

**STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON YEMEN**

New York, 10 October 2017

*As delivered to the Council by OCHA Director of Operations John Ging.*

Thank you, Mr. President,

Last month, Yemen entered the third year of this armed conflict with no clear end in sight. The human cost of this conflict has been devastating: air strikes, shelling and ground fighting continue in urban areas where civilians are killed and injured, and the critical infrastructure that they rely on is being destroyed. The international community has witnessed the devastation in which the Yemeni people now live, and it is the result of this crisis that has left some 15 million people lacking adequate access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, and health services; seven million people are faced with the threat of famine; and all this is exacerbated by the largest single-year cholera outbreak ever recorded. As the conflict continues, two million people remain displaced. They live in crowded, unsafe, unsanitary and undignified spontaneous settlements where shelters are exposed to the elements – made of rags, cardboard and just about anything else that they can find on the streets. This remains a man-made crisis, generating intolerable suffering for the Yemeni people.

Mr. President,

I take this opportunity to highlight three of the challenges facing the Yemeni people and humanitarians, notably humanitarian access and its limitations, the impact of civil servants' salary interruptions and how it's impacting on food insecurity and critical services, and the continued risks to commercial access to the country.

Humanitarians face unacceptable obstacles from all sides in carrying out relief efforts in Yemen. The biggest problem is the prevention of humanitarian access. For example, the authorities in Sana'a regularly deny access and have also arbitrarily delayed or denied dozens of requests for humanitarian personnel to enter the country via Sana'a. Humanitarian partners also report a freeze on the issuance of visas by the authorities in Aden for international non-governmental organizations for several weeks now.



## Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

These obstacles are abhorrent in a country where the threat of famine looms over millions, where there are over 800,000 suspected cases of cholera across 90 per cent of communities and where only 45 per cent of the health facilities are functioning. Quite simply, these obstructions cost lives. We hope that recent commitments made by the parties translate into the prioritization of unfettered humanitarian access.

Mr. President,

The interruption of regular salary payments for one and a quarter million civil servants is a further driver of humanitarian need, particularly food insecurity, and it is affecting nearly a quarter of the population – public employees and their families. Where food is available, even in markets, people lack the cash now to buy basic necessities. The prices of which have risen significantly. Recent market analysis puts the average price of a food basket 30 per cent higher than pre-crisis and in some cases as much as 60 per cent higher, despite the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism facilitating the majority of Yemen's food requirements each month, on average. The price of cooking gas is now more than 70 per cent higher than pre-crisis in Aden and Hudaydah. This reality is having a negative effect on the capacity of the population to cope and now people are taking to such acts as selling assets and taking on debt to buy food.

Children are paying a particularly high price, not least the 460,000 who are severely malnourished. Even if the fighting stopped today, stunted growth and delayed cognitive development will linger for an entire generation. The loss of livelihoods for adults also means thousands of children are forced to work rather than go to school, with child marriage rates also increasing as families claim incapacity to support their children.

Additionally, the lack of civil servant salaries has disrupted the provision of basic services to the wider population. Already stressed critical services are unavailable if employees are not present to operate them, most notably in the health, water and sanitation, and education sectors, and we seek your support in finding ways to prioritize salaries for these sectors. It's not difficult to draw a clear link between the near-absent health, water and sanitation services and the unprecedented cholera outbreak.

Mr. President,

As this Council is aware, Yemen has long been reliant on the importation of commercial goods to meet its basic food and fuel needs. However, commercial traffic to Yemen by both sea and air remains challenging. Any significant decline in imports due to bureaucratic delays risks making the threat of famine a reality. In this regard, we renew our calls for the protection and continued



## Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

operation of Hudaydah port and for the unconditional installment of the four World Food Programme mobile cranes.

The closure of Sana'a airport to commercial traffic has blocked thousands of Yemenis from travelling for medical care and students from attending universities abroad. A resumption of commercial flights is urgently and immediately needed. There appears to be no legitimate reason why the inspection mechanism operated by the Coalition prior to August 2016 cannot be reinstated.

Mr. President,

The Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is 55 per cent funded with \$1.3 billion of the \$2.3 billion required to reach the 12 million people in need of humanitarian support and protection this year. We thank the generous Member States for their funding. Despite the complexity of the response, this year humanitarians have already reached 7 million people with direct assistance. We therefore encourage Member States to directly support our efforts and to do more through the response plan. This year the Yemen Humanitarian Fund has reached \$128 million, the largest globally. The Fund was nimble in rapidly responding to the cholera outbreak and famine prevention. Over 21 per cent of the Fund's allocations have gone to national partners – we salute them for their efforts on the front lines of the humanitarian response. And, again, we thank our donor Member States for their generosity.

Mr. President,

As we desperately wait for a political solution and an end to the conflict, I call upon all States to exert their influence on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law. The Human Rights Council's recent adoption by consensus of resolution 36/31 is one example of the influence that States can exert.

The parties and their supporter need to show greater commitment to finding a political solution. We need the international community to step up its efforts in support of a viable solution that addresses the root causes and restores the Yemeni people's hope for a better future. They deserve nothing less.

Thank you.