

# Humanitarian crisis in Yemen

22.09.2021

**Speech by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Vice President of the Federal Council, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, and co-chair of the High-Level Event on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen delivered on the occasion of High-Level Side Event on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen - The event was held virtually. The spoken word prevails.**

Speaker: Cassis Ignazio; Head of Department, Ignazio Cassis; Swiss representative to the UN

Mr Under-Secretary General.

Madam Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Excellencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Dear colleagues.

On behalf of the Federal Government of Switzerland, I welcome you to the High-Level Side Event on the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen. I extend a special welcome to my co-host for this part of the event, my colleague, the Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde.

Today we come together to talk about the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world – a crisis which affects the people of Yemen the most:

- around seventy percent of the population of Yemen depend on aid
- sixteen million people do not know where their next meal will come from
- half of those affected are children

Since we met six months ago, we have made significant progress. Many lives have been saved, largely thanks to your support. Nevertheless, the situation remains critical.

Given the pressing humanitarian needs, we must act now! So far, only half of the humanitarian response plan for 2021 has been funded. And many sectors of the plan remain underfunded. These include water and sanitation and the protection of civilians from violence and denial of their rights.

It is the responsibility of the international community to ensure adequate funding, and to disburse its pledges without delay so that we can reach those in need in time. The people of Yemen depend on it. They deserve it. For far too long, they have suffered

from armed conflict, displacement, job loss, economic collapse and the spread of numerous diseases. The people of Yemen are struggling to survive every single day. It is up to us to make a difference.

For this reason, the Swiss government has decided to provide an additional one million US dollars for humanitarian aid in Yemen, on top of the fourteen million Swiss Francs already pledged. This is part of our long-term commitment: Switzerland has provided over seventy million Swiss Francs for the people of Yemen over the last five years.

However, funding alone will not be sufficient. Humanitarian aid must reach those most in need and in a timely manner. Therefore, humanitarian access is paramount to all operations. Switzerland calls on all parties to the conflict to ensure that all humanitarian actors throughout the country have unimpeded and timely access to people in need. Switzerland also calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. Civilians, as well as civilian and medical infrastructure, must be protected at all times.

That brings me to my last point: we must address the root causes of this humanitarian crisis. The continuation of hostilities claims more lives and causes more destruction with every passing day. The most urgent humanitarian needs remain concentrated in areas affected by conflict and where access for humanitarian workers is insufficient. The crisis in Yemen requires a comprehensive political solution. Switzerland calls on all parties to cease hostilities and return to the negotiation table. We remain fully committed to supporting the UN efforts for peace in Yemen and stand ready to offer our good offices.

In closing, I wish to thank all humanitarian workers in Yemen – Yemeni and international alike: your tireless work, undertaken at great risk to your own safety at times, makes a difference to those in need. I call on all of us to support you, including making sure you have the necessary financial resources to act on the ground.

It is in our hands to make a difference today for millions of Yemeni women, men, and children. Thank you for your attention, and thank you for your continuous support.

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