Thank you, distinguished panellists, for your insights, experiences and leadership.

It has been a really powerful reminder of how we work together — each of us and collectively — with our partners on the ground to serve, assist and protect people in conflicts.

Let me now please sum up with a few points going forward.

We have heard this morning, and indeed during this week, that fundamental to the ability of humanitarian actors to do their work, it’s imperative that all parties in armed conflict respect international humanitarian law. Without this, civilians will suffer horrendously.

We have heard here today, and over this week, about the way humanitarians have had to adapt their operations in changing operating landscapes and in the face of disturbing trends: the use of starvation as a weapon of war and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war to break people’s and communities’ spirits; attacks on civilian infrastructure — hospitals, medical facilities, schools, water systems, agricultural systems and so on.

We have heard also about constraints to access, and attacks, threats and intimidation of humanitarian and medical personnel. It has to stop, and those responsible must be held to account.

We also heard of good practices emerging — ways of facilitating access for humanitarian operations, strengthening communications with local partners and with affected communities.

We heard about the necessity of humanitarian engagement with all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups, to facilitate such access and build the capacities of our staff in this regard.

We heard about putting in place standing exemptions that cordon off humanitarian assistance from the scope of counter-terrorism and sanctions measures so that humanitarians can do their work.

And we’ve heard about how we are building experience so that we minimize the consequences for civilians. They have the right to receive assistance and we should continue to protect them.

We also heard about the practical steps that help facilitate humanitarian work, for example with expedited visa processing and customs clearances so that we can continue to access those in need.
We heard how important it is to invest in humanitarian diplomacy and negotiations to better support the system and ultimately help people in need. We need everyone’s voice and suggestions on how to be smart in this complex endeavour, and how we can get results.

As we heard, we work in some of the world’s most inaccessible and dangerous places. And we have come a long way to ensure the continuity of operations, with a strong focus on enhanced security management, local outreach and community engagement. Local acceptance remains key.

Despite all the challenges, humanitarian organizations continue to stay and deliver assistance in all major emergencies.

As we heard today, adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence remain essential.

I thank you all again for your commitment. We’ll make headway only when we approach these thorny issues together.

END