gender equality, the empowerment of women and measures for increasing their self-reliance and the use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender with age marker, and ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women and girls;

(l) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should strengthen their capacities, including human and financial resourcing and expertise, to mainstream inclusion of persons with disabilities into programmes, policies and strategic frameworks, should improve the collection and use of data disaggregated by disability and should ensure participation of persons with disabilities at all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle;

(m) Member States, the United Nations, humanitarian and development organizations and other relevant actors should support humanitarian and development collaboration, including joint analysis and joined-up planning to reduce risks and vulnerabilities and increased multi-year financing geared towards achieving collective outcomes;

(n) Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should remove barriers hindering collaboration and meaningful partnerships among international, regional, national and local actors to reinforce and not replace the capacities of local actors and institutions, including by providing capacity-building and funding before, during and after emergencies. They should promote and fund community engagement approaches in the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance;

(o) **Member States, parties to conflict, the United Nations, humanitarian and development organizations and other relevant actors should intensify efforts to prevent and respond to global food insecurity, especially for countries at risk of famine, including by enhancing humanitarian and development collaboration, investing in agriculture to protect livelihoods and food production, providing urgent and flexible funding, scaling up shock-responsive social protection systems, and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law, including prohibiting the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and facilitate humanitarian access to affected people;**

(p) **Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations should accelerate efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of climate change, including by increasing the use of climate risk analysis in planning and programming and strengthening early warning systems, preparedness, resilience and the effectiveness and timeliness of response in at-risk locations;**

(q) **Member States and humanitarian organizations should continue taking forward the commitments made and initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit and voluntarily report on progress and best practices through the online Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation.**
