

**UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien**

'The Road to Istanbul and Beyond'

Remarks to the Global Consultation for the World Humanitarian Summit

Geneva, 16 October 2015

As delivered

Your Excellency Ambassador [Manuel] Bessler, [Head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid]
Your Excellency Ambassador [Hasan] Ulusoy, [Director General for Multilateral
Political Affairs, Turkish Foreign Ministry]
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, the Secretary-General called for a World Humanitarian Summit to meet the growing challenges to effective humanitarian action. He called for an inclusive and multi-stakeholder consultation and Summit.

Everyone of you in this room, and over 20,000 people from all corners of the globe, have taken part in shaping the Summit's agenda. Together, we are engaged in a truly remarkable process.

I warmly thank the Government and the people of Switzerland for so generously and expertly hosting us. Over 1,200 people have been here to contribute to discussions. Without Switzerland's steadfast belief and support for humanitarian values, this would not have been possible.

I also thank the Turkish Government and the people of Turkey for inviting us all to Istanbul next year. Their enthusiasm and commitment to providing the platform for our first-ever World Humanitarian Summit is boundless.

And I, too, want to make a special tribute to Dr. Jemilah Mahmood and her WHSS team for bringing us here to this point and with all the incredibly hard work they have managed to put into giving us this credible and powerful ability to recognize the voices from around world and contribute to our ability to make a real difference during our two and a half day in Geneva.

I want to thank very much the staff of the center for looking after us and to all volunteers who have made our ability to contribute and to participate much more effortless and easy. Not least, I really want to thank you here, all of you who have contributed – all of you here in person and everyone who have been participants at some point during these two days. We have had genuinely interactive sessions.

I am delighted that this consultation has exceeded all expectations. It's not just been a crescendo; it's been a crescendo fortissimo. Together we have formed new partnerships. New ideas have emerged. We have listened to each other and we have learned from each other. And what a buzz of anticipation; Geneva is indeed the springboard to Istanbul. Ideas and political momentum are developing around recommendations that, a few years ago, we could only have dreamed of making a reality.

Never before have we brought so many different and diverse voices together around humanitarian action. And what an outstanding result: the landmark Synthesis Report. Thank you all for your strong collective enthusiasm for its findings.

We can all be proud of the report, which sets out the evidence and demonstrates the groundswell of support for change that puts people at the heart of the global humanitarian agenda. I have no doubt that it will shape humanitarian thinking and action for years to come.

From this Global Consultation, we have validation for many of the recommendations, including really delivering on our long-standing commitment to empower women and girls, supporting them to be leaders in humanitarian action, which is confirmed in the recently adopted Security Council resolution 2242.

We have heard a clear call for the respect of international humanitarian law and to monitor its application; that we must hold violators to account.

There has been as strong call to providing financing to enable refugees and host communities to live dignified lives. This could be a tangible example of how we could bring humanitarian and development expertise to support people in a holistic way. And there has been a clarion call for adequate, predictable finance for humanitarian action, and for the allocation of resources to be based on need. This is essential: without sufficient resources, we cannot save lives; we cannot protect civilians.

One of the major themes of the entire consultation process has been for increased capacity, including funding to local actors. It is clear that we need real progress on giving first responders the support they need to enable them to take the lead in preparedness, response and recovery, wherever this is feasible.

Our collective job now is to transform the fervent hopes generated by these consultations and take the ambitions in the Synthesis Report into reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Global Consultation is now drawing to a close, but our journey to Istanbul is picking up tremendous momentum. From today, we will all need to focus together on four big things to make the Summit the success that the world needs.

First, on the road to Istanbul we must continue to rally around specific initiatives and develop them further. These recommendations and initiatives have emerged from the consultations and offer the potential to deliver results for women and girls, boys and men. In our collective support for these recommendations, ideas and initiatives, we will ensure that they become part of the Humanitarian Toolbox of the future. Some are being implemented; some are implementable now; for others, we need to continue to work together to move from what needs to be done to how it can be done. I know I can count on you to continue to champion these ideas and broaden support to bring them to fruition in Istanbul and beyond.

We will continue to work with everyone to make sure that our joint efforts are coordinated as a collective push in support of the overall vision of the World Humanitarian Summit.

Inspired by what we've heard here at the Global Consultation, in the coming weeks we will collaborate with all stakeholders, communities and Member States on how we all continue to build on the momentum generated here in Geneva and actively engage on the road to Istanbul.

Second, as we move forward we must continue to engage in the global processes that will feed into the Secretary-General's report, which will be released early in 2016.

We have all heard the clear call at this global consultation to put humanitarian action in the broader political and developmental agenda. The Secretary-General's report will build on the commitment already made on disaster risk reduction and on the landmark agreement reached in New York last month on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit will be the first opportunity to show the world how all of us intend to deliver on the pledge to leave no one behind, and to reach the furthest behind first.

The Report will draw on several milestones ahead: the outcome of the High-Level Panels on Humanitarian Financing and the Global Health Crisis; the 32nd Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which will be held here in Geneva, and the Climate Change Conference in December.

It will convey the Secretary-General's vision for the Summit and beyond, and set the tone and ambition for a global agenda for humanity. It will lay out the actions and commitments needed to realize this vision.

The Secretary-General's report will highlight his Agenda for Humanity, reaffirming our key principles of and commitments to our shared humanity, and identifying the action areas required to turn them into reality. I encourage all Member States, regional organizations, civil society leaders and other stakeholders in this endeavor to use the time

between the release of the report and the Summit to actively reach out and build the understanding and concrete actions needed to make the Summit in May the point of departure for the positive transformation that we know is our challenge and opportunity. Wide endorsement of the Agenda for Humanity will be a test of our global commitment to leave no one behind.

We will work together to attract the highest-level commitment of Member States, and all other stakeholders to discuss and rally behind this vision and this agenda for humanity in Istanbul. This Global Consultation has demonstrated beyond question that we have each other's dedication and support.

Third, we need to work together to mobilize political support for the World Humanitarian Summit to deliver the change we all know is needed. We will communicate clearly that acting on our shared humanity is in our common interest.

As the Deputy Secretary-General said yesterday, we need to mobilize the forces of good, and rekindle the humanitarian imperative. This is our shared responsibility.

Fourth, and finally, we need to prepare the Summit itself. We are all responsible for ensuring that the Summit delivers the results the world needs.

Most of all, together we need to bring the voices of affected people to Istanbul. This is something we are absolutely committed to; but we cannot do it without you. We cannot do it without Nalia here.

The Secretary-General has made it clear that he expects leadership at the highest level, from Heads of State and Government, for this critical endeavor.

The Summit will be an opportunity for all stakeholders to announce concrete initiatives and innovation to set humanitarian action on a new trajectory, not only saving lives, but providing hope for every global citizen of a life of safety, dignity and resilience.

The Summit will reaffirm the central place of humanity in global decision-making - whether those decisions concern peace and security, sustainable development or emergency response. Global leaders will come together to reaffirm the promise of the UN Charter for the dignity and worth of the human person.

The commitments that we bring to Istanbul will set the stage to address and end the pain and enormous waste of human potential generated by protracted conflict, chronic poverty, and the effects of climate change and natural disasters.

The World Humanitarian Summit is our generation's opportunity to re-inspire the world with our humanitarian ambition. Our Summit must give a voice to the voiceless and bring their hopes and aspirations to global leaders and to all of us.

Building on the phenomenal skills, dedication and courage of humanitarians today and over the years, the generosity of donors as never before, the strength and resilience of affected peoples, our world is full of possibilities and opportunities to create and deliver a safer, more peaceful, more prosperous, more stable and sustainable future for everyone.

Millions of people affected by crises and disasters depend on us all. We will not fail them. As we leave Geneva full of determination to reach the climax at Istanbul to re-inspire the very best of the humanity in all of us, we strive forward with a confidence that these two and a half days have given us a better ability to serve and deliver to all those who need our support and solidarity.

Thank you.