UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR A CEASEFIRE AND IMMEDIATE SAFE PASSAGE FOR CIVILIANS STILL TRAPPED IN MOADAMIYEH, SYRIA

(New York, 19 October 2013) I continue to be extremely worried by the situation unfolding across Syria where ordinary women, children and men are facing horrific violence and brutality from all sides of the conflict. How many more children, women and men will needlessly lose their lives? The humanitarian community has stressed time and time again that people must not be denied life-saving help and that the fighting has to stop.

We have been denied access to Moadamiyeh in Rural Damascus for months. Although the evacuation of more than 3,000 people took place on Sunday, the same number or more remain trapped. There are reports of continued shelling and fighting in the area, preventing the completion of the rescue operation.

Those evacuated from Moadamiyeh - mostly women and children - received immediate assistance from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, UN humanitarian agencies and partners, local businesses and private individuals, including food, medical treatment and psychosocial support.

I call on all parties to agree an immediate pause in hostilities in Moadamiyeh to allow humanitarian agencies unhindered access to evacuate the remaining civilians and deliver life-saving treatment and supplies in areas where fighting and shelling is ongoing.

Thousands of families also remain trapped in other locations across Syria, for example in Nubil, Zahra, old Aleppo town, old Homs town and Hassakeh. Civilians must be allowed to move to safer areas without the fear of attack.

It is vital that all parties to the conflict respect their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian laws to protect civilians and to allow neutral, impartial humanitarian organizations safe access to all people in need, wherever they are in Syria.