It is now nearly six weeks since super-Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, causing death and terrible destruction. Despite the early logistical problems, the speed with which the people of the Philippines are getting on with the recovery is remarkable. In my two visits to the affected area, I saw how quickly people were picking up the pieces, rebuilding their homes and getting on with their lives.

Nearly four million people are still living in displacement because their homes were damaged or destroyed in the storm. Nearly one hundred thousand people are still in evacuation centres; the rest – 3.8 million– are staying with friends and relatives. That tells us something about the generosity, solidarity and spirit of the Filipino people.

The international humanitarian response has now scaled up significantly, after initial challenges caused by heavy debris blocking roads and ports, damage to airports and landing strips, congested ferries and difficulties reaching remote areas. Communications were virtually wiped out by electricity cuts and damage to infrastructure.

There were criticisms that things weren’t moving quickly enough. The criticisms were valid; given the scale of the devastation, we had people on the ground but they couldn’t move. We had people there on the day after the typhoon struck, and they were unable to leave the airport. The Philippines military was doing all it could to reach as many people as possible.

The turning point came when national and international military assets were significantly mobilized and we were able to address many of the logistical constraints. Without this life-saving assistance supporting the Philippines Government efforts, by over 20 Member States, many communities would not have been reached. Helicopters, ships and fixed-wing aircraft loaded with assistance arrived from abroad and were used for transportation within the country until the UN Humanitarian Air Services and more civilian aircraft became operational. I thank all the Governments and militaries concerned for their generosity.

More than 4.1 million people have now received food assistance. Partners have dispatched over 6,000 tons of food. Over 162,000 households have received help with emergency shelter including tarpaulins, tents, shelter repair kits, tools, cash and construction materials.

Over 180 foreign and national medical teams have brought emergency health aid and nearly 260 mobile clinics are functioning. Eight agencies have established 75 Child Friendly Spaces across
The mission of the United Nations Office for the Co ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mob ilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

Our longstanding and excellent relationship with the Government of the Philippines has played an enormous role in the success of this operation so far. For example, international humanitarian staff were able to join Government flights to the affected areas from the start. Agencies were able to move experts and advisors into the country quickly, thanks to a simplified visa regime. International and national coordination staff worked side-by-side with their government counterparts. This is a real example of what we can achieve together when we have a strong working relationship.

In Geneva and New York, the global humanitarian system pulled together as one. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals activated a system-wide emergency at the highest level on 12 November, when the scale of the damage was becoming apparent. This meant we were able to prioritize the provision of additional staff, funds and other resources. For example, OCHA and other humanitarian agencies sent over 240 staff to the Philippines to manage coordination mechanisms and support programme delivery, to support response efforts with up-to-date maps and updates on the situation and the response on a daily basis. I approved a CERF allocation of $25 million on 11 November for seven UN agencies and the International Organization for Migration and their respective implementing partners.

But while we have made great progress in the past few weeks, we need to continue our support to the Government’s efforts over the medium and long-term.

The delivery and reach of aid is geographically uneven; that is something the Humanitarian Country Team is working on right now with the Government. We don’t have a clear picture of needs in some of the most remote areas of southern Aklan, western Capiz, central Antique on Panay Island, and an area north of Tacloban as well as a number of smaller outlying islands. That is a gap we must address as soon as possible.

There remains an immediate need for food and nutrition support, to prevent a rapid deterioration of worst-affected people’s health and wellbeing. Recovery of shelter and essential community services for water and sanitation, education, health and social welfare are priorities. More than a million homes have been damaged or destroyed. Such large numbers of people living without homes, belongings or documents puts a severe brake on economic recovery.

The key to this recovery will be through helping people to resume their normal lives as soon as possible. We will support this through agricultural production programmes that provide employment for local people and by strengthening local markets, restoring the physical infrastructure by clearing debris and rehabilitating it, and restoring community services including water and sanitation, education and health.

It is already clear that there will be wide variations in the speed of the recovery, depending on how badly communities were hit. Areas hit by [both] super-typhoon Haiyan and the storm surge will take longer to recover. We already see Ormoc transitioning to recovery; Tacloban is focusing on both humanitarian assistance and restoration of livelihoods, and Guiuan continues to focus on core humanitarian needs.

The speed and scale of humanitarian action was supported by swift and generous contributions to multilateral assistance. The Humanitarian Action Plan which was launched within a week of the
disaster has now been replaced by the Strategic Response Plan which comes to a total of $791 million, and represents the plans of 54 humanitarian partners including 41 NGOs. As of 16 December, this was 30 per cent funded at $237m. We are grateful to the donor Governments and the international public who gave so generously.

The Plan has been developed in close coordination with the Government, and covers 12 months from the date of the disaster and was designed to complement the Government’s Yolanda Recovery and Reconstruction Plan, which is for 4 years and will cost some $3 billion. We will continue to work closely with the Government to coordinate our support, and avoid duplication of effort.

Excellencies,

The people of the Philippines have demonstrated their amazing resilience once again. During my two visits to the affected areas, I heard countless stories of heroism and solidarity and I was greeted everywhere I went with the greatest hospitality.

We will continue to support the people of the Philippines.

I thank you all for your commitment and my Director of Corporate Programmes is available with you in New York to take any further questions.

Thank you.