Good afternoon everyone. It is a pleasure for me to be back in Iran for my second visit.

I have had an important opportunity to discuss with Government partners ways in which we can strengthen our partnership to improve regional cooperation on humanitarian assistance and also to discuss the major humanitarian crises in the region.

This morning I met Mr. [Esmaeil] Najjar, the President of the National Disaster Management Organization, and we exchanged a plan of action which sets out areas for our continued collaboration focusing on information management, enhancing operational effectiveness, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

In my meeting with His Excellency Dr. [Mohammad Javad] Zarif, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister Amir Abdollahian and other officials we discussed the humanitarian situations in Syria, in Iraq and in Gaza.

Almost 11 million people are in need throughout Syria. This is up from 1 million people in need three years ago. Out of those, 4.7 million people live in areas that are hard to reach. 241,000 live in besieged communities. The UN is of course responding to this unprecedented crisis.

In July, WFP dispatched food for 3.7 million people inside Syria. WHO distributed medicines and supplies for more than half a million people. UNICEF helped 16.5 million people to get safe water. Syria is also a crisis with a regional impact. About 3 million Syrians sought refuge in countries of the region.

But this is not enough. We need to reach all people in need in Syria.

Insecurity, the fragmentation of armed groups and administrative obstacles imposed by the Government are hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Medical supplies are constantly denied in humanitarian convoys.

I talked about all these issues with the Ministers and, together, we are seeking ways to find solutions.
In Iraq, people are faced with a rapidly unravelling humanitarian crisis, which has already caused one of the largest internal population displacements in the world. Attacks, systematic persecution and grave human rights abuses against civilians by the so called Islamic State and other armed groups are outrageous. UN agencies and partners are supporting national, regional and local government authorities in their aid efforts.

In Gaza, 1,975 Palestinians, including 1,417 civilians, and 67 Israelis were killed during the conflict. An estimated 10,000 people have been injured, including 3,000 children and 3,000 women. Damage to hospitals, schools and UNRWA shelters where people displaced sought refuge, will take months to rebuild. UN response continues, including deliveries of food, water and household goods. Medicines and fuel are being delivered to hospitals.

We will continue to help the people of Syria, Iraq and Gaza.

Other colleagues in the United Nations are engaged in working to find lasting political solutions. My job and that of our humanitarian partners is to be as effective as possible in our aid delivery and ensure that we can reach more people, more quickly.

Iran has a very important role to play in helping us gain better access for humanitarian organizations in Syria and elsewhere.

I look forward to working more closely with our Iranian partners to further improve the international humanitarian system, and to respond to crises now and in the future.

And now I am happy to take your questions.

For further information, please contact Mohammad R. Moghadam (Tehran), 98-21-2287 3837, mohammad.moghadam@unic.org, or Clare Doyle (New York) +1 646 288 6331, doylecm@un.org. 