

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator,**

**Stephen O'Brien**

**Remarks at the launch of the 2017 Global Humanitarian Overview**

*Geneva 5 December 2016*

*As delivered*

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, may I thank you for joining us today to launch the 2017 Global Humanitarian Overview.

We face a time of immense global suffering and fear. The scale of humanitarian deprivation today is greater than at any time since the United Nations was founded. Despite successes elsewhere, more and more people are trapped in a cycle of vulnerability and need. Protracted conflicts last longer – sometimes decades – as political solutions are nowhere to be found. The blatant disregard for international governance, humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law means innocent civilians are suffering an ever greater toll and more and more people are displaced inside and outside of state borders. Globally, more than 80 per cent of the needs stem from man-made conflicts many of which are now protracted and push up demand for relief year after year. These crises affect entire regions.

Adding to conflict, we also remain worried about natural disasters. As the impacts of climate change become more profound, disasters will become more frequent and more severe.

Today, we must heed the humanitarian imperative to demonstrate our humanity and solidarity to millions of people around the world affected by conflict and disaster.

Looking ahead to 2017, over 128.6 million people across 33 countries will require humanitarian assistance. Faced with the trend of increasing needs, the humanitarian community requires US\$22.2 billion to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable 92.8 million people in those 33 countries. This is an increase of 10 per cent since last year, and of 700 per cent since 1991. That's 25 years ago when the General Assembly passed the landmark resolution 46/182, still relevant today.

Some of the figures for 2017 are based on last year's numbers pending finalisation by the country teams, for instance in South Sudan and in Sudan where there will be greater need.

With natural disasters and the deteriorating situation in some of the countries, these figures are likely to further rise over the next year.

Representing the collective vision of hundreds of partners, this 2017 Global Humanitarian Overview and the individual country plans reflect the most accurate, effective and principled approach to tackle the most pressing humanitarian needs in line with humanitarian principles. It provides a strategic, streamlined framework for reliable, value-for-money investment. I would like to thank all of you for your invaluable support in this process.

Funding for 2017 will translate into concrete action, such as:

- life-saving food assistance for people on the brink of starvation in the Lake Chad Basin and South Sudan;
- protection of the most vulnerable people fleeing conflict in Syria, and Iraq;
- vital health and medical care in Yemen;
- education for children whose schooling is disrupted by El Niño;
- psychosocial support and protection for 439,000 children in Libya;
- health services to some 6.5 million people in Nigeria;

And of course much, much more.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The rising demand is putting pressure on the humanitarian ecosystem, but brave humanitarians are never deterred, even in the face of often insuperable challenges. We continue to grow in strength and diversity every day. This year, more relief actors - made up of local responders, national governments, the private sector, international organizations and others - have saved, protected or supported more people than in any previous year since the founding of the United Nations. Yet we cannot become complacent and coordination remains pivotal.

At the World Humanitarian Summit earlier this year in Istanbul, we recognized that the only way to deliver people out of a perpetual cycle of crisis is to reduce need and vulnerability at its source. Humanitarians alone cannot achieve this; it requires a new way of working involving collaboration between development and humanitarian actors as well as others, to work to collective outcomes, each of us working to our individual strengths.

At the Summit we also committed to invest in humanity, in part by committing to a Grand Bargain to improve the transparency, efficiency, flexibility and longevity of aid and by giving more support to local and national responders, both directly and through country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund.

The humanitarian community is changing in line with our commitments at the Summit and we already see improved transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. This Global

Humanitarian Overview further aims to support these goals by setting a framework for multi-year action and by improving the coherence between humanitarian and development programmes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude, we must look back at 2016. Our collective work has never been more important. Together, we have raised \$11.4 billion towards the coordinated appeals - more than ever before. However, despite immense donor generosity, by year-end just 52 per cent of the \$22.1 billion requested was committed to reach over 96 million people in 40 countries in 2016. The bulk of global requirements were for just four humanitarian crises: Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen - all of them man-made conflicts.

Last year humanitarian organizations overcame extreme access constraints and other obstacles to reach tens of millions with assistance. Among many more life-changing examples, your funding meant we reached 2 million refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey with food and we enrolled 700,000 children in school. It meant we delivered yellow fever vaccinations to 6 million children in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It meant we provided 150,000 earthquake-affected people in Ecuador with shelter and distributed seeds to 1.5 million households affected by El Niño-induced drought in Ethiopia.

I want to thank the generous donors who in spite of the challenges, and sometimes because of those very challenges, continue to show solidarity and humanity. I especially thank those governments who continuously trust our community and provide core, timely and – let me stress – un-earmarked funding. We are also counting on you to report your commitments through the Financial Tracking Service so we can identify gaps and avoid any duplication in our response.

As a former politician myself – and an international civil servant today – I understand that donors need to transparently account for and justify the significant resources you vote to provide to the humanitarian community. Resources paid for by constituent taxpayers to whom you are ultimately accountable. Let me assert that there is no higher public investment than the meeting of humanitarian needs and emergency relief. And let me reassure you that investing in the strategic, prioritized humanitarian appeals is the most cost-effective, value for money proposition. And we are always striving to improve and coordinate even better to be both more efficient and even more effective in meeting the urgent needs of the affected people, our fellow global citizens, around our one world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations and the humanitarian community are ready to provide urgent, life-saving assistance and protection in 2017. Our humanitarian response plans are complete, they are prioritized and they are ready to implement. They are reliable, they are effective and they are efficient investments, the best way to get help to people who need help now. Brave, courageous

humanitarian actors – let's all salute them – are ready to deliver more and better humanitarian assistance to people affected by crisis.

The humanitarian community is already transforming to ensure a better, faster and more effective delivery of aid, including through the Grand Bargain and the New Way of Working. 2017 will be the highest funding appeal ever. We ask all Member States, private sector partners, individuals and others to fully respond and collectively invest in humanity and put their generosity and their will behind our collective humanitarian appeals.

We are now counting on you, our partners and donors, to actively engage in these efforts and to support this appeal. Millions of women, men, girls and boys - their lives are in our hands. By delivering fully and generously on this appeal we will prove to them that we will not let them down.

Thank you.