Thank you very much Mr. President,

Let me complement David’s briefing today by focusing on three main areas:
First, the humanitarian situation and outlook in the coming months;
Second, protection of civilians and aid workers;
And third, the support humanitarian agencies need to ensure their work can continue.

Mr. President,

As David alluded to, despite some encouraging developments since the signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement in September 2018, and the formation of the Transitional Government this year, humanitarian needs – already high after years of conflict – are again now rising due to more violence, flooding, and COVID19, which is bringing a host of health and wider consequences, including increasing food insecurity.

Nearly 6.5 million people – more than half of the population – faced severe food insecurity at the height of the annual hunger season a few months ago. COVID-19 has made this worse. Another 1.6 million vulnerable people – most of them in urban settings and cities – have been pushed to the brink as well.

Overall this year, 7.5 million people now need humanitarian assistance – and that’s close to levels in 2017 when we warned of famine.
1.3 million children under the age of five are forecasted to be malnourished— that’s the highest in four years. Put another way, about ten percent of the entire population of South Sudan will be malnourished children who haven’t yet reached their fifth birthday.

The risk of famine is emerging again in areas suffering localized violence. Famine-like conditions (IPC 5 at household level, in the jargon) are reported in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. The violence in these areas has destroyed livelihoods, forced people to flee their homes, and driven down food production.

A 19-year-old woman from Pibor recently told UN staff: “We have been living a miserable life. This all started in February, and we did not expect this situation to last for so long. I ran into the bush with my three-month-old daughter. She was sick and died in July. Today is the first time that I have had access to a healthcare facility since February.”

South Sudan’s economy is contracting, again as David alluded to, affected by lower global oil prices and the wider global recession. The Government has little money to respond to the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. The price of basic commodities has increased sharply – the price of maize flour, for example, which many people rely on, increased by 50 percent between March and July.

COVID-19 is also adding to the pressure on an already fragile health system. Years of conflict have devastated basic services, including the health care system. South Sudan has one of the highest under five mortality rates in the world. Around three quarters of all child deaths in South Sudan arise from preventable diseases like diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia, with malnourished children succumbing where the better fed would not.

The Council of Ministers has decided that schools, closed since March, can re-open, but 2.2 million children were already out of school before COVID-19

Two consecutive years of severe flooding has exacerbated food insecurity, as well as malnutrition, and displacement. Last year, nearly one million people were affected. The floods started earlier this year and more than half a million people have so far been affected. We fear the worst is yet to come, with the peak of flooding season normally in November and December.

Humanitarian access, as you all know, has been challenging in South Sudan for years. But the pandemic, along with increased violence in some areas, has magnified pre-existing access challenges. Humanitarian agencies’ capacity to reach people who need aid is now limited in some areas.

The authorities imposed a range of restrictions early in the pandemic, including on humanitarian agencies. They are being addressed through ongoing negotiations, and domestic travel restrictions for humanitarian workers have recently been lifted.
Other challenges, though, continue to limit on-the-ground presence in some conflict affected areas like Jonglei. Humanitarian agencies are looking at how to set up small humanitarian hubs in remote areas to enable aid workers to deploy more quickly. Stocks are also being pre-positioned ahead of the rainy season, when transport access will deteriorate, and larger distributions of rations are taking place.

Mr. President,

I want to echo what David said about the safety of civilians and aid workers.

This year’s violence has resulted in hundreds of people killed, another 157,000 displaced, and the abduction of large numbers of women and children.

Although the peace agreement in 2018 has allowed an expansion in humanitarian coverage and enabled some 1.1 million displaced people to go home, about 1.6 million remain internally displaced. In order to address this, what is needed is sustainable peace, the allocation of land, and the presence of basic services in areas of return or where people choose to settle, including in urban areas.

Another 2.2 million South Sudanese are still refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda, where the generosity of host communities is being stretched and tested due to limited funding for the refugee response.

The violence continues to take its toll on women and girls, who face extreme levels of sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Most incidents between May and July this year occurred during waves of local violence, with survivors unable to access timely medical or psychosocial assistance.

South Sudan also remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an aid worker. At least 122 aid workers have been killed since 2013. Though we saw an improvement in the operational environment in 2019, it is now deteriorating again as a result of increased violence.

This year, seven aid workers have been killed. Another 144 have had to be evacuated and relocated as a result of threats to their security. Aid supplies have been looted on at least 17 occasions. And a number of health centers have been forced to suspend activities, interrupting life-saving services.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding an extremely challenging operating environment, the humanitarian response in South Sudan is keeping millions of people from sliding into famine. Despite COVID-19, humanitarian workers do continue to deliver aid, and help save lives. Aid agencies have assisted more than 5 million people across South Sudan in 2020.
But continued funding is needed to sustain health services and other life-saving programmes. As a result of the fighting, flooding, and COVID19, funding needs continue to grow. The South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan is now larger than ever, at $1.9 billion dollars for this year. About a third of that has been funded so far.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, in seeking the Council’s support in three areas.

First, continue your backing for efforts to find political solutions to end violence. South Sudan needs a stable political and security environment to recover from the impacts of prolonged conflict. Humanitarian need is going to persist as long as conflict and under-development persist.

Second, use your influence to ensure that humanitarian relief operations are facilitated, and aid workers are protected.

And third, please provide additional resources for the Humanitarian Response Plan.

Thank you.