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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY- GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR,**

Ms. KYUNG-WHA KANG

Statement to the Security Council on the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen

New York, 22 December 2015

Madam President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in Yemen on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien.

The conditions today for the people inside Yemen are appalling. Around 7.6 million people now require emergency food assistance to survive. At least two million people are malnourished, including 320,000 children who suffer from severe malnutrition, a two-fold increase since March. There can be little doubt that this serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation has been caused by the current conflict in Yemen.

Since mid-March, conflict has spread to 20 of Yemen's 22 governorates, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation brought on by years of poverty, poor governance and ongoing instability, and triggering a large-scale protection crisis. Since March around eight million people have lost reliable and safe access to drinking water. At least 1.8 million children have had to drop out of classes, adding to the 1.6 million who were already out of school before the crisis began.

This conflict has had widespread impact on the whole array of social infrastructure, including markets and road networks. This, combined with import restrictions, has crippled the economy and amplified the vulnerability of the civilian population, including their ability to procure food. Institutions providing basic services in Yemen are unraveling. In the north, there are no financial resources and relevant authorities are unable to procure the supplies they need or pay salaries to doctors, nurses and teachers.

While some 14 million people lack adequate access to health-care assistance, Yemen's health system is close to collapse. Prior to the conflict, some 70 per cent of health care was provided by the private sector that is now no longer functioning because of the failing economy, and the public system is unable to absorb the burden. Health facilities are closing – including 190 that provided nutrition services – medicines and supplies are depleted, and health workers have gone unpaid for months. Patients with chronic illness such as kidney disease and diabetes can no longer find the most basic treatments.

Madam President,

Relentless airstrikes, shelling and violence continue to force Yemeni families from their homes. There are now over 2.5 million internally displaced people in the country – an

eight-fold increase since the start of the conflict. While displacement has decreased in the southern governorates, where people have been returning home in recent months, it has increased significantly in the northern governorates, primarily due to airstrikes. Taizz Governorate now hosts the highest number of IDPs - nearly 400,000 people - followed by the northern governorates of Amran and Hajjah. In addition, almost 170,000 Yemenis, refugees and migrants, have fled to neighboring countries, often forced to take perilous sea journeys.

The conflict is devastating the country and causing widespread suffering as parties show disregard for human life and the protection of civilians, indiscriminately targeting civilian infrastructure in clear violation of international humanitarian law. More than 2,700 civilians have been confirmed killed and at least 637 of them were children. At least 70 health facilities have been hit by airstrikes or shelling. Over 170 schools have been destroyed, and more than 600 damaged. At least 58 schools have been occupied by armed groups, nearly all of them in Taizz Governorate. Another 238 schools are hosting people displaced by the violence. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has verified at least 740 cases of child recruitment this year— almost five times the number in 2014. Nearly 85 per cent of these children have been recruited by non-State actors.

Yemeni women have been particularly impacted by the conflict, and their voices are important for us to listen to and heed. Over 30 per cent of displaced households in some areas of the country are female-headed, a notable increase from the nine per cent before the current crisis. Approximately 70 per cent more gender-based violence incidents have been reported since March. Women are also disproportionately impacted by the failing economy and social service, resulting in lack of access for many life-saving reproductive care.

Madam President,

Despite a challenging and dangerous environment, humanitarian organizations on the ground are responding with life-saving assistance. Four million people have been provided access to emergency water and sanitation through water trucking and provision of fuel. Since April, monthly food distributions have been steadily expanding, with 1.9 million people reached in November and 3 million people planned for December. By February, five million people should be receiving food assistance each month across the country. Over 250 MT of life-saving medical supplies have been distributed to health facilities, assisting more than seven million Yemenis. International and national NGOs are playing a significant role in the response, running and supporting health facilities, providing psycho social care, administering treatment to malnourished children, and implementing critical water and sanitation projects.

The announcement the Special Envoy of the agreement by the Yemeni parties to the conflict to cease all hostilities as of 15 December 2015 was seized by humanitarian actors as a long awaited opportunity to reach areas of the country that have been inaccessible, in particular to carry out independent needs assessments and project monitoring - two activities that have been extremely challenging to due to the lack of security guarantees and continuing hostilities.

While UN agencies and partners were able to proceed with some of their intended activities, notably in Taizz Governorate, deliveries have been impacted by continued fighting, denials of clearance for convoy movements, and delays stemming from the resumption of cumbersome movement notification procedures to the coalition.

We are very grateful for the tireless efforts by the Special Envoy and welcome the agreement to facilitate humanitarian access to all affected governorates in Yemen, in

particular in Taizz. I call on parties to take concrete measures to implement this in practice. In Taizz, over 200,000 civilians have been effectively cut off from assistance. Three months of virtual siege has grounded much of the city's basic services to a halt. Over 50 percent of its water network has been destroyed by fighting. The health facilities that remain open are operating with limited capacity and are overwhelmed with the war wounded, often to the detriment of those with chronic illness. To date, only a small amount of supplies have entered the areas of the city affected by the siege. Wheat, pulse, oil and sugar have been off-loaded in WFP partner's warehouses in the four districts of Al Mudhaffar, Al Qahirah, Salh, and Al Taiziah. Distribution of these supplies have not yet taken place.

Madam President,

We continue to monitor commercial imports into Yemen, and I am relieved to report some improvements. Food imports have returned to pre-crisis levels. Fuel imports, although still half of what they were before the crisis, have increased four-fold since October. Despite this progress, prices remain high in part because of damaged road networks throughout the country. It is vital that continued increases in imports of all critical commodities are sustained. The UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) is expected to be operational by mid-January, once all pledges have been received, ensuring steady flows of commercial supplies, especially those vital to the survival and wellbeing of the Yemeni people.

Madam President,

May I once again remind the parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians from hostilities; safeguard civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals; and enable the movement of humanitarian workers and supplies into and across all areas of the country.

UN agencies and partners will continue to scale up our assistance to save lives. However, only a political settlement can end the immense suffering facing more than 20 million men, women and children in Yemen today.

Thank you.