

Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien
Closing Remarks at the launch of the Secretary-General's Report for the
World Humanitarian Summit

New York, 9 February 2016

As delivered

Thank you for joining us here today, and in such numbers. It has been very important to see and hear your commitment to making a difference for people facing humanitarian crises across the globe, through the World Humanitarian Summit.

Today we have clearly heard the Secretary-General's call to action set out in his report for the World Humanitarian Summit, which builds on the messages you delivered through multiple consultations. This report and its core message: 'One Humanity: Shared Responsibility,' highlights the urgency of addressing the great challenges of our time to place people's dignity, safety and their right to thrive, at the centre of global decision-making. The report's 'Agenda for Humanity' highlights the key strategic shifts and priority areas for action identified in the Secretary-General's report and asks for clear commitment at the Summit to making those changes within the next three years.

I have been listening very carefully to all your contributions, and agree with you that we must seize this opportunity and heed the Secretary-General's call to act individually and collectively for a better future which not only meets humanitarian needs, but puts in place the vision and the means to prevent and end crises and to reduce people's vulnerability and suffering.

As noted by the Secretary-General earlier, Istanbul must be a collective moment for us – Member States, international organizations, and other stakeholders – to take a look at the mounting challenges facing us from conflict, disaster, and chronic vulnerability and to decide that we can and must do better for millions of people suffering from their impacts. The Secretary-General's report sets out the 5 core responsibilities all must accept and act upon to make this happen.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the Summit, Heads of State and Government, global leaders from the private sector, civil society and representatives of affected communities and local responders, will be expected to commit to taking the Agenda for Humanity forward and to make concrete announcements in this respect.

First, through the Announcement Plenary, Heads of State and Governments and other high-level representatives will be given the opportunity to announce their general commitment to the Agenda and their specific commitments and actions to drive the Agenda forward. Istanbul must be the first day of its implementation.

Second, eight High-Level Leaders' Roundtables for Heads of States and Governments and other high-level stakeholders will enable leaders to commit to actions around the five core responsibilities laid out in the Secretary-General's report. These high-level roundtables will seek to achieve concrete commitments in the areas of : political leadership to prevent and end conflicts, respect for international humanitarian law and protection, addressing and reducing displacement, building resilience in protracted crises, strengthened national responses to natural disasters, climate change and reducing impacts; women and girls' leadership and empowerment; investing in humanity and humanitarian financing, and how we shift from delivering aid to ending need. We will share this month the outlines for these Roundtables, and how Member States and other stakeholders can participate in and help shape these critical events. We will do that by issuing prospectuses for each of these Roundtables. We will also issue prospectuses for the Special Sessions. And by the end of this month we will convene a Member State briefing on the whole program, issue further information notes and discuss the prospectuses. We will also launch the commitments database at the early part of March. This will be accompanied by a continuing dialogue with regional groupings of Member States, to broaden and deepen the sense of unity of action and purpose. We will intensify briefings, which have been held on a monthly basis in New York and Geneva, according to your wishes – meeting with regional groups and other groups who want to come together. Above all, I and members of my team will always be available to speak with you. We will also step up the engagement and information sharing with key stakeholders, so we will be working with the private sector, the youth and others as has been indicated.

Third, as I mentioned before, a series of special sessions will focus on important partnerships and initiatives spurred by the Summit process. These include the launches of an urban crisis alliance; of a new fund for education in emergencies, a humanitarian fund based on Islamic Social Finance; and a global partnership for innovation. Initiatives will also be launched on key issues, including putting people at the heart of humanitarian response, empowering youth, and including people with disabilities in humanitarian action. More detail will be provided in the draft summit programme at the end of this month.

Excellencies,

We are now 104 days from the opening of the first ever World Humanitarian Summit. We must live up to this timely, unique, and historic opportunity. It is the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of millions of people.

We will use those days wisely to reach out energetically and extensively to all Member States, regional groups and other stakeholders to promote the Agenda for Humanity, to

secure general and specific commitments to it, and to ensure the high-level roundtables and other side events arrive at the agreements and decisions we need to leave Istanbul with a clear sense of achievement for humanity. This is why participation at the highest level is absolutely essential.

At the Summit, we must agree on concrete steps to reinforce and strengthen our capacities and willingness to invest in prevention and conflict resolution. We need to secure a better deal for the millions of forcibly displaced and their host countries and communities. We need a rekindled spirit of strengthening international humanitarian law and accountability, including through a global campaign for compliance. We need to commit to a new approach of working together in the aid sector, to collective outcomes and across traditional divides. We will need to recognize the need for changing our approach to funding and put in place a clear timeline for implementation for the Grand Bargain, the concept of an international financing platform, and the provision of predictable humanitarian and peacebuilding financing, along with greater resources for local actors.

The Agenda for Humanity, attached as an annex to the Secretary-General's report, provides the vision and framework for action at the Summit and beyond. We must make sure the Secretary-General's report will not just remain his vision but become our collective change agenda. This will require all participants to not only make commitments in support of the Agenda and to showcase best practice, but to also assess how they need to change their internal policies and practices to drive forward the Agenda.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General's report, people everywhere have expressed their desire for change. We can see the urgency, the need and the context. I hope that we recognize that change is only possible if we all, collectively, agree to be part of that change. That's why we count on you to prepare your leaders to come to the Summit to make Istanbul that moment.

Let me conclude by again thanking all of the countries that hosted regional and global consultations for the Summit. I thank those like the African Union who have adopted common priorities, resolutions, or expressions of support to the Summit. I would also like to thank the World Humanitarian Summit regional steering groups for their support and ask them to stay engaged. And I would very much want to thank the Turkish Government and people for their commitment and generosity as hosts to this historic event.

I thank those within my team and beyond who have pulled together and drafted this report with and for the Secretary-General. The feedback we are getting from Member States and multiple stakeholder is very welcoming and positive and it is a spur for Member States and across the UN family itself, to motivate and mobilize how we are all get behind the Agenda for Humanity, and help make this Agenda real in our world today for the millions of women, girls, men and boys who are relying on us to alleviate suffering and for the chance to survive and thrive.

The World Humanitarian Summit is our first opportunity to deliver on the promise to leave no one behind. For the sake of an entire generation of people caught in crises and for future generations, we must make it count.