

**Remarks by Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator at the Uniting Business Live Private Sector Forum of the UN Global Compact**

*Virtual, 20 September 2021*

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, thank you. It is a pleasure to join you at this year's Private Sector Forum.

I am here today in my capacity as the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA.

As you may know, OCHA is the part of the United Nations that is responsible for coordinating global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises.

It has been a challenging year, to say the least. Some 238 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection this year alone – the highest figure in decades.

For the first time since the 1990s, extreme poverty has increased. Life expectancy has already fallen. The annual death toll from HIV, tuberculosis and malaria is set to double. We fear a near doubling in the number of people facing starvation. And many girls out of school will never go back.

No single organization can meet – let alone end – these needs. If we do not work collectively, adopting a whole-of-society approach, then we risk not just failure to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, or the SDGs, but an unraveling of the last 40 years of development.

The unprecedented scale of humanitarian needs calls for a unified approach in which the private sector works hand-in-hand with Governments, civil society, humanitarian organizations and affected people themselves to alleviate human suffering.

Working together to prepare for, respond to and recover from humanitarian emergencies is a win-win proposition. After all, businesses of all sizes are themselves affected by crises, and they play a critical role in providing livelihoods for the most vulnerable people and preserving stability for the communities in which they operate. Local businesses are often among the first responders in any emergency, providing not only funds, but also critical goods, services and expertise.

It is for these reasons that OCHA and the United Nations Development Programme partnered to launch the Connecting Business initiative, or CBI, at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

CBI strategically engages the private sector before, during and after emergencies, increasing the scale and effectiveness of the response and recovery in a coordinated manner.

UN Global Compact shares these goals and, as a member of the CBI Executive Committee, partners with us on preparedness, adaptation, response and recovery to build stronger and more resilient communities.

I recently returned from Haiti, which suffered a devastating earthquake last month. There, the Alliance for Risk Management and Business Continuity, a local business federation and member of CBI, immediately mobilized its members to provide drinkable water, fuel, solar panels, clothing and other essentials to affected communities.

In Sri Lanka, the Asia-Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management Sri Lanka – another CBI Member Network – has mobilized the private sector to respond to recurring floods, droughts and landslides, helping hundreds of thousands of affected people.

Global Compact members recognize the value of private sector involvement in achieving the SDGs. My message today is that the private sector has an equally important role to play in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

When we work together, we can make sure we leave no one behind.

When we work together, communities recover faster and more efficiently from disasters.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.