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Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Geneva**
**Remarks at the Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference and
Exhibition (DIHAD)**

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As prepared

Ministers, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to join you at this year's DIHAD conference.

I'd like to begin by thanking the United Arab Emirates for giving us this opportunity to discuss how we can make humanitarian operations more innovative and sustainable, and to brainstorm new solutions.

We are also grateful to the UAE for your steadfast commitment to serving people in need. Over the past three years, you have contributed more than \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance. Your generosity – and the generosity of all our donors – is critical to our work: This year, we aim to reach 239 million people with humanitarian assistance – and we will need more than \$54 billion to do so.

The earthquakes that devastated Türkiye and Syria last month – and the additional resources needed to support those people affected by this heartwrenching tragedy – underscore a central dilemma that we face: Never before has the global humanitarian system been stretched so thin.

For 2022, the UN appealed for \$51 billion to support our humanitarian operations worldwide. But collectively, those response plans were less than 56 percent funded. We fear that this gap will only continue to widen, as crises continue to multiply.

Our ability to respond depends in part upon our capacity to adapt.

Events like DIHAD can help amplify the ideas of some of the world's leading aid practitioners. Together, we are seeking new ways to drive innovation in how we mount our global humanitarian responses.

I'd like to briefly touch upon two key tools that can help us mount a more effective response to the crises we see around the world.

The first is anticipatory action. Early warnings and actions can save lives, and the anticipatory approach is one that we can and must scale up.

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Let me tell you how this works in practice.

Last year in South Sudan, we took action ahead of the rainy season. Using \$19 million from two of our pooled funds, UN agencies and NGOs helped vulnerable communities prepare for severe flooding. At a camp for displaced people in Bentiu, which is home to more than 100,000 people, this meant that shelter, health and other essential supplies were stockpiled in advance.

And also last year, in Niger, where some regions are dealing with concurrent crises of drought and conflict, we allocated more than \$9 million from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund. This allowed seven UN agencies to help mitigate the worst impacts of last year's devastating drought by providing the most vulnerable people with food, protection and clean water.

We at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continue to champion the anticipatory approach. In recent years, this has taken the form of joint pilot projects to address the effects of droughts, floods, storms and diseases.

Not only does it make moral and financial sense, but it also allows us to deploy limited resources more effectively.

In the coming years, OCHA is committed to using both the Central Emergency Response Fund and our Country-Based Pooled Funds to expand our anticipatory efforts. But this will require more flexible, coordinated and predictable financing.

We must also do more to guarantee that early warnings reach vulnerable communities. OCHA is a core member of the Secretary-General's "Early Warning For All" initiative, which seeks to ensure that every person on Earth is protected by early warning systems in the coming years. And we will continue to support efforts to prioritize fragile countries.

Looking ahead, we want to ramp up our cooperation with governments, the World Bank and social safety net programmes so that disaster management harnesses the power of the anticipatory approach. But we must recognize that such actions alone are not enough.

The second tool I'd like to highlight is climate financing. We hope that COP 28 – which the UAE will be hosting later this year – will facilitate progress on the climate finance front – and ensure that the funding reaches the most vulnerable.

As humanitarians, we recognize the enormity of the challenge before us.

Since 2006, on average more than a quarter of CERF funding has gone to climate-related disasters. But there is minimal financing available to address loss and damage, especially for countries with high debt burdens.

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Here, there is room for the private sector – including oil companies – to step in. For example, businesses could channel some of their profits toward loss and damage, in the form of voluntary contributions.

Yet more fundamentally, COP28 must make progress on efforts to cut greenhouse gases. As the Secretary-General told the UN General Assembly last month, we have an obligation to act in deep and systemic ways. This is not a time for tinkering; rather, it is a time for transformation.

Here at DIHAD, let us also devote ourselves to making deep, systemic improvements in the humanitarian context. To meet the needs of millions of people around the globe, we must spare no effort to find ambitious and innovative solutions.

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