

Annex III



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RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/46/L.55 and Corr.1)]

46/182. Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian
emergency assistance of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 and its subsequent resolutions and decisions on humanitarian assistance, including its resolution 45/100 of 14 December 1990,

Recalling also its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, the annex to which contains the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction,

Deeply concerned about the suffering of the victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction,

Mindful of the need to strengthen further and make more effective the collective efforts of the international community, in particular the United Nations system, in providing humanitarian assistance,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the capacity, experience and coordination arrangements in the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, 1/

1/ A/46/568.

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1. Adopts the text contained in the annex to the present resolution for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution.

78th plenary meeting
19 December 1991

ANNEX

I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Humanitarian assistance is of cardinal importance for the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies.

2. Humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

3. The sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country.

4. Each State has the responsibility first and foremost to take care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. Hence, the affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory.

5. The magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries. International cooperation to address emergency situations and to strengthen the response capacity of affected countries is thus of great importance. Such cooperation should be provided in accordance with international law and national laws. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives should continue to make a significant contribution in supplementing national efforts.

6. States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance are called upon to facilitate the work of these organizations in implementing humanitarian assistance, in particular the supply of food, medicines, shelter and health care, for which access to victims is essential.

7. States in proximity to emergencies are urged to participate closely with the affected countries in international efforts, with a view to facilitating, to the extent possible, the transit of humanitarian assistance.

8. Special attention should be given to disaster prevention and preparedness by the Governments concerned, as well as by the international community.

9. There is a clear relationship between emergency, rehabilitation and development. In order to ensure a smooth transition from relief to

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rehabilitation and development, emergency assistance should be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Thus, emergency measures should be seen as a step towards long-term development.

10. Economic growth and sustainable development are essential for prevention of and preparedness against natural disasters and other emergencies. Many emergencies reflect the underlying crisis in development facing developing countries. Humanitarian assistance should therefore be accompanied by a renewal of commitment to economic growth and sustainable development of developing countries. In this context, adequate resources must be made available to address their development problems.

11. Contributions for humanitarian assistance should be provided in a way which is not to the detriment of resources made available for international cooperation for development.

12. The United Nations has a central and unique role to play in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support the affected countries. The United Nations should ensure the prompt and smooth delivery of relief assistance in full respect of the above-mentioned principles, bearing in mind also relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 and 45/100 of 14 December 1990. The United Nations system needs to be adapted and strengthened to meet present and future challenges in an effective and coherent manner. It should be provided with resources commensurate with future requirements. The inadequacy of such resources has been one of the major constraints in the effective response of the United Nations to emergencies.

II. PREVENTION

13. The international community should adequately assist developing countries in strengthening their capacity in disaster prevention and mitigation, both at the national and regional levels, for example, in establishing and enhancing integrated programmes in this regard.

14. In order to reduce the impact of disasters there should be increased awareness of the need for establishing disaster mitigation strategies, particularly in disaster-prone countries. There should be greater exchange and dissemination of existing and new technical information related to the assessment, prediction and mitigation of disasters. As called for in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, efforts should be intensified to develop measures for prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and similar emergencies through programmes of technical assistance and modalities for favourable access to, and transfer of, relevant technology.

15. The disaster management training programme recently initiated by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme should be strengthened and broadened.

16. Organizations of the United Nations system involved in the funding and the provision of assistance relevant to the prevention of emergencies should be provided with sufficient and readily available resources.

17. The international community is urged to provide the necessary support and resources to programmes and activities undertaken to further the goals and objectives of the Decade.

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III. PREPAREDNESS

18. International relief assistance should supplement national efforts to improve the capacities of developing countries to mitigate the effects of natural disasters expeditiously and effectively and to cope efficiently with all emergencies. The United Nations should enhance its efforts to assist developing countries to strengthen their capacity to respond to disasters, at the national and regional levels, as appropriate.

Early warning

19. On the basis of existing mandates and drawing upon monitoring arrangements available within the system, the United Nations should intensify efforts, building upon the existing capacities of relevant organizations and entities of the United Nations, for the systematic pooling, analysis and dissemination of early-warning information on natural disasters and other emergencies. In this context, the United Nations should consider making use as appropriate of the early-warning capacities of Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

20. Early-warning information should be made available in an unrestricted and timely manner to all interested Governments and concerned authorities, in particular of affected or disaster-prone countries. The capacity of disaster-prone countries to receive, use and disseminate this information should be strengthened. In this connection, the international community is urged to assist these countries upon request with the establishment and enhancement of national early-warning systems.

IV. STAND-BY CAPACITY

(a) Contingency funding arrangements

21. Organizations and entities of the United Nations system should continue to respond to requests for emergency assistance within their respective mandates. Reserve and other contingency funding arrangements of these organizations and entities should be examined by their respective governing bodies to strengthen further their operational capacities for rapid and coordinated response to emergencies.

22. In addition, there is a need for a complementary central funding mechanism to ensure the provision of adequate resources for use in the initial phase of emergencies that require a system-wide response.

23. To that end, the Secretary-General should establish under his authority a central emergency revolving fund as a cash-flow mechanism to ensure the rapid and coordinated response of the organizations of the system.

24. This fund should be put into operation with an amount of 50 million United States dollars. The fund should be financed by voluntary contributions. Consultations among potential donors should be held to this end. To achieve this target, the Secretary-General should launch an appeal to potential donors and convene a meeting of those donors in the first quarter of 1992 to secure contributions to the fund on an assured, broad-based and additional basis.

25. Resources should be advanced to the operational organizations of the system on the understanding that they would reimburse the fund in the first
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instance from the voluntary contributions received in response to consolidated appeals.

26. The operation of the fund should be reviewed after two years.

(b) Additional measures for rapid response

27. The United Nations should, building upon the existing capacities of relevant organizations, establish a central register of all specialized personnel and teams of technical specialists, as well as relief supplies, equipment and services available within the United Nations system and from Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, that can be called upon at short notice by the United Nations.

28. The United Nations should continue to make appropriate arrangements with interested Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to enable it to have more expeditious access, when necessary, to their emergency relief capacities, including food reserves, emergency stockpiles and personnel, as well as logistic support. In the context of the annual report to the General Assembly mentioned in paragraph 35 (d) below, the Secretary-General is requested to report on progress in this regard.

29. Special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to enable all organizations to disburse quickly emergency funds, and to procure emergency supplies and equipment, as well as to recruit emergency staff.

30. Disaster-prone countries should develop special emergency procedures to expedite the rapid procurement and deployment of equipment and relief supplies.

V. CONSOLIDATED APPEALS

31. For emergencies requiring a coordinated response, the Secretary-General should ensure that an initial consolidated appeal covering all concerned organizations of the system, prepared in consultation with the affected State, is issued within the shortest possible time and in any event not longer than one week. In the case of prolonged emergencies, this initial appeal should be updated and elaborated within four weeks, as more information becomes available.

32. Potential donors should adopt necessary measures to increase and expedite their contributions, including setting aside, on a stand-by basis, financial and other resources that can be disbursed quickly to the United Nations system in response to the consolidated appeals of the Secretary-General.

VI. COORDINATION, COOPERATION AND LEADERSHIP

(a) Leadership of the Secretary-General

33. The leadership role of the Secretary-General is critical and must be strengthened to ensure better preparation for, as well as rapid and coherent response to, natural disasters and other emergencies. This should be achieved through coordinated support for prevention and preparedness measures and the

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optimal utilization of, inter alia, an inter-agency standing committee, consolidated appeals, a central emergency revolving fund and a register of stand-by capacities.

34. To this end, and on the understanding that the requisite resources envisaged in paragraph 24 above would be provided, a high-level official (emergency relief coordinator) would be designated by the Secretary-General to work closely with and with direct access to him, in cooperation with the relevant organizations and entities of the system dealing with humanitarian assistance and in full respect of their mandates, without prejudice to any decisions to be taken by the General Assembly on the overall restructuring of the Secretariat of the United Nations. This high-level official should combine the functions at present carried out in the coordination of United Nations response by representatives of the Secretary-General for major and complex emergencies, as well as by the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator.

35. Under the aegis of the General Assembly and working under the direction of the Secretary-General, the high-level official would have the following responsibilities:

(a) Processing requests from affected Member States for emergency assistance requiring a coordinated response;

(b) Maintaining an overview of all emergencies through, inter alia, the systematic pooling and analysis of early-warning information as envisaged in paragraph 19 above, with a view to coordinating and facilitating the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system to those emergencies that require a coordinated response;

(c) Organizing, in consultation with the Government of the affected country, a joint inter-agency needs-assessment mission and preparing a consolidated appeal to be issued by the Secretary-General, to be followed by periodic situation reports including information on all sources of external assistance;

(d) Actively facilitating, including through negotiation if needed, the access by the operational organizations to emergency areas for the rapid provision of emergency assistance by obtaining the consent of all parties concerned, through modalities such as the establishment of temporary relief corridors where needed, days and zones of tranquility and other forms;

(e) Managing, in consultation with the operational organizations concerned, the central emergency revolving fund and assisting in the mobilization of resources;

(f) Serving as a central focal point with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerning United Nations emergency relief operations and, when appropriate and necessary, mobilizing their emergency relief capacities, including through consultations in his capacity as Chairman of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee;

(g) Providing consolidated information, including early warning on emergencies, to all interested Governments and concerned authorities, particularly affected and disaster-prone countries, drawing on the capacities of the organizations of the system and other available sources;

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(h) Actively promoting, in close collaboration with concerned organizations, the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction as relief operations under his aegis are phased out;

(i) Preparing an annual report for the Secretary-General on the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance, including information on the central emergency revolving fund, to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

36. The high-level official should be supported by a secretariat based on a strengthened Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and the consolidation of existing offices that deal with complex emergencies. This secretariat could be supplemented by staff seconded from concerned organizations of the system. The high-level official should work closely with organizations and entities of the United Nations system, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration and relevant non-governmental organizations. At the country level, the high-level official would maintain close contact with and provide leadership to the resident coordinators on matters relating to humanitarian assistance.

37. The Secretary-General should ensure that arrangements between the high-level official and all relevant organizations are set in place, establishing responsibilities for prompt and coordinated action in the event of emergency.

(b) Inter-Agency Standing Committee

38. An Inter-Agency Standing Committee serviced by a strengthened Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator should be established under the chairmanship of the high-level official with the participation of all operational organizations and with a standing invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Organization for Migration. Relevant non-governmental organizations can be invited to participate on an ad hoc basis. The Committee should meet as soon as possible in response to emergencies.

(c) Country-level coordination

39. Within the overall framework described above and in support of the efforts of the affected countries, the resident coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level. He/She should facilitate the preparedness of the United Nations system and assist in a speedy transition from relief to development. He/She should promote the use of all locally or regionally available relief capacities. The resident coordinator should chair an emergency operations group of field representatives and experts from the system.

VII. CONTINUUM FROM RELIEF TO REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT

40. Emergency assistance must be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Development assistance organizations of the United Nations system should be involved at an early stage and should collaborate closely with those responsible for emergency relief and recovery, within their existing mandates.

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41. International cooperation and support for rehabilitation and reconstruction should continue with sustained intensity after the initial relief stage. The rehabilitation phase should be used as an opportunity to restructure and improve facilities and services destroyed by emergencies in order to enable them to withstand the impact of future emergencies.

42. International cooperation should be accelerated for the development of developing countries, thereby contributing to reducing the occurrence and impact of future disasters and emergencies.

Addendum

PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITARIAN AID AND RECOMMENDED CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR MILITARY AND CIVIL DEFENCE PERSONNEL IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN TIMES OF PEACE

prepared by the International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. When operating outside of their country of origin, military and civil defence personnel are usually considered by those around them as welcome guests and representatives of their country. As such, just as with all international relief workers, the highest standards of professional behaviour are called for.
2. The following principles provide practical advice and a basic code of behaviour for MCDA personnel engaged in international disaster relief.
3. The present addendum should be considered as a supplement to and not a substitute for the normal rules of conduct for military and civil-defence personnel.

A. Disaster relief

4. In any disaster there are two sets of needs to be met. The first set concerns the immediate life supporting needs and the second concerns more long-term rehabilitation needs.

Six immediate needs

5. Although the degree and importance of the basic needs may vary in magnitude and priority from one disaster to another, they are often the same:

- Search and rescue;
- Sufficient shelter (including "mobile shelter": clothing);
- Adequate food;
- Safe and adequate water supply and disposal;
- Health and social care,
- Protection from violence and harassment.

6. Major types of disasters have similar needs on which the emphasis varies. Earthquakes create a special need for search and rescue as well as for water, medical care and shelter, but rarely affect food supply. Floods very quickly create a scarcity of safe drinking water and problems of food supply. Refugees and internally displaced persons almost always need some degree of protection from violence and harassment.

7. The way in which relief is delivered often has a profound effect on a community's ability to recover from the disaster. For instance, the supply of large scale free food aid may solve the immediate food supply problem, but leave a community more vulnerable to future food crises because it disrupts normal food marketing and production systems.

Rehabilitation

8. Rehabilitation refers to the actions taken in the aftermath of a disaster to enable basic services to resume functioning, to assist victims' self-help efforts to repair physical damage and community facilities, to revive economic activities and provide support for the psychological and social well being of the survivors. While it initially focuses on enabling the affected population to resume more-or-less normal (pre-disaster) patterns of life it should always strive to reduce vulnerability and create an improvement in living standards.

9. With every relief action, aid providers have to ask if the intervention will leave behind a community more able, or less able to cope with future disasters.

10. In meeting the relief and rehabilitation needs of disaster victims, the manner in which the relief is delivered and the way the providers of relief act have a critical effect upon the success of the relief operation.

II. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

11. Disaster relief is part of a larger spectrum of humanitarian assistance. There is no formal definition of humanitarian assistance, but the following description encompasses the key elements which set it apart from other forms of international assistance (e.g. economic, scientific, military).

12. Humanitarian assistance is assistance that is willingly given, without requiring reciprocal financial or political gain, for the purpose of alleviating human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress and suffering caused by disaster.

13. It encompasses both the provision of basic life supporting services and rehabilitation activities as described above. It is given in the spirit of humanity and in partnership with the afflicted population in a manner which recognizes their fundamental human rights.

14. The right to receive or offer humanitarian assistance is a basic humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all human beings. Hence the need for unimpeded access to disaster affected populations is of fundamental importance in providing humanitarian assistance.

15. When foreign military and civil-defence units are involved in humanitarian operations, their actions should always be humanitarian and should never be partisan or political.

III. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

16. There are three basic principles behind all humanitarian actions. These principles should be adhered to by all those involved in humanitarian operations, be they local, international or military and civil defence personnel.

Humanity

17. All persons are entitled to fundamental human rights as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In humanitarian crises, the dignity and rights of all persons, in particular those of the victims of disaster and those of the individuals providing assistance, must be respected. Human suffering must be prevented and alleviated wherever it may be found so as to protect human life and health and ensure respect for the human being. It is the responsibility of every individual involved in humanitarian assistance to ensure that the principle of humanity is respected.

Impartiality

18. Humanitarian assistance makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, sex, class or political opinions in its endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, but is guided solely by their needs, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress. The promise, delivery or distribution of assistance should not be tied to the embracing or acceptance of any religious or other creed by the intended beneficiaries.

Neutrality

19. When providing humanitarian assistance, foreign military and civil-defence units should not engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

20. Foreign military and civil-defence units should not, through their actions, words or attitude do anything to undermine the impartiality and neutrality of the humanitarian assistance being provided.

IV. BEHAVIOUR OF MILITARY AND CIVIL DEFENCE PERSONNEL

21. Bearing in mind these three guiding principles the following more specific guidelines should be observed.

Respect for culture and customs

22. All foreign military and civil-defence units should endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of the community and country in which they are working. In this context the wearing of excessive combat-related or military or civil defence uniforms may, at times, be inappropriate and counterproductive to effective operations. Military or civil defence uniforms and insignia should be used for the purpose of identification and operational discipline.

Building disaster response on local capacities

23. People in all communities - even in a disaster - possess capacities, resources and skills as well as have needs, problems and vulnerabilities. Foreign military and civil-defence units should attempt to support these capacities by employing local personnel, purchasing local materials and trading with local companies where appropriate.

Involving programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid

24. Disaster relief assistance should never be imposed upon the beneficiaries. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the planning, management and implementation of the assistance programme. Foreign military and civil defence personnel should strive to involve the affected community and its leaders in all aspects of the relief and rehabilitation programme.

Relations with local authorities

25. The overall planning and coordination of relief efforts are ultimately the responsibility of the host government. Planning and co-ordination can be greatly enhanced if all operational units, including foreign military units, work through the local relief command structure. To facilitate this, local authorities should be expected to provide information on relief needs and government systems for planning and implementing relief efforts, as well as information on potential security risks that may be encountered. Foreign military and civil-defence units should work in close co-operation with the local government relief operation.

V. ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN DISASTER RELIEF

United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs

26. The annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, sets out the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance to be provided by the Organization.

27. In accordance with paragraph 36 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in April 1992, the Secretary-General established the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and appointed an Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. DHA has the responsibility for providing a rapid and well coordinated response to major and complex emergencies and natural disasters in order to save lives and contribute to the rehabilitation and development of the affected populations.

28. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has offices in New York and Geneva. The Relief Coordination Branch forms part of DHA-Geneva.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

29. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which comprises National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation), which is the permanent liaison body of the National Societies and acts as their representative internationally, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

30. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies exist in almost every country in the world. They provide a range of services, including emergency relief, health services and social assistance to those most vulnerable and most in need.

31. The Red Cross and the Red Crescent emblems are the internationally agreed symbols of protection during armed conflicts. Their use is restricted by international and national laws primarily to officially recognized and authorized medical personnel and to Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel. Neither emblem should be displayed as a general sign of humanitarian assistance, whether by armed forces personnel, non-governmental organizations or others.

Non-governmental organizations

32. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both national and international, are constituted separate from the Government of the country in which they are founded. They range from multimillion-dollar organizations with decades of worldwide experience in disaster relief to newly created small organizations, dedicated to the particular disaster in question. NGOs and their workers may operate under a different organizational culture to the military but like the military they are for the most part professionals in their field.

International news media

33. The media, including television, radio and newspaper journalists, play a critical role today in humanitarian aid operations. They are the eyes and ears of the world and have a strong impact on shaping the world's perception of relief operations and the conduct and competence of all relief workers.