Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. The NGO community is our key partner at the global and field level. The UN needs you so together we can deliver the best and fastest life-saving assistance and protection in the field. And dare I say – overall, I need you to hold my (and others’) feet to the fire.

I also thank you for the support you have given me over the past 18 months. It wasn’t always easy, but I learned that I have good friends and supporters in you. Lastly, I am in awe of our colleagues in the field who are asked to do ever more under ever more dangerous circumstances in ever more politicized environments.

Gayle just outlined major challenges and trends we are facing together and I will try to provide some of my perspective in the hope to get to a lively discussion quickly. Addressing some of the challenges will rely on making the promises of the World Humanitarian Summit a reality. We will have more time to look at that tomorrow, so I will be brief on that today. Of the myriad of challenges, I will focus on conflicts, IHL violations, displacement, the humanitarian-development nexus, as well as touch upon some food for thought on humanitarian financing.

Before we look at where we are going, let me paint add to some of what Gayle has said on the current humanitarian landscape.

Globally we are looking at 40 countries affected by disaster which require a coordinated humanitarian response. Together, we aim to meet the needs of 95 million people. Of the US$ 22 billion required, we have so far received 43%.

There is now one natural disaster with humanitarian impact on average every day, affecting 100 million people ever year. Due to environmental degradation and climate change, we will see more frequent and more devastating destruction, especially when disaster strikes vulnerable societies [Haiti vs. Philippines].

However, the main driver of humanitarian need has been a resurgence of conflict.
Conflicts today are characterized by fractionalization of fighting parties, widening regional and international terror and crime networks, growing extremism and a pervasive disregard for IHL and the protection of civilians.

From Aleppo to Sana’a, from Juba to Kabul, civilians are deliberately or recklessly killed, maimed, tortured, sexually assaulted and abducted. They are killed by barrel bombs, napalm, suicide bombs and sniper fire. Children are forcibly recruited and starved to death. Enough is enough. We need to find ways to better prevent and end these violations and hold the perpetrators to account.

Conflicts are also increasingly difficult to resolve, leading to ever greater demands on the humanitarian community to deliver not just life-saving aid and protection, but also basic social services. Once there are opportunities to move towards sustainable development, the nexus is tricky and complicated.

We also witness major displacement due to violence. 65 million people have been forced from their homes due to violence - two-thirds of them displaced within their own borders. That’s the highest number since the Second World War. This shows the destabilizing impact of conflict not only for the affected countries, but also for entire regions and beyond.

Today one in every 113 people is an asylum-seeker, internally displaced person or refugee. This also means increasing pressure on host-communities who take on the lion’s share of the burden and deserve our support.

Looking to the future, the form and drivers of conflict will continue to evolve, with experts predicting wars marked by greater involvement with non-state factions; by increased use of autonomous weapons systems and cyber-warfare; and with climate change taking on a more central role as a conflict driver. Conflict zones will become increasingly urbanized putting greater numbers of civilians in harm’s way and further testing international rules and norms of war to their very limits.

So, what can be done?

The World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in May, set out to shape better collective solutions to some of these existing and emerging humanitarian challenges so that leaders the world over can deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda to “leave no one behind.”

The Agenda for Humanity and the outcomes from the Summit marks our collective “to do” list for governments, regional bodies, humanitarians, development actors, civil society and beyond, over coming years.
I do fundamentally believe that we must live up to our humanitarian principals. Only needs-based, neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action will allow us to fulfil our mandate to save people and protect lives in today and tomorrow’s crises.
On protection of civilians and holding parties accountable to International Humanitarian Law, we all have a duty to do more. To use our political and economic leverage to ensure that fighting parties comply with the international humanitarian and human rights laws that they have signed up to. To call violators out. To bear witness.

Weapons exporting nations must factor into their decisions, an assessment of whether these weapons will be used to commit serious violations of international laws. As conflicts play out in densely populated urban areas we must all step up our efforts to protect civilians by calling on States to avoid using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. [Yemen example].

A particularly scandalous trend is the deliberate targeting of health workers and health infrastructure in conflict zones. These acts and other grave violations of IHL, compel all of us to support the collection and analysis of evidence pertaining to alleged violations and to push for prompt, impartial and independent investigations – leading to prosecution where necessary – into each incident. This will hopefully lead to more accountability in the long run, supported by a bottom-up approach.

On forcible displacement, we need a new approach. We must invest in prevention; strengthen our response to meet both the immediate need to safeguard the internally displaced and their broader need for education, jobs, and access to housing and services so they can rebuild lives with purpose. Short-term assistance alone cannot provide the solution – it is governments that must take on the primary responsibility to integrate IDPs into development plans and budgets, to adopt the right policies and legislation to enable IDPs to thrive.

Reflecting the reality of a world marked by protracted crises in which under-resourced humanitarians are called on to respond to needs year after year without ever reducing them, we need a groundbreaking shift to transcend the humanitarian-development divide. In Istanbul, we committed to a “new way of working” in which humanitarians, development actors and others will work towards collective outcomes to reduce vulnerability over time. Since the Summit, Humanitarian Coordinators have followed through by requesting assistance in adopting this approach in the Lake Chad Basin, the Horn of Africa, and possibly in Haiti.

To be absolutely clear, this new way of working will always be context specific: it is clearly not the time to starting planning for development in Eastern Aleppo - we will collaborate only when it does not compromise humanitarian principles. But there are several protracted crises, including the Democratic Republic of Congo for instance, where we are already working to reduce needs even as we provide principled life-saving assistance and where this could be enhanced.

With ever growing humanitarian appeals – which skyrocketed 6 fold over the past 10 years – we need to find better solutions on how we finance humanitarian assistance. Of course, we shouldn’t forget that donors give more generously than ever, but
unfortunately, it’s not enough. The Grand Bargain is another element to arrive at more effectiveness and efficiency.

I believe that we – the humanitarian community – must become better at first assessing and analyzing needs and then to devise strategies on how to best take care of those needs. Strengthening together our Humanitarian Response Plans in the field will provide donors the confidence to invest in us to help people. Money spent on the collective, strategic approach just delivers more bang for the buck.

Lastly, I also want to mention that we need to get to terms on finding the right balance in the “localization debate”. On this, OCHA is further strengthening the use of country based pooled funds which allow direct funding of NGOs and local in line with and support of humanitarian strategies and leadership on the ground.

The Summit marked a turning point in which we collectively committed to actions that, if implemented, will better safeguard humanity and promote human progress as the drivers of our collective action. At this critical juncture, I look forward to your support, not only in delivering on your commitments and enabling others, but in holding all of us to account to do the same.

Finally, I want to thank the United States and its people specifically. The US has already shown vital leadership in supporting the humanitarian community financially, politically and normatively. The US is also a staunch support to implement WHS commitments, the grand bargain and the new way of working.

Thank you.