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Remarks at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment side event on “One Year After the World Humanitarian Summit: Advancing the Agenda for Humanity”

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As delivered

Excellencies, distinguished panellists, ladies and gentlemen, welcome.

One year ago, Member States, international and local non-governmental organizations, the private sector, humanitarian workers and civil society came together to respond to a call from people in crisis to do an even better job to secure their safety, to uphold their dignity and to provide opportunities for a better future.

People affected by crisis called for change. We responded by making more than 3,500 commitments and launching initiatives to start delivering them. It was a collective response from all and I would like to again thank the Government of Turkey for their generosity in hosting the Summit.

At the Summit, we also recognized that we cannot deliver this change agenda alone. Even the most efficient and effective humanitarian action cannot address the increasingly complex, urgent and interconnected factors that are driving humanitarian need and vulnerability to sadly record heights. We agreed that only by working with a diversity of actors across sectors can we save lives, protect people, and sustainably reduce their needs and vulnerability in the years to come.

The Agenda for Humanity continues to provide a tangible vision for how this can be achieved. It connects our efforts to improve humanitarian action with global agendas to transform our world, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework, and reinforces the Secretary-General's priorities on prevention and UN reform.

This framework allows us to connect our individual commitments and initiatives with a vision that has the potential to transform our business. To achieve it, we must not only work on delivering our own commitments, we must also pull them toward the same direction and sustain the political momentum needed to achieve the change we all committed to at the Summit.

The five core responsibilities and twenty-four transformations of the Agenda for Humanity also give us a collective framework to assess our progress. This is not intended to replace the need for organizations and initiatives to put in place their own more detailed monitoring frameworks of course, but to help us take stock of our collective progress towards this change.

One of the tools to help us do this is the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT). One year since the Summit, 138 stakeholders submitted voluntary self-reports covering over 60 per cent of the commitments. These reports will inform the first annual synthesis report on the World Humanitarian Summit follow-up, to be released in autumn this year.

Let me speak briefly about a few trends emerging from the reports before handing over to our distinguished panellists.

First, the World Humanitarian Summit was truly a catalyst for a New Way of Working that bridges the humanitarian-development divide.

The shift to collective outcomes is already being adapted and taken forward by humanitarian and development actors in many countries. Secretary-General Guterres has emphasized that operationalizing the New Way of Working is an essential component of his reform efforts and at his request, it is an integral part of our response in the four countries faced with famine. Our collective response is proving that a preventative approach works.

However, we are only at the beginning. To bring transformation in this area we still need to move to joined-up planning, adapt our coordination methods to context, and have financing that enables this new approach.

Second, we are witnessing a step-change in how humanitarian actors work to reinforce national and local response capacities.

There has been an increase in funding channelled to local actors. Increased investments have also been made to direct funding and programming to capacity building at all levels of local response, including more participation of national NGOs in the decision-making process.

A cultural shift in how we work with and support local action is underway. However, implementation is still uneven. To quote one of the self-reports, if we are to truly strengthen local action “we need strong partners, not strong projects”.

Third, there is accelerated action to complement short-term funding with financing approaches that reduce risk and vulnerability in the long-term. This step-change is evident in how many stakeholders reported the shift to multi-year financing to ensure more predictable funding, greater flexibility, and alignment between short-term humanitarian assistance and development investments.

This shift to multi-year financing is critical but only the tip of the iceberg. Financing collective outcomes in the New Way of Working will require humanitarian actors to work with multi-lateral development banks, the private sector and other actors to better understand how we can increase and diversify investment to meet and reduce humanitarian needs.

The Summit also mobilized many other changes and initiatives that have begun to deliver results on the ground. It generated increased support and funding for the new approach to displacement that addresses both short- and long-term needs of the displaced and host communities, although more focus is still needed on reducing the number of internally displaced people.

The Education Cannot Wait initiative is delivering education to over 2 million children in Chad, Ethiopia, Syria and Yemen. The Connecting Business initiative that has operationalized a total of 13 networks so far to respond to emergencies in 8 countries, including Sri Lanka, as we will hear in a moment.

Significant efforts are underway to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system, including by delivering on the commitments of the Grand Bargain. New investments and initiatives, such as the Charter for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, are helping to ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable are not excluded from humanitarian response.

These changes, evident after just thirteen months, illustrate the change agenda that is underway. We cannot afford to lose momentum.

Let me introduce our distinguished panellists today who will provide us with some concrete examples of how they are working to advance the Agenda for Humanity, their insights on some of what has been achieved, and what remains to be done.
