Excellences,
Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. My apologies for the slightly late start. I am delighted to be co-hosting this evening’s event with the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Bangura.

We are here this evening to highlight the importance of partnerships in dealing with humanitarian challenges on the African continent and around the world. I’d like to thank so many of our partners for being present here this evening.

One of the reasons that we thought this event was so important is that we focus so much on the issues of peace and security on the continent and not enough on the very positive things that countries and people, including on the continent in terms of themselves taking charge of their response to crises.

There are communities providing local solutions to their own challenges - I’ve seen it myself in much of the travelling I’ve been doing; We have a private sector which is actively engaging, for example with initiatives like Kenyans 4 Kenya; We have Governments which are themselves leading the humanitarian response and sharing technical help and tools with their neighbours; we have local and national authorities and regional organizations like ECOWAS and SADC and others taking the lead in regional response.

And the role of Civil Society is becoming more and more important.

So we have African countries, which are supporting humanitarian action not just on their own continent but also around the world. Working together with sixteen African contributing countries and a range of other donors, the Central Emergency Response Fund, which is a fund for the UN, by the UN, we have provided more than US$1.7 billion to 43 African countries since 2006 through the Central Emergency Response Fund.

African states are playing a stronger role in rapid response after emergencies, both through the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group which includes five African
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.

states, but also through the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination system, which has 15 African States as members as well as the AU, ECOWAS and SADC. And of course so many African countries are hosting refugees from their neighbouring countries.

The past year has been a particularly eventful and fruitful one for us, in terms of our partnerships with Regional Economic Communities, Member States, and the private sector. And we are working very hard to change the way we work. For example, in the countries of the Sahel, which last year faced a major food security crisis, we have been working with those governments to look at ways strengthening the links between the work that we do on the humanitarian side and our longer-term development work, to help us to build the resilience of communities themselves so that they can better respond when crisis strikes.

We in OCHA are working with the AU’s African Solidarity Initiative to support humanitarian and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. We co-hosted a joint partnership mission to the Sahel with representatives from international institutions and emerging donor countries so that we could get a much better understanding of our work. And we continue our work with ECOWAS, SADC and Member States on developing tools and initiatives for improved preparedness and disaster response.

For us, it’s about the longer-term sustainable development, for example, working to improve basic health and education services, supporting farmers and empowering women. It’s about improved preparedness and resilience-building in case of emergencies.

Tonight we have a number of people in this room who have worked with us and who we would like to acknowledge and recognize as champions for humanitarian work on the continent. My thanks to all of you and I look forward to our further discussions this evening.

Thank you.