HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR YEMEN, JOHANNES VAN DER KLAUW, WITNESSES DESTRUCTION IN ADEN, MAKES URGENT PLEA FOR HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AND FUNDING TO SCALE UP ASSISTANCE

(Aden, 27 July 2015) The humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Yemen are catastrophic. I witnessed this yesterday in Aden, where the intensification of violence and conflict over the past four months have devastated the city and destroyed the lives and livelihoods of the majority of its people. As has become all too familiar in contexts of war, civilians are paying the heaviest price. I heard numerous accounts of death, hunger and utter desperation as mothers and fathers struggle to find safety, security and care for their loved ones.

The level of destruction in Aden and the high number of civilian deaths and injuries, estimated at over 23,000 nationwide, is a shocking testament to the suffering faced by the civilian population. The damage to critical infrastructure in the whole country, including hospitals, schools, air and sea ports, mosques, and residential premises is unacceptable and goes against all the responsibilities that parties to the conflict must adhere to under international humanitarian law. I repeat my plea to all parties of the conflict to put an end to the attacks on civilians and to end the destruction of critical infrastructure, vital for supplying essential goods and services to the civilian population.

The UN and its partners are committed to rapidly scaling up the humanitarian response effort across the whole of Yemen. In Aden, this means urgently restoring healthcare services, repairing and servicing water and sanitation systems, providing emergency shelter to displaced families, increasing the distribution of food and basic commodities such as blankets, mattresses and other household items. We need to get children back to school and provide psycho-social support to the women, men, girls and boys that have witnessed and experienced unspeakable violence in a city that has seen some of the bloodiest fighting since the escalation of conflict in March.

The humanitarian community’s ability to scale up and reach those in need will only be possible if parties to the conflict provide rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. Current access constraints meant I had to reach Aden via Djibouti on a twelve hour boat ride. Humanitarians need more direct access and I call on all parties to the conflict to open all land routes and facilitate the use of air and sea ports to enable humanitarian agencies to rapidly deliver much needed life-saving assistance.

Funding is another immediate requirement. The Yemen humanitarian appeal has received only 15 per cent of the requested $1.6 billion required for 2015. I call on all donors to show their generosity and solidarity to the Yemeni people in this desperate time of need.