Mr. Vice-President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

Can I begin by thanking all of you for your active engagement in the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of ECOSOC. I’d particularly like to thank our panellists, who have offered unique perspectives, enthusiasm and expertise which have helped make this an exciting three days. We also had an online audience, who have participated for the first time by submitting questions on Facebook and Twitter.

We held a record 20 events this year, in addition to the general debate. The main panels focused on evidence-based humanitarian decision-making and strengthening partnerships. We also looked at resilience in the Sahel, issues of access, humanitarian principles and some of the emerging challenges that are facing us.

There are some key messages that came out of these discussions. One recurrent theme has been the primary role of states affected by disasters in initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance. Another theme has been the need to support local communities, who are the first responders when disaster strikes.

The main panel discussion on evidence-based humanitarian decision-making made it clear that open data goes well beyond helping to facilitate disaster preparedness and response. It also plays a crucial role in development efforts, and has huge benefits for the private sector. Kenya’s Open Data Initiative, which was presented to us by the Minister, is a great example of what is possible. As the Minister said, open data is a challenge to Governments to be truly accountable and transparent. Some Governments are better prepared for this development than others.

This main panel discussion was complemented by a side event hosted by CRED and ECHO, which highlighted the fact that emergencies can and do provoke a strong emotional response. Celebrities and individual stories can have more impact than good
data and evidence. We have to learn how to make the most of both approaches, in the right context, for maximum impact.

Our other main panel event was on partnerships – a major theme throughout the whole of the UN. Humanitarian work is something everyone can get involved in, from individuals to major corporations and academic institutions, so partnerships may have particular benefits for us. Another way to broaden our partnership network was highlighted at a side event on ‘twinning’ arrangements.

Another example of effective partnerships was presented at the side event celebrating INSARAG’s 10-year anniversary. The development and adoption of global standards on search and rescue has been key to improvements over this past decade. And IOM held a side event on displacement and natural disasters, in which participants examined how partnerships between Governments, civil society and the international community can help reduce the impact of displacement, was another example of practice that is already ongoing.

Resilience was another major theme this year. The transition event highlighted the need to build resilience through disaster risk reduction, livelihood support and social safety nets. This will dramatically reduce the bill, both in terms of human suffering and resources, when disaster strikes. A message we also heard at the event on the Transitional Solutions Initiative. The launch event for the report: ‘Resilience and children in the Sahel’, by Save the Children and World Vision, highlighted the need for a paradigm shift in our approach to the increasingly frequent droughts in the Sahel and the Horn, while the side event on the Horn of Africa Real Time Evaluation provided important practical lessons on how to build resilience, and pointed out examples.

Other side events tackled humanitarian principles, humanitarian access and civil-military coordination.

And also emerging challenges: how to respond in urban contexts and how we can best tap the energy and potential of young refugees and displaced people, who can be important agents of change.

In addition to our thematic discussions, three key updates were provided: on IASC efforts to improve field effectiveness; on the status of global humanitarian financing through the annual Global Humanitarian Assistance report; and on the Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal at mid-year. One interesting finding from the 2012 Global Humanitarian Assistance report is that only 4% of official humanitarian aid is invested in building resilience and disaster risk reduction. One thing we need to remember if we are to make that shift to include and integrate relief and development.

Mr. Vice-President,

I would like to thank everyone once again for your active participation and engagement during this year’s ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment.

I commend Member States on achieving consensus on the resolution you have just adopted, and particularly the co-facilitators, Australia and Indonesia, for their excellent
work.

I am happy to see that the resolution once again reaffirms the importance of access and humanitarian principles.

I look forward to continuing these discussions with you in the GA, which I hope will be enriched by our deliberations over these past three days.

Mr. Vice President,

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for sharing your thoughts, ideas and your expertise.

It is only through the robust engagement and commitment of Member States that we can make sure that the humanitarian system is, and remains, fit for purpose.

And Mr. Vice-President, I would like personally to thank you for your able leadership of this session, and for Spain’s stewardship in facilitating the ECOSOC process this year.

Thank you.