Excellencies, Colleagues,

New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to participate in this year’s ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment. We thank Ambassador Rodríguez for convening, and agree that it is a critical moment to reinforce global solidarity.

COVID-19 continues to cause disruption to global health systems and economies, compounding the humanitarian challenges posed by conflict and climate change. The pandemic has highlighted inequalities and exclusion.

COVID-19 has also served as a reminder of the inherent resilience and adaptability of people all around the world. In the Pacific, our neighbours have effectively managed the dual challenges of natural disasters and COVID-19. The Pacific, and other Small Island Developing States, have unique needs as they respond to humanitarian crises in the context of the pandemic. It is important therefore, that humanitarian responses adapt to circumstances.

Climate change continues to pose a threat to countries across the globe, particularly to the safety and livelihoods of Small Island Developing States. Until the drivers of climate change are addressed, and greater investments are made to strengthen resilience, intensified natural disasters will lead to increased loss of life and destruction, and require expensive, large-scale responses.
We commend the commitment of humanitarian workers who continue to provide life-saving assistance in complex and dangerous operating environments. The violent targeting of humanitarian and medical workers in conflict settings persists, in clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. New Zealand calls on all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law and encourages the international community to hold perpetrators to account. Sadly, we are still seeing the devastating results for civilians and infrastructure of urbanised warfare and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

New Zealand is concerned by the extreme rise in humanitarian needs around the world, placing stress on an already stretched humanitarian system.

The impacts of the crisis in Ukraine are particularly challenging. As a result of Russia’s illegal and unprovoked invasion, the UN has documented over 5 million refugees, 7.1 million internally displaced persons, 10,260 civilian casualties, and 308 attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel. The actual figures are unfortunately likely to be much higher.

Higher food, fuel and fertiliser prices are directly linked to this conflict of choice, exacerbating fragile situations, and reducing the ability of humanitarian organisations to provide assistance. We acknowledge that budgets are under strain, but this is not the moment to reduce or divert humanitarian resources. We must show as a community of nations that we can multi-task to ensure that no crisis is overlooked.
New Zealand applauds the work of the United Nations and its partners, led by OCHA, to respond to escalating humanitarian need. An effective response requires global solidarity and international cooperation, and New Zealand is committed to playing our part. We continue to provide multi-year and flexible core funding to humanitarian partners, complemented by earmarked contributions to specific crises.

We reiterate the importance of sexual and reproductive health rights in all humanitarian contexts. [Reliable and safe access to sexual and reproductive health services is essential to ensuring the health and well-being of all people, especially women and girls.]

New Zealand strongly supports efforts to localise humanitarian responses. We have seen strong examples of this in our own region. Responses to tropical cyclone Harold in Vanuatu and the eruption of Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai in Tonga were localised by necessity, to keep COVID-19 out. These responses were largely successful, and demonstrate what localisation looks like at its best. New Zealand is a strong proponent of anticipatory action. When we know that a risk or a disaster is looming, anticipatory approaches can help lessen the scale of a crisis, and most importantly, lessen human suffering.

New Zealand is proud to play our part in the global humanitarian system, and to stand up for action that saves lives, all over the world.

Thank you.