Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour this morning of moderating a discussion on the study *Presence and Proximity: To Stay and Deliver, Five Years On*.

Just to clarify, back in 2011, OCHA commissioned a landmark study, *To Stay and Deliver*, which helped identify and document humanitarian organizations’ strategies and best practices to maintain effective operations in highly insecure environments. The title “stay and deliver” became a motto for many, provided advice to practitioners in critical areas such as risk management, responsible partnerships, adherence to humanitarian principles, acceptance and negotiations with relevant actors. The report included 24 recommendations for various actors.

Five years later, as insecurity in a number of complex emergencies continues to grow and humanitarian access remains incredibly challenging in numerous contexts, from Aleppo to Mosul and from Yemen to South Sudan, it is right that we take stock. The UN and other organizations are today present in many highly insecure environments such as Syria, Somalia, CAR and South Sudan which means we are staying in many contexts, where we would maybe not have a couple of years back. However, while we have become better at “staying” we have to ask the question, are we really “delivering” to the extent required? In other words, are we really able “to stay and deliver”? Have the recommendations of “to stay and deliver” been integrated and implemented? Has this made a difference on the ground? And, what are some of the new challenges we are confronted with?

To answer those questions, OCHA decided to partner with the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Jindal School for International Affairs in India to commission the study we are launching today entitled: *Presence and Proximity: To Stay and Deliver, Five Years On*. I thank both organizations for a great collaboration. We are also immensely grateful to the Government of Germany for supporting this project.
Before I give the floor to Ashley Jackson, who co-authored with Steve Zyck the report, let me highlight some of the key findings which particularly struck me and that I hope we can discuss today.

The first is that acceptance by local communities remains essential to ensuring the security of humanitarian workers and maintaining presence - and there is a lot of discussion about protection by presence - including talking to local communities and other stakeholders as well as parties to the conflict. While there has been increasing attention and resources devoted to improving acceptance strategies during the past years, our efforts remain largely concentrated at the policy and headquarters level and we have to be better at filtering down to the country office and sub-office levels. This is a concern we must address.

The second point is: we need a humanitarian action immune from political interference and we need to be able to engage non-state armed groups on issues such as access or protection of civilians. Yet, policies and measures adopted by some donor institutions or host governments, particularly in relation to counter-terrorism, can make this difficult. Governments’ security concerns of course are legitimate and they have a responsibility to act. At the same time, however, we need to reflect with donors and others on ways to preserve the capacity of humanitarians to achieve their mission.

Third of four points is that remote management approaches are increasingly used by humanitarian actors as a default option in highly insecure environments. Whilst remote approaches may help humanitarian actors to gain or maintain presence, they also generate significant risks and may undermine the quality of protection and humanitarian programmes. They must therefore remain a last resort. As humanitarians, we must seek to operate as close to the needs as possible to achieve our objective; this is the message this study tries to convey through the title “presence and proximity”.

And the final point I’d highlight: the study makes the case for integrating security and programming and strengthening risks management. It notes some shortcomings in the programme criticality exercise, training or staff profile. This will be a key area of focus in the coming years.

I can certainly assure you that OCHA is committed to take forward the key recommendations of this study and we are looking forward to working with you to that effect.

Our panel today will discuss some of the findings. I am very happy to be having this important discussion on the challenges of operating in high risk environments.

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