

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and  
Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock**

**Statement to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in  
Yemen**

*New York, 17 April 2018*

*As delivered*

Mr. President,

Yemen remains the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Three quarters of the population, more than 22 million people, urgently require some form of humanitarian help, including 8.4 million people who struggle to find their next meal. The crisis is overwhelming families and institutions and is now affecting nearly every sector and every aspect of Yemeni life.

With swift and joint action, conditions for the Yemeni people can improve. On the political front, you have just heard from Martin, the Secretary-General's envoy.

Mr. President,

Humanitarian agencies have scaled up assistance and strengthened their own capacity in Yemen. The relief operation is one of the largest and most complex in the world. 190 partners, most of them Yemeni organisations, get help to millions of people in thousands of locations every single month. Last year, we increased the coverage of food assistance from 3 million people a month in January to more than 7 million a month in December. For 2018, the World Food Programme have plans to reach 10 million people a month. And we are doing the same thing in other sectors, including water, health, and sanitation and other core services.

The humanitarian operation in Yemen is already one of the largest in the world. We have five humanitarian hubs in place to coordinate assistance across the country, and are exploring opening more, including in Marib and Mukalla. Every week, dozens of humanitarian movements, including food convoys, and hundreds of specific humanitarian locations are deconflicted by the parties to the conflict. We are able to reach people in all 333 districts and in each district, we aim to collect data on how many people receive aid every month.

Mr. President,

Earlier this month, Sweden, Switzerland and the Secretary-General co-chaired a pledging conference for Yemen. In the words of the Secretary-General: “It was a remarkable success of international solidarity”. 40 Member States and regional organizations pledged more than US\$2 billion. Thank you for that generosity.

Allow me to particularly recognize the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for their \$930 million contribution to the Humanitarian Response Plan. This was not just an exceptionally large contribution. It was also prompt, swift, unearmarked and unconditional. And it has already been fully disbursed.

Mr. President,

All parties to the conflict must take practical steps to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The record on this issue remains mixed.

There have been improvements. UN humanitarian flights and vessels are moving regularly. That is positive.

But we remain very concerned about commercial imports through all of Yemen’s ports, most particularly Hudaydah and Saleef. Before the war, Yemen relied on imports to cover 90 percent of staple foods and nearly all its medicine and fuel needs. Commercial shortages and delays at ports have led to sharp increases in the price of food and household necessities. Ports are the life-line of Yemen. We are doing our part to ensure they can function properly. I am pleased to confirm that steps are being taken to further strengthen the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), which screens commercial shipments to Hudaydah and Saleef ports.

We are encouraging all those concerned to accelerate the normalization of commercial shipments into Hudaydah and Saleef, as well as to Yemen’s other ports. We are worried that shipping companies are reluctant to enter Yemeni waters.

The reasons are related to problems with foreign exchange and the banking sector as well as the ports, but the result is that insufficient food is being imported and that needs to be addressed.

Price increases, especially of food, are forcing hundreds of thousands of destitute families to turn to humanitarian assistance for their survival.

We are also concerned that Sana’a airport remains closed to commercial traffic, preventing thousands of critically ill patients from travelling abroad to seek treatment unavailable in Yemen. And on several occasions over the past month, military activities conducted in the proximity of the airport have affected humanitarian flights. Last week,

there were serious incidents close to humanitarian locations which had been deconflicted. We are working closely with all parties to ensure they are not repeated.

Within Yemen, bureaucratic impediments imposed by decision makers in Sana'a are affecting relief operations. Humanitarian staff continue to face delays in visas and project approvals, restrictions on imports and customs clearance, and long delays and searches at checkpoints. In recent weeks, some parts of the media in Sanaa have depicted humanitarian operations inaccurately and unjustly, and humanitarian staff have been detained. We are also concerned about insecurity in parts of the country, particularly in the South.

While we have access in part to all Yemen's 333 districts, restrictions and insecurity mean that estimated 1.2 million people in need of assistance live in areas inaccessible to humanitarian organisations. All impediments, which prevent humanitarians from reaching people, must stop.

Mr. President,

Looking ahead, we still face enormous challenges.

Unless steps are taken now in high risk districts, we risk another major cholera outbreak. Last year's outbreak of cholera and watery diarrhea struck more than a million people. The effects continue to linger. As we enter the rainy season, the conditions that created this outbreak are still present.

Applying the lessons from last year, we are doing everything we can to respond. Agencies are pre-positioning supplies, chlorinating water sources and launching a vaccination campaign.

As with other challenges, a successful response requires safe, unimpeded and unhindered access across and into Yemen for humanitarian staff and humanitarian supplies. We need predictable fuel imports to keep hospitals and water treatment plants running. Yemeni public servants who are doing so much to prepare and respond to the crisis need their salaries paid. Most health and sanitation workers have still not been paid for more than a year and a half.

The impact of airstrikes, shelling and fighting on the civilian population, particularly in Hudaydah, Taizz, Sa'ada, Hadramut and Hajjah governorates is deeply worrying. Civilian lives are lost. Public infrastructure is destroyed. Displacement is increasing. Mines and the remnants of war affect agricultural production and the wider economy, as well as threatening civilian life. Some 3 million women and girls are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Like Martin, I also remain very concerned about missiles being launched into Saudi Arabia from within Yemen. This adds a further dimension to the civil war and puts many civilians at great risk. I want to remind all parties that they have obligations under international humanitarian law. Restraint is needed to avoid any escalation which would worsen still further the suffering of ordinary people.

Mr. President,

While the humanitarian response can do, and is doing, a lot, it cannot resolve this crisis. I therefore echo the Special Envoy's call – Martin's call – for all parties to engage meaningfully with the United Nations, without preconditions, to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement towards sustainable peace.

Thank you.

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