

ERC CALLS FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

Aden, Sana'a, 1 December 2018: At the end of his mission to Yemen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock warned that conditions had deteriorated alarmingly since his last visit.

“Yemen is on the brink of a major catastrophe,” said Mr. Lowcock. “But it is not too late. In my meetings with officials of the internationally recognized Government of Yemen in Aden and the de facto authorities in Sana'a, I was encouraged to hear strong support for relief operations.”

“During my mission, I met families outside Sana'a who fled their homes four years ago when conflict escalated and are still living in terrible conditions. In Lahj, I visited an overcrowded camp that hosts hundreds of desperate families displaced by recent fighting in Hudaydah.”

Displacement is one of the most visible consequences of the conflict in Yemen. About 2.3 million people are currently displaced across the country. Since June alone, more than 500,000 people have fled conflict in Hudaydah Governorate.

The conflict – and especially the recent economic crisis – are also driving major increases in severe hunger and malnutrition.

“In Aden, I met emaciated children so malnourished they could barely open their eyes. Humanitarian assistance helps many of these children recover. But I also heard heart-breaking stories of children relapsing again and again because their families simply can't afford food or proper medical care.”

Throughout his visit, Mr. Lowcock reiterated his call for a cessation of hostilities, particularly in and around infrastructure critical for aid operations and commercial imports. “It is unacceptable to see men with guns inside hospitals,” he said. “Conflict and fighters must stay away from civilian facilities.”

He also urged the parties to facilitate humanitarian assistance and to protect the supply of food and other essential goods. “Humanitarian agencies still face too many obstacles in their work. I was pleased to hear commitments from authorities in Sana'a and officials in Aden to do everything possible to enable effective aid operations.”

Given Yemen's heavy reliance on imports, Mr. Lowcock also repeated the UN offer to

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play a role in Hudaydah port to ensure it can stay open. Most food imports enter Yemen through Hudaydah and nearby Saleef ports.

Mr. Lowcock also stressed the need to address the economic crisis. “I listened to families who can’t afford food, clean water or even transport to a clinic where they might access free medical care. We need urgent steps to stabilize the economy, boost incomes and ensure basic commodity prices come down.”

Deteriorating conditions in Yemen mean substantially more resources will be required for the aid effort next year. “Yemen is the world’s largest humanitarian operation, but in 2019 it will need to be substantially bigger,” said Mr. Lowcock. Donors this year have provided \$2.3 billion for the 2018 response plan, or about 80 per cent of requirements. “I want again to thank all our donors for their support – and I can assure them that their money is saving many lives.”

Mr. Lowcock also reiterated that only a political solution can end the crisis in Yemen.

“I was very pleased to hear de facto authorities in Sana’a and officials of the internationally recognized Government of Yemen in Aden confirm that they intend to travel to Sweden for the talks to be convened by Martin Griffiths, the UN Special Envoy,” said Mr. Lowcock. “This war needs to end. Yemenis deserve a brighter future.”