Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Since 25 August, nearly 600,000 refugees have sought safety in Bangladesh, fleeing violence, serious human rights violations and persecution in Myanmar’s Rakhine State. Nearly 60 per cent of them are children. Thank you for coming today in solidarity with them, with the Bangladeshi Government and with the communities that are so generously hosting them.

I would like especially to thank our hosts, the European Union and Kuwait, as well as my co-panelists.

During my visit to Bangladesh earlier this month, I heard heart rending accounts of killings, arson, rape, torture, and other abuse. The Secretary-General has called the situation “a human, humanitarian and human rights nightmare.” Children, women and men fleeing Myanmar are streaming into Bangladesh traumatized and destitute.

Since I was there another 70,000 refugees have crossed the border. More arrive every day.

In looking at the situation, two points are clear:

First, we are facing a massive refugee crisis. It demands a comprehensive refugee response, based on global refugee response standards.

In the meantime, all partners are working together to deliver effective assistance. This is the main focus of today’s event – mobilizing resources to save lives and protect people. Your support has already made a difference, including food for nearly all the newly arrived refugees, water and sanitation assistance for 370,000 people, and health services for more than 270,000 people. Partners are working hard to prevent the risk of a “crisis within a crisis” by vaccinating hundreds of thousands of people against cholera, measles and other diseases.

The needs continue to change, the new arrivals include numbers of very severely acutely malnourished children and the UN agencies will need to continue to update and adapt our appeal to support beyond what we have put out and we are discussing today. Let me be
clear, funding is a major constraint, we need more money to keep pace with intensifying needs.

My second point is that this is not an isolated crisis. It is the latest round in a decades-long cycle of persecution, violence and displacement. Serious violations continue in Rakhine. We continue to face severe access restrictions, crippling our ability to assess needs and to provide assistance. This must be addressed and I know the importance of the discussions on the way, now, in the Security Council.

Beyond pledges therefore we are looking for your support in finding solutions to the root causes. That means actions on the points emphasised by the Secretary-General last month:

1) To bring an end to all violence and persecution.

2) To secure unfettered and full humanitarian access across Rakhine.

3) To guarantee the right to safe, voluntary and dignified return so that Rohingya refugees can live in peace, with their human rights upheld.

In the longer term, we would like to see full implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission. The United Nations stands ready to assist in implementing these recommendations.

This crisis is far from over.

The international attention on the Rohingya crisis has perhaps never been greater.

So, as we move beyond today’s event, we are counting on Governments and partners to maintain momentum on all fronts: funding to scale up assistance; transforming words into deeds; and reaching durable solutions that address the root causes of this crisis, to bring it to an end once and for all.

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