

**Ms. Laura Johnson, Executive Secretary, UNOG Staff Union**

**19 August 2025**

This is the third year I have had the honour of delivering a statement on behalf of the humanitarians I represent and it may be the most difficult year those humanitarians have faced.

I am not a humanitarian by profession myself and so it can be difficult to know what to say to adequately recognize the staff who are victims and survivors of the terrible Canal Hotel bombing, more broadly commemorate humanitarians around the world, especially those who have paid the ultimate price, and how to effectively call for action to save the lives of humanitarians today.

This year, our staff federation CCISUA, whose member organisations employ any thousands of the humanitarians working across the UN system, has issued a statement for World Humanitarian Day, and I would like to echo its main points.

The theme, “Act For Humanity” is a call to leaders and to the public to confront the normalization of attacks on civilians, including humanitarians, and the impunity that undermines International Humanitarian Law. It is a call to build public support that puts pressure on all parties to conflict and world leaders to act to protect civilians and humanitarian workers.

We pay special tribute to our Palestinian colleagues in Gaza, where more than 300 UN staff have been killed since October 2023, the highest toll in UN history. They continue to serve under unimaginable conditions, often while enduring the same loss, hunger, and insecurity as the communities they assist.

At the same time, the humanitarian space itself is under grave threat. Severe funding cuts are forcing agencies to scale back life-saving programmes and reduce their workforce. Structural reforms and discussions of mergers raise additional fears that humanitarian action may lose its independence, becoming subordinated to political or migration-management agendas. For staff on the ground, this translates into uncertainty, heavier risks, and the erosion of trust.

We call for stronger protection of humanitarian workers, accountability for attacks, adequate funding for principled action, and genuine consultation on reforms that affect the future of humanitarian response.

The future of humanitarian action is at stake. To protect it, we must Act For Humanity!