GENERAL STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. CLEOPA MAILU, EGH, AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN GENEVA DURING THE ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT, 23RD TO 25TH JUNE, 2021, GENEVA

Thank you, Madam Chair,

1. Kenya is delighted to join this virtual August Assembly of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, being held in Geneva.

2. Although the sanitary conditions do not allow for delivery of statements in plenary, the delegation of Kenya congratulates, you Madam Chair, on your election to steer the work of this important segment and for the excellent stewardship of our deliberations. Please be assured of Kenya’s full support.

3. Madam Chair, the theme of this year’s Segment “Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships,” is indeed pertinent. It underscores the urgent need by the international community to re-double its efforts in enhancing life-saving humanitarian assistance that is crucial in meeting the increasing needs caused by the multi-faceted complex situations of our times. It also stresses the imperative to be ambitious and forward-looking in the quest for effective actions and solutions as we forge ahead.

4. Our meeting is taking place against the backdrop of the continued evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, all across the world. While here
in Geneva the public health situation has improved, the conditions in many parts of the world remain precarious. New variants of the virus have continued to spread, resulting in increasing number of deaths recoded daily, all across the world.

5. The severity of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on humanity, will continue to be felt for years to come. This invisible virus has posed an existential threat to humanity. It has demonstrated that all states, big and small, alike, are vulnerable in the face of a public health crisis.

6. The worst pandemic in over 100 years, the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected every aspect of our daily lives, more so the poor and most vulnerable who continue to rely on humanitarian assistance. The Secretary-General’s report has clearly elucidated this reality.

7. It has also underscored the need for international solidarity, global cooperation and enhanced multilateralism. In this regard, Kenya commends the global efforts under the leadership of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, through the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which seeks USD 9.5 billion dollars to fight the pandemic in the most vulnerable and low-income countries of the world. The Global Humanitarian Overview 2021 projects that humanitarian requirements for 235 million people globally in 2021 amount to USD 35.1 billion dollars. Kenya expresses its appreciation to all donors who have responded positively to the response plan and calls upon the international community to enhance its efforts in this regard.

8. While vaccination strategies have been rolled out globally, access to vaccines and vaccine equity remain serious global issues that the international community must address. The COVID-19 Data Explorer Global Humanitarian Operations of 31st May, 2021, indicates that, “in May, 2021, deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines to Humanitarian Response Plan countries were the lowest since February, 2021 with a projected continuation of the trend in the second half of 2021.” As the United
Nations Secretary-General has repeatedly emphasized, “no one is safe, until everyone is safe.”

9. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on humanitarian crises have been, particularly, alarming. A recent publication by the United Nations University points out that the pandemic has had an especially acute impact on vulnerable populations receiving humanitarian assistance and that it has contributed to significantly greater humanitarian needs in many settings, alongside a high likelihood of longer-term socio-economic risks that may push more people into vulnerability. On its part, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has indicated that “for people living in conflict zones, the pandemic represents a dramatic threat to life.” UNHCR, in its COVID-19 Supplementary Appeal, 2021, explains that the pandemic will continue to have significant implications on people of concern to UNHCR, especially in poorer countries, in which a majority of the forcibly displaced are hosted.

10. Concerted global efforts are therefore the only imperative. As Mark Lowcock, former Emergency Relief Coordinator once said, “Unless we act now, we should be prepared for a series of human tragedies more brutal and destructive than any direct health impacts of the virus.”

11. This session of the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, will therefore be crucial in setting the stage for key global discourse on how the humanitarian system can better adapt for future emergencies, discuss lessons learnt, share experiences and above all else advocate for enhanced international cooperation through multi-stakeholder engagement and transformative partnerships. More importantly, deliberations on humanitarian action and climate change will be crucial in emphasizing the call for enhanced preparedness, as it is estimated that the humanitarian impacts of climate change will be far worse in decades to come.
12. In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a compelling case for international solidarity. Let us seize the opportunity to forge a better future for humanity.

I thank you for your attention.