Good afternoon everyone.

I visited Syria and Lebanon last week to see for myself the impact of the intensifying conflict and to discuss ways to increase humanitarian assistance to the men, women and children who are facing the terrible effects of the crisis.

The humanitarian situation has worsened since my visit in March. According to the Government’s own figures, 1.2 million people are sheltering in public buildings. Many more are staying with relatives and friends. Both those who have fled and their hosts have urgent humanitarian needs due to the widening impact of the crisis on the economy and people’s livelihoods.

The most urgent and growing needs are for health care, shelter, food, water and sanitation. There are serious public health issues in the school buildings that are being used as shelters. There will also be disruption to the education of thousands of Syrian children when the academic year begins in September, unless other solutions are found in terms of housing internally displaced people.

The UN and its partners are reaching more people with emergency aid every month. WFP food distributions through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and local partners are reaching people in all governorates across Syria. Last month, more than 820,000 people were fed. UNHCR and UNFPA distributed hygiene kits, blankets and other basic items to over 60,000 people in the first two weeks of August. But it’s not enough. Not when we are dealing with the needs of an estimated 2.5 million people.

We face problems with access to people in need, particularly where there is intense and ongoing fighting, but funding is also holding us back. If we had more resources, we could reach more people, especially as we have established solid partnerships with local NGOs and with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

I am also extremely concerned that all parties to the conflict are failing to comply with international humanitarian law which sets out clear rules on the protection of civilians. This conflict has taken on a particularly brutal and violent character. We have all seen distressing images on our television screens and it is ordinary women, men and children who are caught in the midst of it. I repeat my call to all those engaged in the conflict to respect civilians and abide by international humanitarian law.
In Lebanon, I was unable to visit the refugees in the Bekaa valley due to the security situation at that time. However, I was able to meet the minister for Social Affairs, Wael Abou-Faour. We will continue to do everything to support those displaced both inside and outside Syria.

My thanks to the donors who have supported our efforts to date, and I appeal to our international partners to contribute more generously.

I am very happy to now take any questions.