Ministers, Distinguished Representatives,

Thank you for coming this morning to discuss the critical humanitarian situation in Yemen. I especially want to thank the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Margot Wallström, and the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Bert Koenders, for co-chairing today’s event, as well as our keynote speakers, the President of the International Committee for the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, and the Yemen Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick.

Yemen is facing the world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with nearly 21 million people in need of emergency aid or protection. Most of them are children. Despite the extraordinary scale of the suffering linked to the brutal conflict, including the threat of famine and the world’s worst cholera outbreak, Yemen does not receive the international attention it deserves.

So I thank you for your support and engagement.

Of course, only negotiations and a political settlement can put an end to this appalling, man-made crisis. We strongly support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General towards this goal.

At the same time, we must ensure that the principle of humanity – and not political considerations – continues to guide our relief efforts.

Until resolution is reached, all parties to the fighting in Yemen must be repeatedly reminded to comply with international humanitarian law, taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. We implore all States with influence over the parties to exert greater pressure on fighting parties to respect and protect civilians.

Despite serious challenges, humanitarian agencies are having a tremendous impact. Millions of people in every governorate of Yemen receive humanitarian assistance every month through the Humanitarian Response Plan. Just last month, the World Food
Programme delivered emergency food assistance to a record 7 million people across the
country, helping to avert potential famine. This is an increase of some 60 per cent from
the average 4.4 million people who received food assistance in the first six months of the
year.

Partners in all sectors – have been working tirelessly to prevent famine, contain the
cholera outbreak, and assist the most vulnerable wherever we find them. This work is
making an enormous difference.

But we could do so much more given the access and resources we need. Donors have
been generous, particularly in funding the cholera response. Thank you. But this year’s
humanitarian response plan is just 45 per cent funded, which means short-changing
famine prevention efforts, and discontinuing programmes. WFP did reach 7 million
people last month – but this came at the cost of cutting rations for about half of recipients
to 60 per cent, of the normal level.

Too many partners are facing similar, nearly impossible choices due to insufficient
funding. I call on donors to provide full funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan, and
note that the Yemen Humanitarian Fund is one of the quickest and most effective ways to
support the most urgent priorities.

Other obstacles go beyond funding.

Too often, de facto authorities in Sana’a delay or block humanitarian assistance or the
movements of humanitarian staff – including for the cholera response. This is despite a
clear obligation under international law to allow unimpeded passage for humanitarian
relief. These impediments are unacceptable.

Yemen imports more than 90 per cent of its staple food and nearly all its fuel and
medicine. However, fluctuating restrictions on commercial imports are reducing
availability of these commodities. All ports in Yemen must remain open to humanitarin
and commercial traffic.

I welcome news that food availability rose in August, partially as a result of much higher
imports in July. I urge Member States to do everything they can to sustain this trend –
including by ensuring that vessels cleared by the UN Verification and Inspection
Mechanism can proceed directly to port, and by deploying mobile cranes generously
purchased by the US Government to relieve congestion at Hudaydah port.

The closure of Sana’a airport to commercial traffic has blocked thousands of Yemenis
from travelling abroad for medical care, and restricted imports of some medical supplies.
A resumption of commercial flights is needed immediately, especially for humanitarian
cases.

Finally, we need to enable Yemen’s own health workers, teachers and water and
sanitation staff to do their jobs. Salary arrears since October 2016 are accelerating the
collapse of essential services. We seek your support in finding a way to ensure some 1.2 million public employees’ salaries are paid.

Overcoming each of these obstacles is within the reach of the international community. I look forward to working with you to achieve this life-saving agenda.

Thank you.