

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR MARK LOWCOCK**

Statement on the situation in Yemen

I am extremely concerned by recent developments in Yemen. Over the past few weeks we have seen an escalation in conflict, growing restrictions on humanitarian action and a reduction in essential commercial imports. These factors are compounding the world's worst humanitarian crisis at a time when millions of Yemenis face acute food insecurity and a possible resurgence of cholera or watery diarrhoea.

More than 22 million people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance or protection. Some 8.4 million people are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation. If conditions do not improve, a further 10 million people will fall into this category by the end of the year. One child in four is out of school, depriving them of opportunity and leaving them more exposed to risks of recruitment by armed groups and other violations of their rights. Civil servants, including teachers and health workers in northern areas, remain unpaid.

Airstrikes in Yemen are putting many Yemenis at risk, and causing large numbers of civilian deaths. Since December 2017, escalating conflict along the west coast and in Taizz has displaced more than 130,000 people – adding to some 3 million people forced from their homes since 2015. Numerous indiscriminate missiles launched by Houthi forces into Saudi Arabia add a further dimension to the conflict and put more civilians at risk.

I call on all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure that everything possible is done to protect civilians.

Humanitarian agencies face increasing restrictions on their work imposed by authorities in northern areas. Humanitarian staff are being detained and intimidated and visas are being delayed and denied. Programmes and missions are being interfered with in ways which contradict humanitarian principles. I recall that, during my visit in October 2017, both the Government and decision-makers in Sana'a offered me assurances that these restrictions would be addressed. I request rapid action to that end.

While aid imports have held up recently, commercial food and fuel imports remain well short of pre-blockade averages. I am particularly concerned about the recent decline of commercial food imports through the Red Sea ports. Pressure on the currency and a liquidity crisis in the Yemeni banking system make imports less viable for traders. Confidence among commercial shipping companies has eroded due to delays, including as a result of inspections undertaken by the Saudi-led Coalition after these vessels have been cleared by UNVIM. Some companies tell us they fear that ports could again close as they did for several weeks in late 2017, even though the Coalition has sent written confirmation to international organizations confirming that all ports, including

Hudaydah and Saleef, are open. I am also concerned that key humanitarian supplies including items required to address the cholera outbreak remain on the prohibited list of imports.

I am encouraged by recent discussions held between UNVIM, the Coalition and the shipping community to facilitate a mutual understanding of challenges and to expedite the process of vessels sailing to Houdaydah and Saleef. It is important that agreements recently reached to expedite the processing of vessels be honoured.

I call on the Government of Yemen, with the support of the Coalition, to take active steps to boost commercial imports of food, fuel and humanitarian supplies through all Yemen's ports. I also call on the Government of Yemen to take steps to ensure that all public servants receive their salaries wherever they are in Yemen.

Last month, we saw 40 donors come together to pledge more than \$2 billion for humanitarian assistance in Yemen this year – including \$930 million from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This support is enabling humanitarian organisations to reach millions of people across the country every month. It is encouraging to see the impact when positive steps are taken. I particularly welcome the decision by all parties to open a medical air bridge from Sanaa to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to transport patients with conditions that cannot be treated in Yemen to facilities where they can receive the help they need.

The humanitarian agencies stand ready to increase their delivery of assistance to the people of Yemen. We have the resources to do this, and we call for greater cooperation from all parties and stakeholders to that end.

Finally, I urge all parties to engage meaningfully with the United Nations, without preconditions, to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement towards sustainable peace.

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