

**Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller**

**Remarks at Institute for South-South Cooperation and Development, Peking University**

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Good evening ladies and gentleman.

I feel very honoured to have the opportunity to address you today at China's first modern national university. Since the early 1920s, this university has become a centre for debate and progressive thinking. Peking University is closely tied to China's modern history and has produced generations of talents, including your current Premier Li. It is a privilege to talk to you at the Institute for South-South Cooperation and Development. Combining local expertise with global vision, and sharing knowledge and experience on public leadership and development with developing countries, is at the very core of what South-South Cooperation is about and China is one of the driving forces of this growing and critical cooperation.

But you all know this much better than me. What I am here to talk to you about is the United Nations, and its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is where I work.

Let's begin with the United Nations. While you all undoubtedly know of the organization, many do not know how much it does.

So, let me provide you a snapshot of how UN colleagues affect the lives of people around the world every day.

The United Nations:

- provides food and assistance to 80 million people in 80 countries;
- supplies vaccines to 45 per cent of the world's children;
- works with 195 nations to keep the global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Centigrade;

- helps to keep peace with 104,000 peacekeepers in 14 operations around the world;
- protects and promotes human rights globally including through 80 treaties and declarations;
- assists some 50 countries a year with their elections;
- supports maternal health, helping over 1 million women a month overcome pregnancy risks; and
- assists and protects 68.5 million people fleeing war, famine and persecution.

This gives you a sense of the UN's many areas of work. Allow me to now talk more about what my office does.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, is part of the United Nations Secretariat. OCHA was created in 1991 by General Assembly Resolution 46/182, which was designed to strengthen the UN's response to humanitarian crises. More than 25 years on, Resolution 46/182 continues to be the foundation of our work.

OCHA is not an operational agency. In other words, we are not the ones handing out food rations, building refugee camps or providing education. Instead, we coordinate these various efforts to ensure that crisis-affected people receive the assistance and protection they need.

How do we do this? We do this through five core functions.

The first one is coordination. This means we bring humanitarian actors together to come up with common understandings of humanitarian needs and develop collective plans to respond. This helps to ensure that response efforts do not overlap with each other or leave gaps, and that assistance goes to those who need it most.

Advocacy is our second main area of work. More specifically, we help to bring the voices of affected people to the national, regional and global stages. We also champion respect for the global humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. These four principles are what essentially define humanitarian aid, namely that we have an obligation to address human suffering wherever it is, and must respond without favoring any sides, without discrimination and free from political, military or other objectives.

OCHA also helps to develop and advance global humanitarian policy, which is our third core function. We conduct research and provide thought leadership on major humanitarian issues, such as humanitarian access, internal displacement and International Humanitarian Law.

Fourthly, we mobilize funding for humanitarian response efforts. We do this through various means, including our 18 pooled funds at the country level, and the global fund known as the Central Emergency Response Fund, where we manage over \$1.3 billion annually on behalf of the humanitarian system.

And finally, we provide information management services to the humanitarian community. In other words, we gather, consolidate and share data and information, which helps to ensure that decisions are based on realities on the ground. Together, our efforts in these five core functions help to make the humanitarian system more effective, efficient and responsive. And I would argue that this work is more important than ever. Why?

Because humanitarian crises are growing in scale, complexity and impact like never before. Some 134 million people currently require humanitarian assistance – this is roughly 200 per cent higher than it was a decade ago!

Because more people are displaced than ever before. By the end of last year, 68.5 million people had fled their homes due to violence and conflict, with many of them encountering even greater dangers on their journeys to safety.

Because urbanization and climate change are posing greater risks, with natural disasters occurring with increasing frequency and harsher impacts.

Because respect for international humanitarian law is becoming more and more precarious, leading to devastating effects for civilian populations and the people working to help them.

Because the humanitarian system needs more money than ever before - \$25.7 billion [the equivalent of around 175 billion RMB] this year alone – but the gap between what we need and what we receive is growing every year.

It is for these, and many other reasons, that UNOCHA is important and necessary.

And while a lot of our work happens at the global level – in New York and Geneva – our most crucial work is happening at the national level throughout the world, in countries affected by crisis.

Before coming here, I was in Mali, Kenya and Burundi, last week. In Mali alone, we have four different offices, with almost 50 staff, who work to coordinate the humanitarian response there. One particularly important area of work for our country office is what is called civil-military coordination. Put simply, this means OCHA helps to ensure a regular dialogue and interaction between humanitarian and military actors in crisis zones, with the aim of minimizing inconsistencies, avoiding competition, and most importantly, protecting those four humanitarian principles I mentioned earlier.

In total, OCHA has 2,000 staff in almost 60 countries. From Afghanistan to Yemen, we have dedicated, committed and hardworking individuals, who make up the foundation of our organization.

You might wonder what their backgrounds are. Well, the truth is we need talents of all sorts - people who can do budgets; who can analyze humanitarian needs; who can

coordinate with partners. We need statisticians; logisticians; demographers; radio producers; engineers; drivers; translators - you name it. Our various core functions mean we need a diverse workforce.

We are always searching for people with expertise, knowledge and experience in our line of work. In OCHA, we also look for people who are passionate about our mandate - saving lives, relieving suffering and maintaining human dignity. We need people who can work with team members from different cultural backgrounds, in diverse locations and under various challenges.

As you all know, this Institute is committed to excellence in national development research, talent training for developing countries and providing an exchange platform for global cooperation. I really hope that many of you here will walk off this campus aiming not only to contribute to your nation's success but also take the spirit of this Institute and aim at also making the world a better place. I look forward to working with some of you one day at the United Nations.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and taking any questions.

Xie Xie.