I. Key Messages

1. After thirty-five years of conflict and under-development, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is severe and the country’s people are bearing the brunt of the continued violence. More than 7,500 civilians were killed last year, and civilian casualties rose by 24% in the first five months of 2013. Over half a million people are displaced due to conflict and recurrent natural disasters affect a quarter of a million people every year.

2. Humanitarian needs are likely to increase as a result of the withdrawal of the international military presence and its effects on the political, economic and security sectors. At this crucial time, Afghanistan must not become a forgotten crisis. The international community needs to continue to focus on protecting people and communities, restoring their livelihoods and building their resilience and supporting the delivery of basic services for the most vulnerable.

3. As the security transition moves into its final phase, there is an urgent need to separate humanitarian activities and funding from stabilization and reconstruction efforts to preserve the neutral and impartial nature of humanitarian action. I welcome the Government of Afghanistan’s acknowledgement that humanitarian funding will remain outside the scope of aid management policy.

4. In the first half of 2013, humanitarian aid workers and facilities have been targeted in several attacks. Despite this, humanitarian organisations remain focused on finding ways to continue their work in Afghanistan. Humanitarians must engage with all parties to the conflict in order to reach all those in need, but negotiations on access need to remain distinct from mediation on peace and reconciliation.

5. Support for humanitarian action will contribute to Afghanistan’s transition and help reduce the impact of the volatile security situation. Last year, international and local humanitarian organizations provided 3.8 million vulnerable Afghans with food, delivered medical assistance to half a million people and helped 244,000 people with emergency shelter and basic household items. It would make a huge difference to our work if donor governments committed at least ten per cent of their civilian assistance during and after the security transition to life-saving humanitarian assistance. In 2013 humanitarian organizations need US$ 471 million to help vulnerable Afghans across the country.