I wish first of all to thank you very much for joining us here today at the launch of our action plan for Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda.

Let me start by offering my sincere condolences and those of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to the Government and people of Philippines, who have suffered such terrible losses this year.

This is such a major calamity for the Philippines, a country which over this year has already seen so many crises, but by all accounts this one is the most deadly and destructive.

We have all seen those terrible images and have been horrified by what we have seen. I would very much like to thank the Government of Philippines, who are leading a massive relief operation and who are already providing assistance to tens of thousands of people in affected areas.

I want to keep my comments very brief. I have had an opportunity to speak to the Cabinet Secretary and to the President about the situation and I hope tomorrow, the weather permitting, to have an opportunity to visit Tacloban myself. I am of course very keen not to use up urgently needed logistical capacity, which is needed to deliver humanitarian supplies for a visit, but it seems it will be possible for me to do so.

While it’s still too early to tell the full scale of the destruction, it is clear that the needs are huge. And I was very pleased to be able to agree a $25 million amount from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The UN agencies that are present here in the Philippines have already mobilized substantial response efforts in support of the Government's own efforts. We hope that with what has been done with the infrastructure [...] that we can come in behind the Government and support the Government's own response efforts.
As each hour and day passes, relief operations are indeed scaling up. [...] I will be chairing a meeting of not just UN agencies, but also our partners, NGOs and the civil societies side, to see what more we can do to support the Government’s own efforts. This for us is a major emergency. We measure these on scale and we have what we call L3, which are the emergencies, unfortunately, at the top of that scale, and we consider this to be one of those.

I would like to extend my thanks to UN Member States and other donors who have already pledged extremely generously and would like encourage others to contribute. But I would also like to remind everyone that the scale of the devastation which we are seeing will be just the start, because we will need to help those people who have been affected so severely to rebuild their lives for the future. The UN and its international partners stand ready to support the Government and the Philippines nation in any way that we can, now and in the longer-term.