Closing Remarks to the Global Forum on Improving Humanitarian Action  
New York, 5 June 2015  

As delivered

Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My thanks to the US Government, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, and the League of Arab States for inviting me to join you here this afternoon, and congratulations to ALNAP for organizing this event in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

We are reminded every day of the immense challenges to humanitarian action around the world, and the need for change and progress.

In Syria, 12.2 million people need humanitarian assistance including 7.6 million who have been forced from their homes. In South Sudan, 4.6 million people face severe food insecurity in the next few months. In Ukraine, 1.3 million people have been forced to flee the violence. In Nepal, 50,000 families are in urgent need of shelter before the monsoon rains descend in a few weeks.

These huge topline figures are well known to us all. But sadly, as you know only too well, they are no longer exceptional. Just last week, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel sounded the alarm for renewed crisis there, pointing out that the number of people displaced inside and outside their countries in the region had jumped from 1.6 million to 3.5 million in a year. I could also mention Iraq, Burundi, Yemen, Somalia and many more.

As I know very well, the Sahel is an example of how multiple factors are creating chronic, protracted crises that are testing humanitarian response in a completely new way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world is changing and we need to change with it to meet the needs of those affected by crisis in a timely and effective manner. The Secretary-General has called for the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit to set an ambitious and bold forward agenda for humanitarian work. The Summit must re-inspire and re-invigorate the world with the fundamental tenets of humanitarian work. It must be a global rallying call for humanity,

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.
putting principles and affected people at the centre of our response. The Summit will not be an end in itself, but rather a starting point for progress. It will initiate a set of actions so that people, countries and communities throughout the world are better prepared for and able to respond to current and future crises.

I commend the efforts of everyone here to consider ways of adapting the humanitarian system to different contexts and realities, and I welcome your focus on risk management and on ensuring that affected people have ownership of humanitarian response. This is very much in tune with the message we have heard at the regional and stakeholder consultations we have held.

The consultation process undertaken so far is invaluable. It is garnering the views of a wide range of stakeholders. It is generating a lot of valuable recommendations that will make a difference. And not least, it is creating trust and buy-in. While the consultation process will crescendo with the Global Consultation, we must see a step change. That’s why the Secretary-General has challenged us all to generate strong global support for transformative and inspirational change:

Operational effectiveness, which you have been discussing here, is the first of four key areas for action at the Summit. While the international humanitarian system has put in place important measures to improve effectiveness through the humanitarian reform in 2005 and the Transformative Agenda in 2011, we now need to move towards better and faster response to empowered people affected by crises.

On humanitarian financing, we need to address the widening gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available to meet them. As we speak, halfway through the year, the global appeal for 2015 is just 24 per cent funded. That’s the lowest number at mid-year ever.

We must do more to meet people’s needs in conflict. We must find better ways to protect civilians. We must demand more from the global community – and hold to account those who do not deliver on their obligations to uphold International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law.

Finally, we must help people and communities become more resilient to shocks and less reliant on humanitarian assistance. This is particularly critical in protracted crises, where humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for basic service provision year after year. The development and humanitarian communities must find ways to better manage risks and crises together.

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the clear recommendations you have made over the past two days. The proposals made by this meeting will be instructive and influential in shaping the World Humanitarian Summit action agenda. Moving forward, they will be further developed at the Global Consultation in Geneva. In December, the Secretary-General's report will be available.
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.

The World Humanitarian Summit will be a platform for Heads of State and Government, and leaders from civil society, the private sector, crisis-affected communities and multilateral organizations to rally around these action areas and announce their commitments to change, launch new initiatives and partnerships, and showcase innovative practices and ideas.

I count on all of you to heed the Secretary-General’s challenge and to work on commitments that you will bring and the changes needed for the women, girls, boys and men affected by crises. For those who lost everything and need our solidarity.

I call on you to join the Secretary-General in Istanbul on 26 and 27 May next year to commit to a new vision for humanitarian action.

Thank you.