



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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

STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON YEMEN

New York, 12 July 2017

As delivered

Thank you and thank you to Special Envoy, Ismail, for his statement to which I fully align.

Mr President, Distinguished Representatives,

Millions of Yemeni civilians – women, children and men – continue to be exposed to unfathomable pain and suffering. Cholera and risk of famine remain acute in all but one of the 22 governorates across the country. And, in the midst of this, each day millions of people in Yemen are struggling to survive the conflict, the poverty, and, at the end of their tether, grind just to survive one day at a time.

Seven million people, including 2.3 million malnourished (500,000 severely malnourished) children under the age of five, are on the cusp of famine, vulnerable to disease and ultimately at risk of a slow and painful death. Nearly 16 million people do not have access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, and more than 320,000 suspected cholera cases have been reported in all of the country's governorates bar one. At least 1,740 people already are known to have died from this entirely preventable disease – probably many more in the many very remote areas of Yemen we can't reach.

Yemen is facing critical stoppages of hospitals and a lack of doctors and nurses. The health system has essentially collapsed, with an estimated 55 per cent of facilities closed due to damage, destruction or lack of funds. Some 30,000 health care workers have not been paid in nearly a year and no funding has been provided to keep basic infrastructure such as hospitals, water pumping and sanitation stations operating. At what point will the parties shoulder their responsibilities to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure – hospitals, medical facilities and schools – and to provide basic services for the population? At what point will those supporting the parties in the conflict take necessary action or perhaps more importantly desist from violent actions? This cholera scandal is entirely manmade by the conflicting parties and those beyond Yemen's borders who are leading, supplying, fighting and perpetuating the fear and fighting.



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Over 120 humanitarian partners in Yemen are delivering coordinated assistance out of five hubs in Aden, Hudaydah, Ibb, Sa'ada, and Sana'a. From January to April this year, humanitarian partners reached 4.3 million people. However, at a time when the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is only 33 per cent funded (\$688 million of \$2.1 billion), humanitarians have had to use resources programmed for food security or malnutrition to combat the unprecedented cholera outbreak which has surged beyond initial estimates. Funding to the appeal is critical to ensure that life-saving aid reaches all those in need, wherever and whoever they are. Fresh funds are needed to scale up further, pledges made in Geneva at the April conference must be turned into cash, and the UN and its partners must be allowed to use funds flexibly to tackle the multitude of crises this conflict has created. The cholera response alone now requires an additional \$250 million, of which only \$47 million has been received and is being deployed and used up as we speak.

Mr. President,

I repeat my call made last time I briefed this Council six weeks ago. If only I didn't have to repeat it – there has been change since then, only for the dramatically worse.

1. Notwithstanding the World Bank's commitment of \$866 million to assist Yemen and the US lifting the freeze on access to Yemen's foreign currency reserves, public servants need to be paid immediately, and health facilities need to be reopened and restarted. Failure to do so will surely result in further preventable deaths. Ultimately, the UN and partners cannot replace State functions. There is no time to lose to ensuring these payments are made.
2. To ensure the protection of the Yemeni people and critical infrastructure. For as long as military actions continue, all parties must comply with their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law, and all States must exert their influence to ensure the parties do so. Today, they are not doing so. This must change.
3. To ensure that all ports and land routes remain open for both humanitarian and commercial imports in a predictable and stable manner. This includes continuing efforts to avert an attack on Hudaydah, to re-open Sana'a airport and for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to release airspace and getting the paid for, desperately needed mobile cranes to Hudaydah port rather than leaving them sitting useless, rotting on a Dubai quayside.

As I have said before, this is a man-made crisis, and the sheer scale of humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people is a direct result of the conflict and serious violations of international law. Humanity simply cannot continue to lose out to politics. The United Nations Verification and



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Inspection Mechanism has all the necessary checks and balances to ensure the flow of commercial goods into the country by the Red Sea ports, particularly into Hudaydah. It is, and will be inhumane and irresponsible for parties to impede the delivery of food or fuel into the country.

Mr President,

The international community must do more – words are insufficient to ensure that the parties are upholding their obligations under international humanitarian law. This Council has a primary responsibility for this, as well as your responsibility to maintain international peace and security, which is frankly patently failing in Yemen. Some 20 million people depend on your concrete action to end the conflict. To do that you will have to lean much more heavily and effectively on the parties, and those outside Yemen who are leading this policy and action.

Just for the sake of reaching all the millions of Yemenis with cholera vaccines, so desperately needed, the people of Yemen need stability. Failure to do so renders their fate, and our – and your – ability to intervene useless and hopeless. We should all feel deeply guilty about that – and especially the conflicting parties in Yemen should do so and those who drive them from outside Yemen. Our joint – your – top common priority should be always to save civilian lives and protect them. The Yemeni people deserve this equally to any other citizen of the world – be it one of you around this table or someone cowering in fear somewhere in Sana'a or Taizz in Yemen.

Thank you.