

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, STEPHEN O'BRIEN**

**REMARKS AT THE HIGH-LEVEL PLEDGING EVENT FOR THE
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN YEMEN**

Geneva, 25 April 2017

As delivered

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yemen is the world's largest humanitarian crisis today, including the very real risk of famine. I do thank you for coming today to demonstrate your solidarity, commitment and generosity to save lives and lessen the suffering of women, children and men caught in a conflict which is not their own.

Your support for the 2017 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is a manifestation of that solidarity. Financial contributions to the plan are the most strategic, effective and efficient investment to save and protect millions of lives; it is to provide humanitarian assistance which is neutral, impartial and independent, reaching people where the needs and vulnerabilities are greatest across all of Yemen.

I have visited Yemen three times over the past two years and I have seen with my own eyes the terrible suffering. I have met a stunted teenager who barely looked older than a pre-schooler. I met a thirteen-year-old girl who is now the head of their household. I listened to families displaced due to fighting, living in squalid shelters with little access to food, medicine and clean water. I spoke with parents about their fears and hopes for their famished and sick children. I witnessed babies and toddlers who are too sick to register their surroundings or even their mother's touch. Those are some of the people we are here for today.

On my visits, I also saw the remarkable expansion of our capacity. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners are scaling up and are ready to do more provided there are resources and access. Our understanding of needs is more sophisticated than ever. Humanitarian hubs in Sana'a, Sa'ada, Hudaydah, Ibb and Aden ensure reach across the country. The number of humanitarian partners has more than doubled since 2015. Under the outstanding leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, we have a plan, we have a strong humanitarian country team, and we can scale up.

Of course, serious challenges persist. Parties to the conflict must be reminded of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law and that they will be held to account, now or at some future day of reckoning. Those with influence over parties to the conflict must also exercise their influence accordingly. Access restrictions to and within the

country exist. Bureaucratic impediments, insecurity and active conflict at times hinder humanitarian partners from delivering assistance. But where challenges arise, we are determined to overcome them, working with all stakeholders and parties to the conflict.

As the Secretary-General noted, we have already reached 5.8 million people across the country this year. More than 3 million people receive emergency food assistance every month, more than 1 million people can access safe drinking water, nearly 500,000 people benefited from essential drugs and medical supplies, and nearly 60,000 acutely malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women received life-saving treatment.

We are about to allocate US\$50 million from the Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund, of which \$35 million will support famine prevention and 70 per cent will be allocated to national and international NGOs. We are complementing this injection of much needed funds with an allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) of up to \$25 million to provide immediate, life-saving assistance. And I wish to emphasize just how grateful I am to those donors that provide unearmarked funds to give to the CERF and the pooled funds that provide flexibility and speed.

These efforts demonstrate our resolve and capacity, despite the challenges. They show that we must do more and can do more. We can, with your money and support, scale up, we can avert famine and the worst catastrophe, if we have access. It urgently requires your financial and political support for the exceptionally brave humanitarian aid workers who must remain protected.

I wish to echo the Secretary-General: humanitarian assistance will not resolve this crisis. We need an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to negotiations and peace. We hope that by addressing people's most urgent needs now, we will also help to create the space that is needed for Yemenis and parties to the conflict to come together and put an end to this terrible war.

I thank you in advance for your commitment and encourage your best generosity now.
