As delivered

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this briefing on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Let me first offer my condolences to the Government of Afghanistan following the deadly attack in Kabul on a logistic supply compound of the Afghan National Army on 1 July, which reportedly killed 30 people and injured another 70. I also offer further condolences to the Government of Afghanistan, as just yesterday an attack on the National Directorate of Security in Ghazni reportedly killed 14 people and injured 180.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to introduce our distinguished speakers who are joining me today on the panel. We have with us on video connection from Kabul, Mr. Toby Lanzer, the United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan. We are also joined by Her Excellency, Ms. Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations.

They will both share with us their reflections on the humanitarian situation on the ground, and their perspectives on the way ahead.

Before I hand over the floor, allow me to provide some introductory remarks.

Conflict, natural disasters and poverty continue to drive humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. In the first six months of this year, 150,000 people have been displaced by conflict, and another 171,000 remain in displacement sites in the Western Region due to the 2018 drought and other factors.

While peace talks are ongoing and preparations are made for the 28 September presidential elections, we are seeing continued fighting between non-state armed groups.
In this context, civilians are paying the highest price. Half of the country’s population — 17 million people — live in areas highly affected by conflict. Many of them face horrifying risks on a daily basis. More than 3,800 people, including 927 children, were killed last year, and civilian casualties continue to mount in 2019.

The conflict is also impacting civilian infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals. Last year, more than 1,000 schools were closed due to security reasons, interrupting the education of half a million children.

At the same time, some 13 million people are still dealing with crisis levels of food insecurity, largely due to the 2018 drought. Many have lost their livelihoods and their resources have been exhausted. With 80 per cent of Afghans living in poverty, people often have little choice but to rely on humanitarian assistance to survive.

With the generous support of the donors, the humanitarian community has been able to meet many of these needs. Last year, almost 80 per cent of the required funding was received – which was in real terms more than US$470 million – meaning that humanitarian organizations could provide lifesaving assistance to millions of people, including health services, food, shelter and protection.

In 2019, however, humanitarian funding levels are worryingly low and we are halfway through this year. The 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan, which engages almost 170 humanitarian organizations, including United Nations agencies and international and national NGOs, has only received 26 per cent of the US$612 million required. Some sectors, such as education, health and multi-purpose cash programming, have received less than 10 per cent of the funding needed.

Lack of funding has serious consequences for the humanitarian response and for the people in need of assistance across Afghanistan.

It means that women and girls will face increased safety risks, such as child marriage and gender-based violence. Families will not have enough food on their table. Children will suffer from irreversible impacts of acute malnutrition. People will die from preventable illnesses and will be further exposed to water-borne diseases.

We need sustained support to make sure these risks do not become a reality.

Thank you.