



**Welcoming remarks by Ms. Tatiana Valovaya
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

World Humanitarian Day 2025 – Commemoration Ceremony

**Tuesday, 19 August 2025, 4 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Palais des Nations, Building E, 3rd Floor
Outside Room XX (the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room)**

**Dear humanitarian workers,
Dear survivors of attacks on humanitarian workers,
Dear families and friends of colleagues lost in humanitarian
service,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends**

- **Today, as every year, we gather to commemorate World Humanitarian Day and to pay tribute to all our colleagues who have given their lives in the service of humanity. We honour their courage, their unwavering dedication, and the values they stood for.**
- **Behind me, the memorial plaques remind us of the devastating attack in Baghdad in 2003, where twenty-two UN staff members, including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio**

Vieira de Mello, were killed, and of the tragedy in Algiers in 2007, where we lost 17 more members of the United Nations family. They are no longer with us, but their legacy lives on. Their sacrifice and commitment will stay forever in our hearts and inspire generations to come.

- **Sadly, the list of names keeps growing. Humanitarian workers across the world are being killed, injured, and kidnapped in unprecedented numbers, with each year tragically more deadly than the last. In 2024 alone, more than 380 humanitarian workers lost their lives, and 2025 is on track to be even worse. These are not just numbers – they are individuals: people with families, with dreams, and with an extraordinary commitment to making the world a better place.**
- **I invite you all – those here in Geneva and those following us virtually – to join me in a moment of silence in memory of the humanitarian colleagues we have lost.**

(Minute of silence)

- **Thank you.**
- **I am deeply honoured and humbled to welcome to the Palais des Nations today some of the survivors and family members of the victims of attacks against humanitarian workers. A heartfelt thank you to Mr. Dhafer Younis Al-Hussini, who will shortly share with us his memories and reflections of the Baghdad Canal Hotel bombing.**

- It is also a privilege to be joined today by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Tom Fletcher; the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Nada Al-Nashif; the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Karim Hashim Mostafa; and the Executive Secretary of the UNOG Staff Union, Ms. Laura Johnson.
- *[If Mr. Grandi attends and is in the audience]* I also take this opportunity to welcome the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The increasing number of conflicts and fragile situations around the world today is placing humanitarian workers in situations of grave risk. Day after day, our colleagues are being targeted for doing their jobs: protecting civilians, providing food, shelter, and healthcare, delivering infrastructure support, and more. This is unacceptable. International humanitarian law must be respected. Attacks on UN staff and humanitarian workers must stop. Their protection must be ensured. Impunity must not be tolerated.

- **Humanitarian workers are the face of the United Nations and the broader humanitarian community. Their commitment is a source of hope for millions, and their dedication strengthens our resolve to ensure that humanitarian workers everywhere are protected and supported in their vital work. Today, we recognize the importance and courage of the humanitarian community, the risks they face and the sacrifices they make.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

- **In the face of shrinking resources, growing mistrust and an increasingly volatile world, let us recommit to what unites us at the United Nations and in the wider humanitarian community: a shared desire to help others and build a better world. As we remember the brave colleagues we have lost and honour those who continue their work despite immense risks, we must ensure that their sacrifices are not in vain.**
- **Thank you.**