Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Thank you to all the distinguished representatives from governments and Member States, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and guests for attending this event on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. I also thank the co-hosts, Iraq, the United States, the EU, the ICRC, the OIC, and our OCHA colleagues, for coming together in support of the Iraqi people at this critical juncture.

As the military coalition advances and re-captures territory from ISIL militants, every military action is generating humanitarian needs, with 300,000 people freshly displaced this year alone.

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences once the military campaign advances to Mosul City. Humanitarian partners estimate that up to 1.5 million people could be directly impacted by the military operations with as many as one million civilians anticipated to flee the city, although numbers and flight paths are impossible to predict with precision in these circumstances.

What is certain is that all who try to escape the conflict zone will require aid and protection and will face extreme risks of being caught between the frontlines, or even of being abused as human shields.

Excellencies, and distinguished delegates,

In Iraq, as in all conflicts, warring parties must adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law, and put the plight of the civilian population at the centre of their actions. Vulnerable people and families on the move must be protected. Those fleeing the fighting in Mosul must be able to move to a safe distance from the frontlines, and humanitarians enabled to reach them.

When security screenings of displaced civilians are deemed necessary, these should be conducted by the security organs of the state, and in a manner that upholds the dignity of the affected. Humanitarian actors stand ready, and will aim to provide uninterrupted assistance at screening sites and reception areas.
Together with the Iraqi Government, partners are identifying space and preparing shelter for over 700,000 people, while efforts are underway for another 300,000 to find shelter through sponsorship schemes.

To prepare for Mosul, partners launched a flash appeal for US$284 million in July of this year. Generous pledges were made at the Iraq pledging conference in Washington, DC, and 48 per cent of this funding ($136m) has been received. I cannot over-stress the importance of receiving any outstanding pledges as soon as possible to allow humanitarians to prepare.

The shortfall for the Mosul preparations comes in context of underfunding for the Humanitarian Response Plan – the backbone of the Iraq humanitarian operation – as a whole. Just over half of the funding requirements have been met ($468 million received from the requested $860.5 million), and as a result, 54 per cent of planned programmes this year have either shut down or could not begin at all.

Further programme closures will follow if the required funding is not received. Iraqis deserve better than this: Acutely vulnerable people in Iraq urgently need assistance and protection, based on need alone in line with humanitarian principles. They cannot wait any longer.