Thank you very much indeed everybody for coming. I am going to encourage you to take a seat now, if you can find one, because we have already achieved one of my measures of success for a meeting, which is when there is more people than seats. I am absolutely thrilled about that, because this is a very important opportunity for us to do something that we do not do often enough in our work in humanitarian affairs here at the UN - which is to tell the story of how, with resources that are given to us voluntarily by member states, we make a difference to people suffering in humanitarian crises.

We spend a lot of time, as we should, talking about the problem we face and the nature of the problem and who needs to do different things to solve the problem, but what we are doing today at this event is something different. It is telling the story of how suffering is being reduced and how lives are being saved through the ongoing relief operation.

I want to start by thanking my co-panelists. I want to thank my friend and colleague David Beasley, the head of the World Food Programme for joining us today. I am also thrilled that we have Shahida Azfar from UNICEF with us. You are going to hear from both David and Shahida about the amazing things that their organizations are doing and I really want to thank their organizations for that. I am also absolutely thrilled that we have Mai Aliryani with us because many of the most important activities, which are going in Yemen to reduce the suffering of people are being implemented by Yemeni organizations.

We are going to start by giving you some information to update you on the response.

[Film is shown: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umOM9Wj-lv0&feature=youtu.be]
So that film we just showed you, is a human story. This is an issue of humanity. That is the theme of today’s event: Yemen - investing in humanity. If you are tweeting, please help us out by using the hashtags #Yemen and #InvestInHumanity.

On the 3rd of April, the Secretary General, with the support of the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden convened a high-level pledging event in Geneva which many of you attended, in order for us to seek funds towards the US $3 billion that the UN was trying to raise in order to deliver the humanitarian response plan that we prepared for Yemen in 2018. We received pledges that day of $2 billion, or two-thirds of the total amount. We received very large pledges in particular from six quarters. We received from the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates a pledge totaling $930m. That was a pledge that was made early in the year, was paid in one payment, was unconditional except for the fact that the money was to be used for the UN’s response plan, and was unearmarked. In other words, it was our favorite kind of funding. We also received a very large pledge from Kuwait, large pledges from the United Kingdom, the European Commission, and the United States.

The main purpose of this event is for us to tell all of you, the countries I have just named, plus everybody else who has contributed, what we have done so far with your money and the lives we are saving. And I do personally want to thank every Member State that has contributed to this appeal, not just on my own behalf, or on behalf of the United Nations, but on behalf of the people who you have just seen on the screen who lives are being saved through a very, very difficult situation. And who, in every single respect, are exactly the same as me and you and everyone else in this room, except that we are lucky to be here and they are having to struggle through a conflict. So, thank you again for your humanity in supporting these people through this difficult period.

I want now to give you just a few more facts and figures.

Firstly, three-quarters of the population in Yemen needs humanitarian assistance. That is the indicator of the fact that makes the Yemen crisis the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Secondly, the United Nations with its partners, including the Red Cross and the NGOs and many Yemeni organizations, commensurate with the scale of the need, is running one of the world’s biggest most complex relief operations. There are tens of thousands of people across Yemen, in hundreds of organizations, who are carrying out thousands of activities, doing countless different things every day in every single one of the 333 districts of the country as part of this operation. We have 150 national partners. So, this is a very big operation.

David is going to say more about this, but every month the UN is reaching more than 7 million people with some form of assistance. We have had a massive scaling up of our food assistance. Early last year we were reaching 3 million people a month. We do have a plan and resources, and if conditions on the ground permit, we may be able to reach 10 million people a month with your money.
We have also had a massive operation to deal with what most people think is the biggest epidemic of cholera outbreak the world has seen. Last year we had fewer than 30 diarrhea treatment centres for cholera. We opened hundreds during the course of last year, but that network of treatment centres is still growing. As of now, there are 234 of them. One of the things that this has meant, is that we have reduced the response time for people who are suspected to have cholera from more than a week on average in 2016, to less than a day, currently.

But cholera is not the only part of the medical services that the response effort is supporting. You saw people who are being kept alive through the dialysis centres that we are supporting under the relief programme. There is a massive diphtheria vaccination programme going on. Obviously, there are thousands and thousands of people suffering trauma injuries. So, in total, this year, nearly 2.5 million people have benefitted from medical services financed through the response.

Most people in Yemen today don’t have access to safe drinking water or healthcare. So, public water systems are another big priority for the relief effort. That’s germane not only to deal with the cholera response, but also to dealing with lots of other problems that you get if you don’t have adequate safe water and sanitation. So, there are more than 3 million people being supported with safe water and sanitation.

As I saw when I was last in Yemen, part of the tragedy is huge numbers of children, pregnant and lactating women really struggling for life, just a step away from losing their lives through starvation because of acute malnutrition. And humanitarian agencies have this year treated a quarter of a million people to fend that off, both with bulk feeding programmes but also with the therapeutic feeding programmes, which provide the Pumpy’nut that you will be familiar with, but also by supporting hospitals for the most severe cases.

Millions of Yemenis have been forced to flee from their homes, some of them several times – from one place to another place, to a third place, to a fourth place, seeking refuge away from the conflict. We have provided 300,000 people with emergency shelter and other essential items, as they fled for refuge.

The education system has essentially collapsed. Teachers, generally, have not been paid for more than a year. I don’t think any of us wants to have to imagine the set of challenges that we will be dealing with if a whole generation of Yemeni children goes without an education. So, one of the other things that we are doing, which is a big priority, is trying to support the education system. Half a million teachers and students have been helped so far, this year, including repairing 22 schools.

And then this is a massive logistics operation. The UN has multiple hubs all around the country. A lot of the things that we do have to be done by air, but there are also the sea and land routes. There are thousands of humanitarian workers engaged in this, and they need to be transported in and out of and around the country, and one of the fantastic things that David’s brilliant organization does is run the humanitarian air and logistics
services. That is also something that gets supported through your contributions to the relief plan.

All of this has been possible through the funding that has not just been pledged, but paid this year. And of that more than $2 billion that I referred to, $1.5 billion is in our bank accounts. Without it, none of those things that I have just described would have been happening.

I hope this is helpful to give you a sense of the scale and nature of the operation. What I would like to do now is to hand over to David to tell you a bit more about what the World Food Programme are doing.