Good afternoon.

I have just briefed the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria and what has been happening since October.

Four months ago the Council adopted a Presidential Statement which stressed the need for immediate action to protect civilians, give access to people in need. However, since that Presidential Statement was adopted, the conflict has intensified.

 Civilians are under fire and the social fabric of Syria has been torn to shreds.

Just this week, reports of sectarian violence and horrific human rights violations have emerged in the Sunni village of Soran and the mainly Alawite village of Ma'an. The Secretary-General released his report on children and armed conflict in Syria, depicting the “unspeakable” suffering of civilians.

The operational environment is more dangerous for our colleagues than ever. 15 more aid workers have lost their lives since October.

I told the Security Council that it is unacceptable that, four months since the members demanded action, international humanitarian law continues to be consistently and flagrantly violated by all parties to the conflict.

All parties are failing in their responsibility to protect civilians. We understand that a war is going on. But even wars have rules.

Over the past four months, we on the humanitarian side have made some modest progress, for example,
- Twenty-six inter-agency convoys have delivered one-off assistance in hard-to-reach areas in Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Dara’a, Hama, Homs, Idleb, and Rural Damascus since the PRST was adopted
Since 18 January UNRWA has managed to deliver food to over 6,500 families, and vaccines for 10,000 children – but that food was only enough for two weeks.

In the last week of course, we have delivered food and medical supplies for 2,500 people in Homs Old City and evacuated more than 1,400 people.

What I also said to the Security Council is that what progress there is is extremely limited, uneven and painstakingly slow. We have not been able to deliver enough and many areas remain beyond our reach.

The ceasefire agreement which enabled us to finally access the Old City of Homs shows what can be done when parties to this conflict put their differences aside in support of humanitarian action.

While remarkable, the events in the Old City cannot serve as a model. Why? It was a success, given the difficult circumstances, but I find it difficult to describe as progress.

- Our people were under fire
- We evacuated 1,400 people: there’s nearly a quarter of a million people to go, if you look at all of those in besieged communities
- We provided food and medicines to 2,500 people: over three million people in hard-to reach communities. So yes to 2,500; no to three million.

I first raised the alarm about Homs 14 months ago. We cannot wait another 14 months to reach 1,400 more people. This is not only about the Old City of Homs. There are millions of people in dire need across Syria, their lives hanging in the balance.

I have asked the Security Council members to do everything they can to use their influence over the parties to this appalling conflict, to ensure that they:

- Abide by humanitarian pauses and ceasefires
- Give humanitarian actors sustained and regular access
- Commit, in writing, to upholding International Humanitarian Law
- Allow systematic cross-line access

and prevent our teams from being shot at while delivering aid to people in need.

There is no amount of words can adequately describe the horrific reality facing civilians in Syria today.

Solidarity with the people of Syria is what, in my view, the United Nations Charter stands for: “We the Peoples of the United Nations.”

The Member States of the United Nations have a responsibility to take the action necessary to uphold the principles and values of the UN Charter.

We must not fail the men, women and the children of Syria.