

**Assistant Secretary-General a.i. and Deputy Emergency Relief  
Coordinator, Ramesh Rajasingham, remarks at Grand Bargain Annual Meeting**

*Geneva, 15 June 2021*

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today to take stock of our collective achievements since the inception of the Grand Bargain. We are proud to have been part of this journey and remain committed to the next phase of this initiative.

On behalf of OCHA and Mark, I would like to thank our Eminent Person, Sigrid Kaag, for her strong and insightful leadership and unwavering dedication in ensuring that our Grand Bargain commitments remain front and center of our agenda. I warmly welcome Jan Egeland, as the new Eminent Person, and look forward to working with him and his team in realizing the goals of the Grand Bargain 2.0.

These are extraordinary times. Our collective COVID response showcased strengthened collaboration, spurred innovative solutions and served as a catalyst to push forward critical areas of work. It has also amplified areas of work that the system has grappled with. These include changing the power dynamics in the response to put people at the center; meaningful engagement with local responders, resourcing and capacitating communities and civil society; collaboration with development actors; and addressing the persistent and rising protection crises on the ground (including GBV).

The humanitarian system is currently overwhelmed and over-stretched. Today one in 33 people worldwide needs humanitarian assistance or protection. This comes at an enormous cost to us all. This year's Global Humanitarian Overview seeks \$US36 billion – compared with just \$2 billion in the late 1990s.

While donors have been more generous than ever before, funding has failed to keep pace with rising needs. We have seen an average 40 per cent funding shortfall each year for the past five years.

## *Success stories of the Grand Bargain*

The Grand Bargain has been a vehicle for fundamental progress in a number of key areas. The collective progress made on developing a **Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF)** is a major achievement in providing a comprehensive understanding of the needs of crisis-affected people. This Framework is the cornerstone of a more efficient and effective humanitarian response, one that gives a voice to people, that encourages multisectoral responses, that take risks into account, and that seeks to reinforce linkages between humanitarian and development actors. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the JIAF has also contributed to significant advancements on inclusivity and intersectionality, specifically on gender analysis and disability inclusion.

Great achievements have also been made since 2016 in advancing the **quality funding agenda**. We saw some of its concrete benefits at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic last year when donors and UN Agencies “leaned forward” and provided large sums of flexible funding on a “no regrets basis”. Hopefully some of these achievements will continue beyond the pandemic.

We must also persist in our efforts to widen and diversify the donor base and recognize the importance of resource flows beyond appeals. We must expand our efforts to finance and implement anticipatory action, getting better, faster and be more innovative in how we approach our work.

## *How can we make Grand Bargain 2.0 a success?*

We need **more political engagement and commitment** in the Grand Bargain. Making real – and swift - progress will require continued and strengthened leadership from UN agencies, NGOs and donors.

Most of the achievements of the Grand Bargain so far have been technical and process oriented. We now need to tackle the institutional practices and policies that prevent a deeper change from happening in the way we work collectively.

In a context of further restricted donor funding, more attention than ever is needed to work jointly, across agencies, across sectoral and humanitarian-development siloes, and genuinely with local actors.

**Localization** - The pandemic has more than ever brought to the fore the importance of local actors in humanitarian response. Access for local actors to pooled funds has increased significantly (36% of OCHA-managed Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) in 2020. We welcome the ongoing work to produce the first-ever IASC guidance on localization. We need to translate policy and aspirations to action. We need donors and international organisations to provide sustained, long-term support to capacity building and coordination resources for local and national actors.

**Participation** - Change in the humanitarian system must also be driven by the participation of those affected by crisis. We have a leading role to play, yet we are not yet consistently delivering on this. I look forward to hearing what more we can do as IASC and donors to collectively better listen to and respond to the feedback of affected people.

The ultimate yardstick of success of Grand Bargain 2.0 should be based on the differences that can be measured for the lives and livelihoods of crisis-affected people. There should be concrete, measurable indicators defined for the two agreed-upon priorities that can be monitored and reported against. It is a responsibility we have towards all those who rely on humanitarian actors to help saving lives, alleviate suffering and protect dignity.

The **success of the Grand Bargain** means meaningful improvement in the performance of the humanitarian system. We need to do our utmost to reinvigorate the ‘bargain’. Each one of us here today has the opportunity, responsibility, and the power to contribute to its future success. Thank you for your attention.