Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have reached the end of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment. I would like to express to you all my sincere gratitude for your valuable contributions to the works of the humanitarian affairs segment. I am pleased to share my assessment of the key messages and recommendations that emerged over the segment and in various side events.

We heard from Member States, humanitarian partners and affected populations on challenges, but also on progress and solutions on a wide range of topics. I commend the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and humanitarian actors, which is indispensable. I also commend the progress that has been made in responding to increasing humanitarian needs. I welcome the focus on orienting the humanitarian system towards anticipatory solutions and applaud the generosity of donors to fund the humanitarian response.

The underlying drivers of needs must be addressed. As we approach the 70th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, we must reaffirm our commitments to uphold international humanitarian law and protect civilians in armed conflict. The Geneva Conventions are as relevant today as they were 70 years ago, and the challenge we face going forward is not with the content of the law, but with its implementation and compliance with the law. Moreover, the Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General provides a vital forum to respond to climate science which tells us we have less than a decade to make necessary changes before we face runaway climate change. Already climate change is exacerbating the risk and impact of disasters and displacement.

To improve the ability of the humanitarian system to tackle these current and future challenges, I would like to present some concrete findings and recommendations that emerged throughout the discussions over the course of the last days:

- We must seize the critical opportunity of the Climate Action Summit to generate unwavering global commitment to immediately put in place and implement the required policies and initiatives and scale up concrete action in support of the Paris Agreement.
• We need increased focus on, identification of, and support for, vulnerable people and communities who are at risk, affected or displaced by disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change, to ensure that their needs are met effectively and that no-one is left behind.

• These messages were strongly echoed in the high-level panel on climate change and weather-related disasters as well as the side event on Cyclone Idai, which followed-up on the OCHA-ECOSOC mission to the three affected countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe).

• **On localization**, we stressed that local actors are the first and last responders to any crises. Connecting with and complementing the capacity of national and local responders must be central to international humanitarian efforts. Women play an essential role as first responders and leaders in their communities.

• **On respect for international humanitarian law**, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, along with their Additional Protocols, are the cornerstone of contemporary international humanitarian law. The Geneva Conventions’ universal ratification shows a clear line between what is considered acceptable and what is clearly unacceptable in war. Most often, it is compliance, which is lacking. What is needed is full and effective implementation of international humanitarian law by all parties in all conflicts.

• Enhancing and ensuring respect for IHL and accountability for its violation are two of the greatest challenges in strengthening the protection of civilians and other protected persons in armed conflict. There should be no impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law, and all available mechanisms must be utilized to ensure accountability.

• **Attacks against healthcare** have important immediate consequences, in terms of deaths and injuries of medical workers and patients, and the destruction of essential infrastructure. There exists a solid normative framework for the protection of healthcare in armed conflict, found in international humanitarian law and bolstered by Security Council resolution 2286 and the Secretary-General’s related recommendations.

• **Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** was an overarching theme, with speakers recognizing the need to address gender inequality and promote the meaningful participation of women and girls in humanitarian action, planning and decision-making. We welcomed ongoing efforts to strengthen the response to sexual violence – including the recent event in Oslo on preventing sexual and gender-based violence – and encouraged Member States to take practical action to support such initiatives.

• Concerning the **protection of children**, we must strengthen norms and agreements to protect children in and after armed conflict, such as by promoting universalization of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. All parties should continue to develop tools and approaches to protect children in all conflict and post-conflict situations.

• On **internal displacement**: We need stronger evidence on interconnected or multi-causal drivers and impacts of internal displacement to inform better planning, prevention and responses to protracted displacement crises. We also need to follow through on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to achieve durable solutions.

• While terrorism is a serious threat to international peace and security that needs to be countered, there is also a need to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not impede impartial humanitarian and medical activities.


• **On humanitarian financing**, we require increased donor investment in both preparedness and early warning.

• The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Country-Based Pooled Funds and other humanitarian pooled funds play a critical role in providing much needed funding to underfunded
emergencies, and we welcomed and urged continued support by the wide donor base for this mechanism, while encouraging new donors to financially support the CERF. Addressing underfunded emergencies is particularly important.

- During the discussion of the Joint Informal Event of the Operational Activities and Humanitarian Affairs Segments, we heard the importance of humanitarian and development actors working collaboratively together towards collective outcomes that measurably reduce need, risk and vulnerability and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Recognizing Agenda 2030’s vision for prosperity, peace and dignity for all, we noted the importance of strengthening collaboration across the humanitarian, development and peace efforts wherever possible.
- These messages were reinforced during the side event on the situation in the Central African Republic chaired in my capacity as PBC country-configuration chair and as Chair of the HAS.

Together, we have accomplished a very successful humanitarian affairs segment this year. In fact:

- The segment this year has registered one of the highest number of registered participants: over 600 delegates. Participants represented a wide variety of stakeholders including governments, UN agencies, local, national and international humanitarian actors and organizations, development actors, civil society, academia, the private sector and more.
- The session was extremely well attended. We have had full rooms in all the meetings, not only during the formal sessions of the general debate and the panel discussions, but also in the side events.
- The Panels and high-level events had an inclusive array of experienced panelists that brought strong gender, regional and grassroots perspectives.
- The 17 side events covered a wide array of diverse topics and discussions were rich and inspiring.
- The marketplace saw innovative and interesting booths and exhibits set up by 20 IASC, humanitarian partners and Member States.

These achievements wouldn’t have been possible without the contribution of each and every one of you and the commitment to give the humanitarian affairs segment of ECOSOC the importance that it deserves.

In this regard, I would like to pay a special tribute to the humanitarian community, in particular those working on the ground, putting their lives at risk to save other people’s lives. Their professionalism, dedication and devotion are the reason why the impacts of wars, conflicts, natural disasters and epidemic outbreaks are contained.

I would like also to express a sincere gratitude to our colleagues in OCHA, from the leadership, USG Mark Lowcock and ASG Ursula Mueller, to the working level divisions and branches, policy, operations, partnerships and others, in whom, as a Chair, I found reliable partners, professional staff and committed humanitarians. The Policy Branch, in particular, under the leadership of Mr. Hansjoerg Stromeyer and Ms. Anastasia Carayanides, and their entire team, has been the backbone of this chairmanship. They worked tirelessly to provide me and my team with substantive support and advice. I would like to thank each one of them for their dedication and hard work.

I would like also to warmly thank our colleagues in DGACM for their tremendous support since my appointment as Chair of this segment. The outgoing USG Catherine Pollard and the newly appointed USG Movses Abelian, and their team supporting the Humanitarian Affairs segment, led by Emer Herity here to my left, have been essential to ensure the smooth proceeding of our works.
Finally, I would like to thank UNOG staff and personnel, as well as the interpreters who accompanied us during these three days.

Before closing, I would like to leave you with one thought: All together, we have contributed to a successful Humanitarian Affairs Segment. Our work does not stop here. We need to continue supporting humanitarian workers on the ground and to strengthen the collaboration among all actors.

I hereby declare closed the 2019 session of the humanitarian affairs segment of ECOSOC.