Muchas Gracias.

Your excellency Mr. Carlos Morales, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Guatemala.

Honorable Alejandro Maldonado, Executive Secretary of CONRED and current President of the Centre of Coordination of Natural Disasters in Central America.

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and thank you all very much indeed for your participation in this regional meeting ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit. My particular thanks to the Government of Guatemala for hosting this meeting.

I am very pleased that this regional consultation has been held in conjunction with the seventh Regional Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance Mechanisms. This region has pioneered fora like MIAH, which are leading the way in regional cooperation on humanitarian action, disaster management, risk reduction and the role of the private sector. The World Humanitarian Summit provides an ideal window for Latin America and the Caribbean to present the achievements, success and challenges of regional coordination and increased South-South cooperation.

Colleagues,

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, second only to Asia. Last year, about four and a half million people were affected by disasters here. Flooding displaced more than 80,000 people in Bolivia and 75,000 people in Paraguay. Earthquakes in Chile and Nicaragua affected close to a million people. Right now, more than 6,500 people have been evacuated due to the eruption of the Calbuco volcano in Chile, and more than 10,000 people have been affected by flooding in Peru. Many people in this region are struggling to cope with the overlapping impacts of natural disasters, food insecurity, urban violence, increased migration flows and new epidemic outbreaks like chikungunya.

This reflects global trends. Natural disasters are occurring with greater frequency and intensity around the world, often recurring before communities and countries have time to rebuild. In other parts of the world, conflicts are creating immense humanitarian need.
and massive displacement. Some 51 million women, men, and children are now displaced from their homes – the highest figure since 1945.

And these trends show no sign of reversing.

By 2050, we estimate that up to one billion people around the world could be displaced by the impact of climate change. Global economic losses from natural disasters are now around $300 billion annually, and are projected to increase dramatically. And whilst the number of conflicts between states has decreased, with the increase of conflicts within states and the proliferation of armed and terrorist groups, the poor, the displaced, and the marginalized continue to suffer most.

In the face of these challenges, we must act now to strengthen our support for the most vulnerable, including the 80 million people in this region who live in extreme poverty. We need to be ambitious in finding new ways to help people build their resilience to shocks and increase their ability to cope with the impact of these global trends.

The World Humanitarian Summit consultative process is an important step in helping us to identify the changes we need. It is vital that our consultations are as wide-ranging as possible, so I am delighted to see so many partners and sectors represented here – governments, regional organizations, civil society, humanitarian practitioners, and people affected by crisis.

I commend your efforts to put people at the centre of humanitarian response; to consult people affected by disasters; and to move away from the concept of charity and towards a new model based on risk management and resilience. This is a message we have heard at all the regional and stakeholder consultations that have been held so far. Humanitarian action must be about more than distributing aid after a disaster. It must be about empowering people so that they can live lives of dignity.

People like Cristobalina Martin, in Guatemala, who spent three years with almost nothing but a makeshift tent to protect her from freezing temperatures after her house was destroyed by a hurricane in Ixchiguan. With support from UN agencies and their local partners, she was able to move into a solid new home. She said “We couldn’t work the fields because we were constantly sick and suffering from the cold.”

When we listen to people and rebuild the types of homes they need, they can resume their livelihoods and not be dependent on aid when the next storm or crisis comes.

This region has a history of global solidarity and leadership from the adoption of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees in the 1980s to the outpouring of humanitarian support after the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

This type of solidarity is at the heart of our thinking around the World Humanitarian Summit. It is an opportunity to tackle the big challenges: to close the gap between needs and resources; to join our efforts with our development partners and other actors; to find more effective and efficient ways to meet humanitarian needs; and put in place mechanisms to protect and assist people who are displaced by violence or conflict. It is about showing solidarity with the communities we are here to serve, particularly the most
The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

vulnerable, the most marginalized. It is about putting women and girls at the heart of our response efforts.

We face a world full of complexity and challenge but also full of opportunities to promote and deliver a more peaceful, prosperous, stable and sustainable future for all. The World Humanitarian Summit is one such opportunity. We must make the most of it.

Thank you all very much indeed. Gracias.