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Statement on preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you once again preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit.

As each day goes by, the importance of the World Humanitarian Summit grows. In the words of the Secretary-General, 'we live in an age of mega-crises'. The news headlines continue to be filled with stories of people taking unimaginable risks to flee from brutal and unending conflicts; we hear of the devastating effects on communities of natural disasters or climatic shocks; and stories of the barbaric acts that violate the rules of war and humanity.

The World Humanitarian Summit is our opportunity to confront these issues head on. Our aim must be to reaffirm our shared commitment to humanity and the universality of humanitarian principles.

In December, leaders from across the globe came together in Paris to confront the global challenge of climate change. They successfully demonstrated the power of political leadership to make progress on one of the most difficult issues of our time. We must now harness this political momentum and deliver success in Istanbul in May. We must work together to ensure that the Summit delivers on its promises to the most vulnerable people across the world. We have committed to leave no one behind, and importantly, we have also committed to reach those furthest behind first.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since my last briefing to Member States in November in New York and by Assistant-Secretary-General Kang in Geneva in December, preparations have intensified in the lead up to the Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, on the 23rd and 24th of May. Today, I would like to offer you a preview of the forthcoming Secretary-General's report and update you on the organizational arrangements for the Summit.

The Secretary-General's report will be published by the end of January and it will be launched by the Secretary-General on the 9th of February.

The report will focus on placing humanity at the centre of global decision making. This is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity to confront today's global challenges: Humanitarian issues should never be seen as a discrete, technical stream of work. The Secretary-General will argue that successful humanitarian action makes a vital contribution to the strength of the UN's three pillars: peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

The report will build on the messages from the World Humanitarian Summit consultation process which culminated in the Global Consultation, as well as those from other key processes such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the high-level panels on peace operations and humanitarian financing, the peace-building review, the review of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the new Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction, and the Paris Agreement.

He will highlight five core responsibilities that the whole international community must shoulder:

First, we must secure global leadership to prevent and end conflicts. We must act early, invest in stability, and develop solutions with and for people. Put simply, we must find ways to reduce the unsustainable demands being placed on the humanitarian system. The Global Humanitarian Overview that I launched last month outlined, that out of the 125 million who need humanitarian assistance, after prioritisation 87.6 million people in 37 countries across the world are in need of humanitarian assistance. So we can't prioritise more, however much, understandingly, you always ask us to do. 12 months ago this number was at 57 million. We cannot keep seeing this caseload grow and grow at this rate. These 87.6 million lives are what we need you to fund this year at USD 20 billion and we go into this year while last year's appeals were only 52% funded. That's 48% of the world's needs left unaddressed because we, you couldn't raise this money and the political will was not there to stop conflicts.

Second, the Secretary-General's report will reiterate the need for everyone to respect the norms that safeguard our humanity, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law as well as the humanitarian principles.

Each and every one of us in this room will have been deeply troubled by the harrowing images of starving children that emerged last week from the besieged town of Madaya in Syria. Siege is a barbaric tactic that has no place in the 21st century. All people in need must have access to humanitarian assistance and protection. Sadly, the conflict in Syria has become synonymous with flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. But Syria is not the only example in the world today where people are subjected to such brutality; there are 101 "Madayas" – all subject to hard, complex safe access negotiations by my teams. Across the world we see the rules of war consistently violated on a daily basis.

The World Humanitarian Summit must be a political moment at which leaders from across the globe publicly re-commit to upholding the rules that protect people in conflict. This means taking steps to ensure that robust action is taken when there are violations of international law, and ensuring that people who need humanitarian assistance and protection receive it.

Third, the Report will remind us that we cannot achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaching the most vulnerable and furthest behind first. The Summit will be the first test of our commitment to 'leave no one behind'. This requires us to meaningfully address needs of internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants, the stateless, women and girls, children and youth among others.

The issue of forced displacement has shot up the political and media agenda in recent months. The crisis in Europe has focused minds. But the challenges of forced displacement are not new, and they are relevant to almost all regions and countries in the world. Countries and communities hosting refugees and internally displaced persons need more support. They need longer-term financial support, including investment in infrastructure and services for the mutual benefit of both host communities and the displaced including access to jobs for refugees. And we must support safe, dignified and voluntary return.

As part of the third core responsibility to leave no one behind, the report will include recommendations on how to improve gender equality and empower women and girls. Women must be included more systematically and meaningfully in the leadership of response and recovery, as well as their participation in peace processes. This responsibility also requires empowering all

children, youth, older persons and people with disabilities including through national and global networks to rally around humanitarian action.

Fourth, we must commit to changing people's lives and move from delivering aid to ending need. This means that we – all of us – need to find a new way of working if we are to effectively tackle the humanitarian and development challenges of today and tomorrow.

The Secretary-General will argue in his report that we can do this by putting people at the centre; addressing vulnerability and risk; reinforcing rather than replacing local and national systems; and overcoming the age-old 'humanitarian-development divide' by working towards collective outcomes.

We can no longer afford to work in silos. We must transcend the divides that so often undermine the sustainability of our work. We must invest in a more effective and efficient partnerships. This means more empowered leadership to drive coherent, coordinated and collective outcomes-. In addition, it means a more local, more inclusive, and more context-specific response. We should therefore look for ways to channel resources directly to local actors, and build national and local capacities to deliver at scale and coordinate effectively.

And fifth, we must enable all of this by investing in humanity. The Secretary-General and I were both in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday to launch the report of his High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing. Many of the Panel's very welcome recommendations will be developed for inclusion in the Secretary-General's report. This includes diversifying and optimizing financing not only for humanitarian response but for broader risk management, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Financing must also enable diverse actors to work towards collective outcomes through greater resources and a broader range of financing approaches: be they traditional grants, social impact bonds, or risk insurance. Investing in humanity also means investing in local capacities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As an annex to the report, the Secretary-General will put forward an Agenda for Humanity. The Agenda will encapsulate the Secretary-General's vision, and outline what is needed to deliver on the five core responsibilities identified in the report. The Agenda for Humanity will provide the framework under which Member States can announce commitments at the Summit.

The Secretary-General will also urge all stakeholders, including Member States to take forward this Agenda in order to build a shared vision for action, change and mutual accountability.

Following the release of the report, the Secretary-General and I will continue to engage, consult and work with Member States and other stakeholders on how we can all best support and advance the agenda so that leaders at the World Humanitarian Summit are ready for Istanbul to be the turning point we need for millions of people.

This leads me to the organizational arrangements for the Summit and the critical role that Member States and other stakeholders can play.

The Summit will have an opening and closing ceremony which will include statements by the Head of State or Government of the host-country, the President of the United Nations General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Participation will include a balanced geographical and stakeholder representation at the highest-level, and will also include representatives from crisis-affected communities.

The Summit will then include five main features.

First, the Secretary-General will convene a Summit Announcement Plenary where Heads of State or Government and their representatives as well as other high-level leaders from regional organizations, international and non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector will make individual statements announcing ambitious and action-oriented commitments aimed at furthering the shared responsibilities set out in the Report of the Secretary-General and Agenda for Humanity.

Second, the Summit will feature a limited number of High-Level Leaders' Roundtables. These sessions will run in parallel on both days. They will be interactive and multi-stakeholder in nature and will be broadly focused on the five core responsibilities from the Secretary-General's report. They will provide high profile opportunities for Leaders to make commitments and announce bold actions in support of the Agenda for Humanity.

Third, in support of the High-Level Leaders' Roundtables, a limited number of special events will be organized at high-level around key thematic areas. These events will be interactive and multi-stakeholder in nature and will seek commitments around a number of themes, including innovative financing, humanitarian response in urban settings and humanitarian innovation among others.

Fourth, a number of side events will be organized with and by Member States, international and non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in the form of briefings, seminars, workshops and panel discussions.

Fifth, the Summit will feature an exhibition fair and innovation marketplace dedicated to showcasing the work, products, and programmes of governments, organizations, agencies, companies and other institutions and partners in support of humanitarian action.

The Secretary-General together with the Turkish government will also host a High-Level Leaders Luncheon as well as a High-Level Dinner with Heads of State or Government, and other guests to seize the moment and focus global leaders' attention on his vision for change.

Throughout all these events, the World Humanitarian Summit secretariat will ensure that announcements of commitments to action are captured accurately and that deliberations throughout the main features of the Summit are well reflected to ensure that we can depart Istanbul with a clear sense of how to take forward the next steps post-Istanbul.

The Summit will result in a Chair's Summary that will include a summary of proceedings capturing the main issues and recommendations coming out of the Summit.

The Summit will also result in a Commitments to Action document that reflects the concrete set of bold actions, leadership and commitments made by global leaders throughout the Summit.

A report of the Secretary-General on the outcomes of the Summit will also be prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/106. The report will be provided to the Assembly before the start of its 71st session.

The organizational arrangements will be finalized this week and will be available on the World Humanitarian Summit website on 25 January. A note verbale with relevant information for Member States on organizational arrangements will be sent to Permanent Missions in due course.

In the lead up to the Summit we will continue to hold monthly briefing sessions and further update you on preparations, to listen to your views, and identify commitments to action from Member States at the Summit and build support for the Secretary-General's vision. We remain available to hold informal gatherings with Member States in Geneva and New York to delve into the content of

the upcoming Secretary-General's report.

Over the coming weeks, through various avenues of engagement, the Secretary-General, myself and my team will engage with stakeholders, including at the African Union Summit, the World Economic Forum, and the 4th Syria Pledging Conference in London.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by thanking you for your engagement in this process to date. I would also like to reiterate my thanks to the Government of Turkey for their generosity in hosting this event and their commitment to a successful outcome. And once again to thank the 23,000 people who have contributed their energy and expertise during the Summit consultation process.

I urge you all to join the Secretary-General in Istanbul at the highest political level. Safeguarding humanity and promoting human progress for all must become the central drivers of our decision making and collective actions. The Summit is a critical and historic moment to ensure that people across the world have a chance to live in safety and dignity and have the opportunity to thrive, not only survive.

Thank you.