

General Debate

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Mr President, dear colleagues.

It is a great pleasure for me to say a few words about the political, economic and social situation in the world from the perspective of our very vital theme *Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis*

Iceland's foreign policy has always been founded on the values of peace, human rights, and international cooperation. We believe that respect for humanitarian law and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance are not only legal obligations but also moral responsibilities of all states. When these laws are not upheld and civilians become the targets of war, the very foundation of peace is undermined.

In recent years, we have witnessed a serious decline in respect for international humanitarian law. Wars have become longer and more complex. Hospitals, schools, aid workers, and journalists have come under attack. This is unacceptable!

A ceasefire has finally been reached in **Gaza**, where acts of genocide have been committed over the past two years against children, women, and civilians.

There is now great hope that a lasting peace can be achieved. Ahead lies one of the largest humanitarian operations in history, as two million people have been deprived of all basic infrastructure and famine threatens a large part of the population. It is essential to ensure access for humanitarian organizations and the international community to the reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure.

In 2011, Iceland took a leading role in recognizing Palestine as an independent state, and many other countries have done the same in recent months. This is a necessary step for Palestine to gain sovereignty over its territory and to be able to take part in the reconstruction process that lies ahead.

The war in **Ukraine** remains unresolved, and the suffering it brings continues to grow. The fate of the children who have been taken from their families in Ukraine remains uncertain. Their separation from their families is a violation of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions. Iceland condemns such actions and supports international efforts to ensure that these children are safely reunited with their families. Protecting children in war is a fundamental part of our shared struggle for peace and humanity.

Wars and conflicts remain a grim reality in many regions, particularly in Africa, bringing with them human suffering, famine, and poverty.

The world faces major challenges, and the need for humanitarian assistance has never been greater — yet at the same time, funding has been significantly reduced, which is unacceptable.

Humanitarian aid faces enormous obstacles: the need is immense, yet politics and conflicts often prevent assistance from reaching those who need it most.

Iceland emphasizes that humanitarian aid must reach everyone in need, without hindrance and without discrimination — regardless of religion, gender, nationality, or political belief.

Humanity knows no borders.

We parliamentarians also have an important role to play. We bear the responsibility of ensuring that governments honor their international commitments, that funding for humanitarian aid is secured, and that national legislation promotes the protection of human rights.

Iceland works toward these goals through the United Nations, the Nordic Council and other international organizations — with a focus on peacebuilding, equality, and the rights of children in conflict zones.