Good evening everyone.

I will read a short statement and I will be very happy to take questions. I apologise that Ambassador Swing cannot join me, but you will know that there are three senior UN officials who have been here in the Philippines in the last few days looking at the relief effort.

I’m joined this evening by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator here in the Philippines, Ms. Luiza Carvalho, and to my left Mr. David Carden, who runs the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs here in the Philippines.

Today, I went back to Tacloban – exactly one week after my visit last week when I was appalled at the devastation and impact of the typhoon on the community. The ferocity of the typhoon, coupled with the tsunami-like storm surge surprised everyone, despite the extensive preparedness measures which had been taken and also the evacuation efforts which had been made.

Today was very different. The relief operation has been scaled up substantially. People are making every effort to rebuild their lives and the early signs of entrepreneurialism are all there, with women cooking and selling food, others removing debris or providing other support in the community. National and local Government efforts, supported by the international community, are paying off.

Every day aid efforts gather pace with the systems getting through to more people. Significant food and medical assistance has been provided and water services as well as limited telecommunications services restored. All residents now have access to clean drinking water and hygiene kits are being distributed. This will help prevent outbreaks of water-borne disease. While much of the international focus has been on Tacloban, people need help in many other areas. There are areas further inland, in the mountains and on many of the smaller islands that we have yet to reach.

Today I also visited Guiuan, in Samar province, which was the first town hit by the typhoon as it came ashore on the 8 November. I saw entire towns that had been completely wiped out and which will take a long time to rebuild.
My office, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is setting up a coordination hub there to help with the relief effort that is so urgently needed, is already holding coordination meetings with our partners on the ground.

We want to ensure that aid get distributed as quickly and effectively as possible and those coordination meetings are being attended by members of the local community, by the mayor and others, so there is not a duplication of effort. Coordination hubs have already been set up in Tacloban, Roxas, Ormoc and Cebu to support the Government-led response across the vast areas affected.

To date, humanitarian partners estimate they have reached just over 1.1 million people with food aid. The Philippines Government has also distributed 837,900 food packs in affected areas.

In addition to restoring water services in Tacloban, UNICEF water bladders and water treatment points have been installed to provide clean drinking water to thousands of people in Capiz, northern Cebu and Roxas city. Forty-three international emergency medical teams are supporting national responders, providing life-saving medical care for survivors. And I myself was able to see the MSF work that’s being done to restore the local hospital in Guiuan.

But the needs are immense; 2.5 million people require food assistance. Making sure everyone has safe water to drink remains a major challenge in many areas, including in island towns. With over 500,000 homes completely destroyed, the need for emergency shelter and basic protection for women, for children, remains.

An estimated 3.2 million women and 4.6 million children need psychosocial support and protection against violence, trafficking and exploitation. Pregnant women, new mothers and other vulnerable groups also need special care.

I would particularly like to thank the people and Government of the Philippines and the extensive Filipino diaspora for the work that they have done to support relief efforts. Member States of the United Nations, the private sector and the public around the world have shown immense generosity. Member States have given generously, providing military, in kind, financial and other support.

A total of $193 million has been contributed to the Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) response as of 18 November. This includes $87 million for the Haiyan Action Plan that was launched here on 12 November. We know that the appeal figure will increase significantly.

And while we increase our immediate response efforts we are also looking to the future, helping people restore their livelihoods. The Government, I’m sure, will be doing a post disaster needs assessment to frame longer term rehabilitation efforts.

I continue to be struck by the resilience and spirit of the Filipino people. Everywhere I visited, I saw families determined to rebuild their lives under the most difficult conditions. I would like to assure them and the Philippines Government that the United Nations and international community continue to stand with them.

[ends]