Good afternoon everyone, happy New Year to you.

We ended 2013 with three Level 3 system-wide emergencies. Level 3’s, as you know, are our highest level of humanitarian crisis. They are for Syria, the Central African Republic and the Philippines. We enter 2014 with multiple, severe humanitarian crises threatening or affecting the lives of millions of people, including those three Level 3 emergencies that I have mentioned.

Two weeks ago, I launched the Overview of Global Humanitarian Response for 2014. Our assessment then was that we need US$12.9 billion this year to reach 52 million people in need in 17 countries.

Since then, developments in the Central African Republic and South Sudan have already added tens of thousands of people to the list of those who need our help and support. And with the ongoing emergencies in Syria, the Philippines and elsewhere, our collective response capacity and our resources are being stretched to the limit.

Millions of people have begun this year internally displaced or as refugees - dependent on humanitarian organizations for a place to sleep, food to eat and for basic healthcare.

In the Central African Republic, the violence and unrest continue against the backdrop of abject poverty and a collapsing state. More than one in six Central Africans – more than 800,000 people – are now internally displaced and nearly half a million face hunger. Aid agencies continue to scale up their response activities as fast as security conditions allow. But it has not been easy.

In South Sudan, violence has driven an estimated 194,000 from their homes in a matter of weeks, with more than 57,000 seeking protection in the bases of the UN peacekeeping mission. Some 107,000 people have been reached with assistance and our aim is to reach over 600,000 in the first three months of this year. But I am deeply concerned about the ongoing reports of disturbing, gross violations of human rights, and the lack of protection
of civilians. Aid organizations need access to affected communities to provide healthcare, shelter and clean water. People’s lives depend on this.

In mid-December, we launched the largest ever appeal for a single humanitarian emergency, the crisis in Syria and surrounding countries. We requested $6.5 billion for this year. In Syria itself, 9.3 million people need aid, 6.5 million of them are displaced, and more than 2.3 million people have left the country as refugees, mainly to neighbouring countries.

The collapse of the country’s infrastructure, ongoing targeting of civilians and militarization of schools and hospitals remain major concerns. We continue to stress the need for a political solution to the crisis. Every day that passes leads to further deterioration of the situation and we on the humanitarian side can only do so much.

We are doing our utmost to support the children, women and men affected by this bloody conflict. The funding that we need is unprecedented. On the 15th of this month, the Secretary-General as you know will chair the second Kuwait Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, hosted by His Excellency the Emir of Kuwait. We are working hard to make that event a success.

In Syria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, and in so many conflicts, we are seeing ongoing abuses of human rights and protection concerns. That makes the UN’s Rights up Front agenda even more relevant and necessary. Women and children are particularly vulnerable.

Let me now turn to some of the other crises.

In Sudan there is still no independent cross-line humanitarian access to 800,000 people in SPLM-North controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. This has been the case since mid-2011. Access is also limited for international NGOs and UN agencies in Darfur, a crisis that is now entering its tenth year.

Large-scale displacement is a major concern also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 2.7 million people remain uprooted, 65 per cent of them in the Kivu provinces alone. The surrender of M23 in early November last year raised hopes of progress, but the security situation is volatile and the sustainable return of the displaced remains an elusive goal.

Internal displacement is only one of the issues of concern in the DRC. An estimated 6.3 million people are food-insecure and half of all children under five years old are chronically malnourished.
A fragile political landscape and rampant insecurity continue to make Somalia one of the most volatile and operationally challenging environments for humanitarian workers as we have seen in the last few days. 3.2 million Somalis need help – 1.1 million of them are internally displaced. Malnutrition rates are amongst the highest in the world with 206,000 children under 5 years of age acutely malnourished.

And this year, close to 570,000 children under 5 years of age are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in Mali. Overall, 2.7 million people out of a population of 14.5 million will need food assistance this year.

And if we look at the entire Sahel region in West Africa – that’s the nine countries that we have indicated will be high on the agenda again this year – preliminary figures show that around 16 million people are at risk of hunger due to conflict and rapid population growth. We have a twin-track approach for the Sahel: delivery of food and other assistance to vulnerable people while we work to increase their ability to absorb future shocks – to build their resilience so that year on year communities and governments are better able to deal with the consequences of drought.

Myanmar, Afghanistan and Haiti will continue to be on our agenda. We have ongoing humanitarian crises in those countries which will continue to demand our attention.

The humanitarian response to the various crises in the Philippines will continue this year. The destruction left by Typhoon Haiyan – which affected 14 million people – will require our sustained support. Simultaneously, international humanitarian organizations will continue to provide assistance to the nearly 370,000 people displaced by the Bohol earthquake, and the tens of thousands who remain uprooted because of fighting in September last year in Zamboanga City.

2013 was a real test of the global humanitarian system. There is no indication that this year will be any different. It is clear that the United Nations and our partners are needed more than ever. The extent and complexity of the emergencies I have mentioned will continue to pose significant challenges for the humanitarian response system.

The reforms that we put in place two years ago are delivering real results. But we will need to work even harder to bridge the different parts of the United Nations system – the political, development, peacekeeping and humanitarian – in a way which delivers strategic and sustained support to many of our Member States and to people in those countries.

Thank you very much.