Mr. President,

The humanitarian system faces enormous challenges in responding to increasing humanitarian needs around the world. The gap between available resources and humanitarian needs is growing, and will continue to do so. We cannot afford to let ourselves be overwhelmed by the common challenges we know will continue to come. We need a humanitarian system better fit for the future.

Principled and effective humanitarian action must lie at the very core of a future global humanitarian system. But we cannot claim to be neither effective nor principled if there is no accountability to affected populations and if those in need have no access to life saving assistance.
Mr. President,

International humanitarian law sets clear obligations for the parties to armed conflict to protect the civilian population. Still, the vast majority of victims of armed conflict are civilians.

Norway fully agrees that it is the prerogative of the state to ensure that basic humanitarian needs of its affected people are met. However, if states are unable, or unwilling, to address humanitarian needs and provide protection, humanitarian actors must be in a position to do so.

This means that, in order to save lives and reduce human suffering, states and parties to conflict must grant rapid and unimpeded access to affected populations. Such access must not be arbitrarily denied.

Civilians continue to pay the price for grave violations of international humanitarian law. An area of particular concern is the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which have had detrimental effects on the civilian population. Another serious concern is the many attacks on schools and schoolchildren that we have witnessed over the last year.

We must do more to ensure continued education for children in conflict and crises and we must do more to protect schools and universities during armed conflicts. Lack of education has both immediate and long-term effects. Schools not only provide continuity, safety, protection and often food and water when societies are disintegrating. Education delivers the knowledge and skills that is needed to reconcile, to rebuild and to build back better. Education is a driver for development and for finding a way out of the unprecedented number of complex humanitarian crises.
We hope that the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict" will be an effective tool in the efforts to prevent that schools and higher education institutions are used for military purposes during conflict.

Mr. President,

Medical facilities and health workers are increasingly not protected in crises and conflicts, in fact, they are often under direct attack. We are concerned about the long-term consequences for the civilian populations and the resilience of health systems in countries affected by attacks.

The obligation to protect medical missions in armed conflict, is set out in international humanitarian law. The gaps are not due to a lack of norms, but lack of implementation and respect.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, let me underscore Norway's strong support for a more inclusive, effective and better equipped humanitarian system. In this regard, we would like to commend the efforts and achievements of outgoing Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos. We further welcome the Secretary General's call for new candidates, and look forward to an open and competitive process in selecting one of the most important, and challenging, jobs in the world.

Thank you.