This is my first opportunity to talk to you about the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. But it’s the third or fourth time that many of you have attended such an event.

And that is at the heart of this emergency: the failure to end the violence that is fuelling humanitarian needs.

In the past month, the fighting has intensified and there have been completely unacceptable attacks on UN bases where more than 140,000 people are sheltering. Eyewitness accounts and satellite images show that the parties to the conflict are destroying communities in parts of Greater Upper Nile. Civilians have been terrorized and forced to flee for their lives. Villages have been razed; health facilities have been destroyed; livestock has been stolen; food has been taken and burned.

The number of people facing severe food insecurity has almost doubled since the start of the year to an estimated 4.6 million people – the highest number since the conflict began in December 2013.

More than 2 million people have been displaced and are living in very difficult conditions, vulnerable to attack, gender-based violence and forced recruitment to armed groups. Some 560,000 refugees, mainly women and children, have fled to Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. That number is still growing.

Water and sanitation services in some areas are on the verge of collapse. As the rainy season starts, there is a heightened risk of malaria and water-borne diseases including cholera. Healthcare supplies are running out and unless they are replenished by September, people will start to die of common and easily treatable diseases.

Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies are operating under extremely difficult conditions.

Thirteen aid workers have been killed since the beginning of the crisis. Others have been abducted, harassed, carjacked, detained, arrested and threatened. And as you know, the Humanitarian Coordinator was recently expelled.
Despite the dangers, aid agencies continue to deliver life-saving assistance to South Sudan’s people. In the last week alone, more than two thousand survival kits including food, seeds, mosquito nets and other essential items were distributed to people who fled to the swamps of southern Unity.

We are making a real difference to people’s lives when we act together, with the right funding. Humanitarian aid reached 3.6 million people last year and helped to avert the threat of famine.

But we must now step up our efforts.

First, those with influence over the parties to the conflict must do everything possible to end the bloodshed and reverse the slide into desperate need.

Second, we must see respect for international humanitarian law so that the parties to the conflict uphold the neutrality and independence of humanitarian workers and enable them to reach people.

Third, we must enable humanitarian agencies to scale up programmes in the parts of the country where people need them most. We must fund the aid effort adequately.

The revised South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan seeks $1.63 billion to meet the most urgent needs until the end of 2015. Some $650 million has been raised, leaving a gap of $1 billion. We also need $708 million to support refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.

These funds will enable humanitarian workers to provide food, water, shelter and healthcare to people in the most remote places, by airlift if necessary, and to stock up on supplies for the rainy season.

Thank you for your continued support for the people of the world’s youngest country. They struggled for years to gain independence; now they are struggling for survival. Your support is vital to send a message of solidarity and hope to South Sudan.

Thank you.