Thank you, Deputy Secretary-General, and thanks to all the speakers who are joining us this morning.

I welcome today’s discussion as an opportunity to celebrate the principle of Humanity, which is not specific to any one culture or religion but is shared and valued by all.

Putting the principle of humanity into action is the job of every humanitarian organization, regardless of its size, background, or mandate. We need now, more than ever, to come together to take responsibility to uphold the humanity and dignity of all people. This is the impetus behind the Secretary General’s call for a World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in Istanbul in 2016. The summit aims to set a new vision that better meets the needs of the millions of people affected by conflicts and disasters.

The World Humanitarian Summit has two goals. First, it should re-inspire and reinvigorate our commitment to humanity, and in particular to alleviate the suffering of more than 100 million people who are at risk of being left behind.

Second, it should spark concrete actions aimed at enabling countries and communities to better prepare for and respond to crises, and be more resilient to shocks.

In the lead-up to the Summit, more than 23,000 people have called for collective action to enact major changes to ensure humanity is restored. Putting these changes into action will be the basis of our work in the global humanitarian system for years to come.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

To re-affirm humanity, we must also counteract the politicization of aid. In today’s conflicts, life saving assistance like access to water or healthcare is often used as a tool or a weapon. The International Committee of the Red Cross has an invaluable role in highlighting attacks on health facilities during conflict. Doctors are punished by one party to conflict for providing life-saving medical care to enemy combatants. Patients have been killed in their beds. Aid workers are attacked and relief supplies are looted. These are not simply violations of international humanitarian law; they are violations of the people’s humanity.
All humanitarian action must seek not only to end suffering and meet immediate needs, but to keep people safe from harm and enable them to live with dignity. It’s about providing displaced women in Darfur with firewood so they do not need to venture into dangerous areas and risk being raped; working with parties to conflict in Syria to ensure basic services are maintained; removing explosive hazards of war in Afghanistan and Gaza so that people can get to work safely. The spike in human trafficking immediately after the earthquake in Nepal shows that in every crisis, whether natural or manmade, the safety and dignity of people is at risk.

Restoring people’s humanity and protecting them from harm must always be at the heart of our work.