



MEETINGS COVERAGE

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General Assembly Resolution, Adopted without Vote, Recognizes Global Impact of Ebola, Need to Include Health Issues in Foreign Policy Formulation

Co-Sponsored by 170 Member States, International Day of Yoga Text Also Adopted

Before commencing discussions on strengthening global coordination in humanitarian assistance and relief, the General Assembly adopted without a vote two resolutions today, with one commemorating 21 June as the International Day of Yoga and the other aimed at fortifying the role of the United Nations in guiding global health and foreign policy.

The Assembly, in its adoption of the resolution on global health and foreign policy, recognized the dire impact of the Ebola outbreak worldwide and urged Member States to protect, promote and respect the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and to consider health in a holistic manner, including the consideration of health issues in the formulation of foreign policy.

The representative of Norway, introducing the draft on behalf of Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand, said the resolution called for ensuring the safety of medical and health personnel, notably the Ebola outbreak, which had disproportionately affected health workers, leaving 350 dead. Recognizing those health workers' efforts in West Africa, he emphasized that they were the heroes in the fight against the disease. "It is, therefore, fitting that just yesterday, Time Magazine announced that these health workers, the 'Ebola fighters', were named their Person of the Year," he stated.

Several delegations also spoke of the link between the protection of health and sustainable development, with Kazakhstan's representative stressing that, in the face of unprecedented outbreaks, such as the Ebola virus which knew no borders, sustainable international responses to shared health risks were critical. That notion would become even a greater imperative in the post-2015 era, he underscored, warning that health and for overall security and progress and all sustainable development gains could be reversed by challenges to health systems.

The Assembly also adopted a resolution proclaiming 21 June as International Day of Yoga. General Assembly Vice-President Álvaro Mendonça E Moura (Portugal) delivering a statement on behalf of General Assembly President Sam Kutesa (Uganda), noted the overwhelming support that the resolution on yoga had received, with more than 170 co-sponsors.

The representative of Sao Tome and Principe also underlined that yoga would not only promote health, but supported clarity of vision and action. That clarity could help prevent contradictions, which often generated confusion while making rules and promoting laws.

The Assembly also heard introductions to three resolutions on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, the twentieth anniversary of the participation of volunteers known as "White Helmets", and the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Speakers around the room agreed that 2014 was a year of substantial humanitarian crises, voicing support behind the measures that strengthened the coordinated international responses to them. The magnitude and complexity of those crises had increased with increasingly hostile environments and extremists, requiring better coordination and response in all areas.

The representative of Myanmar, speaking for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said its member States had cooperated for the purpose of humanitarian assistance after the Malaysian Airlines MH 370 incident, setting aside their overlapping jurisdictional claims in the searched waters. The first World Humanitarian Summit to be held in 2016 would be an important platform for all stakeholders and humanitarian actors to identify solutions, and strategies that would ensure effective, efficient and accountable delivery of humanitarian assistance, a sentiment voiced by many delegations throughout the discussion.

Also speaking today were representatives of India, Sierra Leone (on behalf of Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Mali), Israel, Singapore, United States, Russian Federation, Qatar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Italy, Argentina, Sweden, China, Thailand, Australia, as well as the State of Palestine and the European Union.

The representative of Syria also spoke in exercise of the right of reply.

The General Assembly will meet at 10 a.m. on Friday, 12 December to continue its consideration of items on its agenda.

Background

The General Assembly had before it a note from the Secretary-General on the global health and foreign policy (document A/69/405 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/405)), as well as draft resolutions on the International Day of Yoga (document A/69/L.17) and global health and foreign policy (document A/69/L.35).

The Assembly would consider the following reports of the Secretary General: safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/69/406 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/406)); Central Emergency Response Fund (document A/69/96 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/96)); international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (document A/69/303 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/303)); assistance to the Palestinian people (document A/69/84 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/84)); and the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order (document A/69/410 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/410)).

The Assembly would also take up the following draft texts: safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (document A/69/L.33); twentieth anniversary of the participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development (document A/69/L.37); strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (document A/69/L.40); and the organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items and draft resolution on the Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (document A/69/L.28).

Under its agenda item on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, it would consider the note verbale from the Permanent Mission of China transmitting the Report of the Kimberley Process (document A/69/622 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/622)) and a related draft resolution (document A/69/L.39).

Action on Draft Resolutions

The General Assembly postponed its consideration of the agenda item on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order. It would consider that item at a later date to be announced.

Turning to a series of plenary-generated drafts, the General Assembly first considered a note from the Secretary-General on the Global health and foreign policy (document A/69/405 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/405)).

ASOKE MUKERJI (India) introduced the draft resolution on International Day of Yoga (document A/69/L.17). By its terms, the Assembly decided to proclaim 21 June the International Day of Yoga. He said yoga embodied the unity of mind and action. It also had a role in promoting sustainable development, he pointed out, noting that the draft text had received broad support from Member States.

BJORN KLOUMAN BEKKEN (Norway) introduced, on behalf of Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand, the draft resolution Global health and foreign policy (document A/69/L.35). By the terms of the text, the Assembly urged Member States to protect, promote and respect the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and to consider health in a holistic manner, including by considering health issues in the formulation of foreign policy. He said this year's resolution called for ensuring the safety of medical and health personnel, including in conflict situations and other emergencies, such as the Ebola outbreak, which had disproportionately affected health workers, leaving 350 dead.

The draft text also condemned attacks on medical and health care personnel and called on Member States to respect their integrity, he said, adding that it recognized health workers' important work being done in West Africa. "They are the heroes in the fight against Ebola, as they, often at great personal risk, are at the frontline in the efforts to stop this outbreak," he said. "It is, therefore, fitting that just yesterday, Time Magazine announced that these health workers, the 'Ebola fighters', were named their Person of the Year."

KYAW TIN (Myanmar), speaking for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said the draft text was especially critical as the world faced the Ebola virus pandemic. The adoption of the current draft resolution was more timely and relevant than ever before, with the Ebola pandemic having claimed thousands of lives, and was a reminder that international political commitment was crucial to ensure that quality health care was equipped with professional and dedicated medical personnel and health workers.

The text was also a vehicle to realize that ambition for achieving not only health goals but the new development agenda, he went on to say. Health was a precondition for and an outcome of sustainable development. Ensuring the population's good health was crucial to work towards achieving development goals. However, many challenges remained. Ebola had spread to more than 16,000 people in eight countries, spanning three continents. Ensuring healthy lives for all at every age required a paradigm shift with renewed political commitment at national, regional and global levels.

FRANKLYN BRIMA FAWUNDU (Sierra Leone), speaking on behalf of Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Mali, said he profoundly appreciated the convening of this special meeting. He strongly endorsed the safety of health workers. The Ebola outbreak

demonstrated the need for a coordinated response and the provision of services to stop the spread of the virus. Indeed, the unprecedented outbreak had had severe economic effects, wreaking havoc on the health care system. At the moment, Sierra Leone had lost 10 medical doctors in the fight against Ebola.

The United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) was making great efforts, he stated. The current assessment of the head of the World Bank was also welcomed, particularly in view of the post-Ebola recovery landscape and economic recovery. The fear and stigma attached to the virus could not be overstated, he said, expressing agreement with the draft text and its provisions for deploring attacks on medical staff. In that vein, health standards needed to be formulated and benchmarks should be set.

DAVID ROET ([Israel](#)) said numerous humanitarian crises and conflicts was a grave concern. For its part, Israel had contributed field clinics to West African countries affected by the Ebola virus. Major health crises, including the Ebola outbreak, often had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and elderly persons. Multi-stakeholder partnerships played a fundamental role in achieving collectively agreed global health priorities and a new global partnership should include the broadest possible range of actors. "If we work together, there is no limit to what can be achieved," he concluded.

LEE WEIMEN ([Singapore](#)) said the draft text was a stark reminder of the rising violence and deliberate attacks against healthcare workers in areas of conflict. Her delegation urged all States to take stronger action to ensure those acts were fully investigated and that impunity ended. Outbreaks, such as the Ebola outbreak, posed grave threats. For its part, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had struck her region, resulting in the loss of life and a blow to the economy and society, she said, saluting those who cared for their patients despite dangers. Singapore had also contributed to efforts to fight Ebola, she added, noting that the best way to stop the virus was at the source.

TERRI ROBL ([United States](#)), said the focus on the safety and security of health workers was timely, given the outbreak of Ebola in Africa. The outbreak had decimated the health care structure. More support was needed on the front lines, especially towards improving safety. Medical personnel had to be respected and protected globally, and she asked States to take the necessary steps to avoid the spread of infection. However, not all problems for health workers were manifested through contact with disease. There were numerous incidents of the safety of health workers being threatened, such as in Syria, where nearly 70 per cent of hospitals had been damaged or closed, and where there had been reports of people being dragged from their sick beds. Although a co-sponsor of the resolution, her delegation did not recognize the creation of any new rights in the customary international law, which included the highest attainable standard of human health. That should remain under national determination.

VICTOR ZAGREKOV ([Russian Federation](#)) welcomed the work of the United Nations in bolstering national healthcare capacities. A nation's health could be seen as its backbone, and represented a long-term investment in human potential. Mitigating the negative impact of Ebola by the United Nations was fully supported by his Government. Through the World Health Organization (WHO), the Russian Federation was working to help with outbreaks of infections like Ebola. As well, there were proposals before his Government to finance humanitarian projects in those areas. He welcomed the draft resolution, as it reflected the importance of healthcare in the new global agenda. In addition, non-communicable diseases were one of the major causes of mortality, along with infections, and the Russian Federation had allocated over \$3 million through WHO to fight those scourges through technical and financial support to countries that needed it.

AKAN RAKHMETULLIN ([Kazakhstan](#)) said as the world faced unprecedented outbreaks, such as the Ebola virus, cooperation was the approach to take. Progress in global health depended primarily on international partnerships, including public-private endeavours, to bridge existing gaps in realizing every person's right to internationally accepted standards of physical and mental health. Outbreaks required sustainable international responses to shared health risks, which knew no borders. That notion would become even a greater imperative in the post-2015 era, for health and for overall security and progress. For its part, Kazakhstan was working on national goals and was collaborating on regional efforts as well as contributing to Ebola response initiatives. Warning that all sustainable development gains would be reversed by challenges to health systems, he said his country was committed to all global efforts that affected health in the fight against poverty and the pursuit of peace and human security.

ALANOUD QASSIM M. A. AL-TEMIMI ([Qatar](#)), underscoring that health was a prerequisite for sustainable development, said that due attention must be accorded to health within discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. Her country fully supported global health goals and had supported health initiatives, as well as hosting major sporting events, including a world forum aimed at achieving peace through sports. Its national health strategy included the Government's efforts on an integrated healthcare system. In addition, it also supported both short- and long-term global health initiatives through cooperation with other actors. With regards to the draft text on yoga, Qatar also recognized the health benefits of that practice.

DURGA PRASAD BHATTARAI ([Nepal](#)) said yoga should have already found its way into the General Assembly Hall long ago, as the practice was beneficial spiritually. The scared mountains and Himalayas of Nepal were where forms of yoga and meditation had been practicing for centuries. Commercialized forms must stay true to traditional yoga, he said, noting that it

was important to realize yoga as a long-term approach to enhancing health.

ANGELO ANTONIO TORIELLO ([Sao Tome and Principe](#)) said the International Day of Yoga would not only promote health and evolution, but also clarity of vision and action. That, in turn, could help prevent contradictions, which often generated confusion while making rules and promoting laws. The Day should be fully supported and yoga should become a part of daily life for all.

PALITHA T. B. KOHONA ([Sri Lanka](#)) said his country supported both draft texts. Sri Lanka would continue to work on efforts on the Ebola outbreak and other initiatives. On the draft text on yoga, he said the practice had a holistic effect. As the world struggles with challenges of modern life, yoga could achieve a needed balance. He said he hoped the intrinsic beauty of yoga would not be diluted by sheer commercialization in Western countries.

The Assembly then took action on the draft texts, adopting “L.17” and “L.35” without a vote.

ÁLVARO MENDONÇA E MOURA (Portugal), Vice-President of the General Assembly, delivered a statement on behalf of General Assembly President Sam Kutesa (Uganda), saying that the resolution on yoga had been overwhelmingly supported, with more than 170 co-sponsors. He congratulated India’s Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for the initiative to observe the International Day of Yoga, which brought thought and action together in harmony.

Right of Reply

In exercise of the right of reply, a representative of [Syria](#) said the statement by the United States’ delegate was ironic for expressing concern about Syrians. United States Central Intelligence Agency operatives had been trained and had killed Syrians. Armed terrorist groups had also been created by the United States, in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Jordan. If the United States delegate was truly concerned about Syrians, she said, then that country should lift sanctions against Syria.

Introduction to Drafts

Next, on the topic of strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance, the Assembly took note of the [report of the Secretary-General on Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel](#) (document A/69/406 (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/550/59/PDF/N1455059.pdf>)).

INIGO LAMBERTINI ([Italy](#)), speaking on behalf of the European Union, introduced the related draft resolution (document A/69/L.33), pointing out that the number of deliberate attacks in 2013 against humanitarian personnel was the highest ever recorded, with 251 attacks, 155 killed, 171 injured, and 134 abducted. Those attacks were a crime under international humanitarian law, and the perpetrators had to be punished. The resolution also concerned the protection of United Nations personnel in security incidents, 28 of whom were killed in 2013. The text provided guidance for States, among them, “when to leave, and how to stay,” and recognized the importance of coordination of efforts with host Governments who had primary responsibility for the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. The resolution also encouraged the continued improvements of the Organization’s approach to risk management.

MATEO ESTREME ([Argentina](#)) introduced the draft resolution on [the twentieth anniversary of the participation of volunteers, “White Helmets”, in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development](#) (document A/69/L.37). Expressing satisfaction regarding the work of the United Nations and its contributions to humanitarian relief over time, he said he looked forward to closer cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, especially on the deepening of the debates on handling disasters and risk management. His country’s support for volunteers would continue through the initiative and through training of the White Helmets. The resolution recognized that there were a greater number of crises and disasters worldwide than ever before that deserved special support and which brought together technical, financial and supply sources. Selfless humanitarian workers offered their assistance day-after-day, and he called on all Member States to recognize their efforts.

PER THÖRESSON ([Sweden](#)), in introducing the draft resolution, [strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations](#) (document A/69/L.40), said every year the resolution sent an important message about the legitimacy of humanitarian assistance at the United Nations. There were additional areas focused on in the current draft, among them the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) measure of non-acceptance of violence against workers. There was also stronger language on public policy, risk management, and other components that supported humanitarian efforts and staff, he said, adding that he looked forward to its adoption by consensus.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, Head of the [European Union](#) Delegation, said that humanitarian needs continued to grow faster than the system’s response capacity and available funding. For the first time since World War II, there were over 50 million people displaced and the international community needed to respond as best as it could to that “terrible reality”. Commending the improvements already made to the current system, he stressed that humanitarian reforms must continue, including the implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda. Humanitarian decisions-making needed to be based on situational evidence and response analysis. The system must adapt to the changing world, and all should learn to do more with less.

The European Union intended to actively contribute to preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit, he continued. That summit would be essential to ensure adequate humanitarian contribution to the 2015 processes, including work on sustainable development goals, climate change, and the post-Hyogo framework for disaster risk reduction to be agreed in Sendai. Preventive action and resilience-building must become the norm and must receive all the attention and funding they deserved. Conflicts were the greatest overall challenge facing the humanitarian community today. He called on all parties to grant unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to all affected population, recalling that arbitrary denial of humanitarian access constituted a violation of international law. Furthermore, all parties to the conflict must also ensure the respect and protection of humanitarian personnel, or of health care personnel.

U KYAW TIN ([Myanmar](#)), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said the outbreak of the Ebola virus was a good showcase of the relevance of United Nations humanitarian work. He also noted that during the Malaysian Airlines MH 370 incident, ASEAN's member States had extended support to Malaysia, proffering genuine maritime cooperation as countries agreed to set aside their overlapping jurisdictional claims in the searched waters to provide humanitarian assistance. With the continued challenges faced by the United Nations humanitarian system, the first World Humanitarian Summit was an important platform for States, stakeholders and humanitarian actors to identify solutions to address further strengthening international commitment and efforts that would ensure effective, efficient and accountable delivery of humanitarian assistance.

BHAGWANT SINGH BISHNOI ([India](#)), speaking also for Sweden, said that he welcomed the role of the United Nations in the growing humanitarian needs worldwide. His joint statement with Sweden reflected a common endeavour to strengthen humanitarian assistance, as well as the need worldwide for closer cooperation among States. There were mega-crises being dealt with currently, and broader partnerships were needed to meet the challenges presented by them. Tackling the Ebola outbreak demonstrated the importance of multi-national and cross-sectoral cooperation. India and Sweden had stepped up their efforts to end that crisis, and were among the top four contributors to the Ebola Trust Fund at the United Nations. The resolution was a call to Member States to assist in humanitarian efforts, to continue to work with affected people and to promote a sense of local ownership and local strategic planning. Protection should be at the core of all humanitarian efforts, for women, men, boys and girls, as well as humanitarian and United Nations personnel. India had contributed more than 100,000 peacekeepers over time, and had made contributions of \$500,000 to Saint Lucia and Grenadine and other islands after the flash floods that affected them this year.

LIU JIEYI ([China](#)) said that present-day humanitarian crises were complicated and dire, resulting in an increase in humanitarian needs and impacting development in stricken countries. The international humanitarian relief efforts had to be conducted while conforming to the United Nations Charter and respecting sovereignty of the host country. The role of the United Nations in leading such efforts had to be strengthened, and, in that regard, he recognized the role of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Central Emergency Response Fund. The 2016 World humanitarian Summit would provide countries with the ability to share knowledge and best practices. The underlying causes of many human crises were acute economic and social problems as a result of protracted poverty and underdevelopment. The Organization should address the root causes of those crises and help those countries transition from emergency conditions to long-term development. Technology had improved the ability to respond to disasters, and he looked to Member States to assist countries in that area. Since the Ebola outbreak, his Government was one of the first to provide in kind and cash assistance, with a donation, so far, of 750 million renminbi yuan.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for the [State of Palestine](#), thanked the Secretary-General and his team for the attention given to his country. The Secretary-General's recent report on Palestine provided ample information on realities. However, recent events, such as the war in the Gaza Strip, had deeply affected the Palestinian people and would have long-term consequences. For more than 47 years, the United Nations had been addressing the Al-Nakba and the Palestinian people's exodus without examining the root causes. Israel had redistributed the Occupied Palestinian Territory, splitting and separating it, and preventing trade between Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The occupying Power had recently suggested trade existed. However, in reality, trade amounted to no more than \$10,000. Israel was also preventing materials from reaching industries, controlling borders and expanding its settlements. Gas and oil fields in Gaza and the West Bank could not be explored, as Israel had denied requests to do so. The occupation had, in reality, denied the Palestinian Authority opportunities for economic development, he said, noting that Israeli currency was the only monetary unit available to Palestinians.

Furthermore, Palestine's growth rate had fallen sharply since 2012, he went on to say. Oxfam's 2013 report had shown that in terms of per capita income, Palestine's had dropped enormously while Israel's had grown to more than \$32,000. Palestine youth needed opportunities, he said, pointing out that the tourism and fisheries sectors could work towards attracting youth employees. Yet, Israel's occupation was hindering that. Economic losses that had been suffered by Palestinians were shocking. If the occupation was lifted, and its resources could be used, Palestine would not need the international support it now received. With that in mind, he said that a proposal had suggested that a resolution in the Security Council could end both the occupation and Israel's construction of its racist separation wall.

PEMIKAR LUSANANON ([Thailand](#)), associating himself with ASEAN, said his country was committed to providing humanitarian

services and disaster relief at the national, regional, and international level. Close cooperation and consultation between the host Government and the United Nations was key in strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance on the ground. For its part, Thailand had contributed over \$150,000 to WHO in response to the spread of Ebola. Further, his country and donated up to \$1.78 million and 131 tons of relief supplies to the Government of the Philippines after Typhoon Yolanda. He reiterated his country's strong commitment to working side by side with the international community to reinforce global capacity for effective provision of humanitarian assistance.

DAVID ROET (Israel) said the scale of humanitarian needs was increasing. It was vital that Member States, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations, private sectors and volunteers united around an effective humanitarian response. His country was concerned with the intensification of conflicts in Africa and in the Middle East. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa showed how a disease outbreak could quickly morph into a humanitarian crisis of disastrous proportions, underscoring the needs for early response and prevention. Gender based violence were amplified during humanitarian crises, and it was crucial to prioritize access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence.

The greatest obstacle to humanitarian good will was the politicization of relief efforts, he continued. Israel cared about the wellbeing of its neighbour and had constantly ensured that trucks were entering Gaza even when rockets were falling on Israelis. It was time to stop pointing fingers and constantly laying blame, he said. It was time to put a stop to Hamas, to the militarization in Gaza and to using the United Nations and its gatherings as "mini-Security Council" meetings.

PETER LLOYD VERSEGI (Australia) said that there were incredible humanitarian challenges worldwide, including the Ebola outbreak. The magnitude of those crises was changing the needs of the system. Increasingly hostile environments and violent extremists had made action even more complex. Women had to have lead roles in recovery and human rights efforts. States could not use a "business as usual" approach. New donors needed to be brought in and consistency of approaches with humanitarian principles needed to be ensured. Political solutions were needed, but in the absence of those solutions, humanitarian assistance needed to move forward. The targeting of humanitarian workers had to cease immediately. Reducing disaster risk was integral to sustainable development, and in that respect, the Hyogo Framework was a paradigm for a resilient future. He encouraged all Member States to come together and find solutions to humanitarian challenges.



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