We are now halfway through the year and I wanted to update you on some of the humanitarian concerns and challenges we are facing as we seek to respond to the needs of millions of people around the world.

There is no let-up in the number of humanitarian crises that need our attention, or indeed in their severity. Most recently, of course, we have Iraq and the large numbers of displaced people in the last few days and the situation in Ukraine is also worsening.

The crisis in Syria continues to dominate our response efforts with 9.3 million people in need and 2.8 million people who have become refugees in neighbouring countries. We will be updating those figures very soon, because of course we have been using those figures since last year.

Violations of humanitarian and human rights law continue unabated by all parties to the conflict in Syria. And 241,000 people remain under siege in areas where almost no aid can go in, and there are few ways for people to get out.

Security Council Resolution 2139, which focused on a number of areas and was really about trying to help us to get additional access, has had little impact and access remains extremely difficult.

In the Central African Republic, which is another of our top-level crises, over half of the population - 2.5 million women, children and men – urgently need protection and relief to meet their most basic needs. Our strategic response plan in the Central African Republic targets 1.9 million people for humanitarian aid. But violence and insecurity is cutting off entire communities and aid workers themselves have been attacked.

In South Sudan, our third top-level crisis, some 1.5 million people have been uprooted by violence in the past six months alone and the situation continues to deteriorate because, despite the ceasefire, we are seeing ongoing violence and conflict. With the onset of the rains, cholera has broken out and malaria is taking its toll on children and on adults alike.
Aid agencies have just released a new plan to help 3.8 million people in South Sudan by December with emergency healthcare, food, clean water, sanitation and shelter. There is no time to waste if we are to avoid a famine later in the year. And that is why I was so pleased when we recently had our fund-raising conference in Oslo, co-chaired by myself and Foreign Minister Børge Brende, where we were able to raise an additional US$600 million for South Sudan. So, if access improves and the funding continues to come in, we can make a difference.

And of course we face continuing challenges in countries like Yemen, where nearly 15 million are in need of aid; Somalia where one million remain internally displaced and in a state of extreme vulnerability; Sudan, where UN agencies and NGOs are targeting five million people as needs grow, especially in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

This year, we asked for a record US$16.9 billion, the highest amount ever requested in a single year. As of today, we have received 30 per cent of that funding, or $5.2 billion. We still have to raise $11.7 billion.

With the support received so far, we have reached, for example, 600,000 conflict affected people in South Sudan with food assistance and more than 1.3 million people have received health assistance.

In Central African Republic, more than 9,000 small children have been treated for severe acute malnutrition since January and 150,000 children have been vaccinated against measles.

In Syria, food reached a record 4.1 million in March, but I regret only 3.2 million people in May, partly due to increased insecurity, but we also saw some administrative difficulties as well.

Humanitarian organizations will continue to try to scale up efforts – our capacity is stretched to the limit. We need the continued support of the international community, we need not just the funding, but we also need the access if we are going to do our jobs effectively.