

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

**STATEMENT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE HUMANITARIAN
SITUATION IN YEMEN**
New York, 15 April 2016

Checked against delivery

Mr. President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

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

We welcome the Cessation of Hostilities which is a long-awaited respite at a time of appalling suffering and trauma in Yemen. More than 6,400 people have now been killed, and over 30,500 injured. Displacement has spiked, with some 2.8 million people now forced from their homes. Livelihoods have been ravaged. Some 14.1 million people now need help accessing adequate healthcare as a result of a year of intensified conflict. Lack of supplies, medicines, electricity, fuel for generators, and staff or equipment, have caused health services to decline across the country. Entire governorates have been engulfed in relentless violence – such as Taizz where intensified fighting in and around Taizz city since mid-March has left scores of people dead and wounded, and also significantly hampered relief work.

Children have been particularly affected – among the most vulnerable in any society but all the more so in Yemen. Up until 10 April when the Cessation took effect, an average of six children had been killed or maimed in hostilities each day since March last year. Secondary effects of war and neglect also kill. UNICEF estimates that some 10,000 children under the age of five may have died in the past year from preventable diseases – and this in addition to the 40,000 children who die in Yemen every year before their fifth birthday.

Nor can we ignore the dismal reality women face in Yemen today, a crisis that barely registers on the world's radar. Over half a million pregnant women lack access to health care that would ensure safe births and, although notoriously under-reported in Yemen, the number of recorded cases of gender-based violence is steadily increasing. And at a time when the burden upon the women of Yemen is increasing, with women the primary provider for nearly a third of all displaced households, across the country over 40 per cent of women-run businesses have closed in the past year.

Mr. President,

This paints a very bleak picture, but there is some cause for very cautious optimism. The Cessation of Hostilities is bringing calm to many areas of the country, reducing the crippling violence that has devastated these communities. In addition, following efforts by the UN and partners to prepare for scaling up operations where possible in anticipation of the Cessation of Hostilities, humanitarian organizations have begun to respond in areas that were previously difficult to access. For example, in Sa'ada, UNICEF was able to re-start the rehabilitation of a water facility in Kitaf district serving some 10,000 people which had been damaged in airstrikes. As a result of the calm, parents in the governorate are also more willing to send their children to school again and efforts are being undertaken to re-open around 100 schools. And unlike in previous efforts in Sa'ada, the calm has allowed for vaccination teams to go door to door – increasing the number of children reached. In Taizz City, one of the most severely affected by hostilities, three mobile health and nutrition teams have been deployed, including to districts in the “enclave”, and partners will be delivering medical supplies for over 130,000 people. Some 240,000 people are now receiving food assistance in Al Jawf, Al Dhale'e and Taizz Governorates. As the Cessation of Hostilities continues to strengthen, the humanitarian community will similarly increase assistance on the ground in the most affected areas.

At the same time, UN agencies and partners continue to ramp up ongoing relief efforts across the country. Coinciding with the start of the Cessation of Hostilities, a nation-wide polio vaccination campaign targeting around five million children was successfully launched with the support of UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank. This extraordinary effort has involved more than 19,000 mobile vaccination teams of over 46,000 health workers, and some 5,000 vehicles that were rented to facilitate monitoring across all governorates. Around 3.5 million people are receiving food assistance each month from the WFP. So far this year, around 2.2 million people have been reached with health interventions in 22 governorates through the procurement of medicines, the provision of trauma kits, immunizations, and the maintaining of an uninterrupted supply chain management system. Some 2.3 million people have been reached with emergency water and sanitation programmes, and UNFPA has this month established two shelters in Yemen where survivors of gender-based violence can receive legal, psychosocial and health services.

Millions of fearful, innocent civilians across Yemen – whichever side of the conflict lines they reside – are being reached and lives are being saved. But this is hardly enough. The Cessation of Hostilities must be made to hold.

Mr. President,

Despite these efforts by humanitarian agencies, vital operations continue to be hampered by a variety of bureaucratic impediments, principally by the authorities on the ground. Missions are frequently cancelled due to lack of clearance; interference with implementing partner selection is common; there has been no headway in negotiating the start of the nation-wide emergency food security and nutrition assessment - blocked for seven months now; and there remain long lists of critical humanitarian supplies sitting in warehouses or in ports awaiting clearance by the authorities – including UN armoured vehicles, along with around 100 protective vests and helmets required for UN staff to expand and operate safely, particularly on missions outside Sana'a. Progress is also required towards simplifying the current de-confliction mechanism with the coalition. For operations to

meaningfully expand during the Cessation and beyond, as well as for existing humanitarian relief efforts to consistently reach those most in need, these impediments must be immediately removed.

In this context, I underscore that the terms of the Cessation of Hostilities not only include a halt in hostilities but also obligate the parties to allow unhindered humanitarian assistance. I remind all parties that this facilitation is an obligation under International Humanitarian Law. While airstrikes, rockets and ground fighting indiscriminately kill civilians, these administrative obstacles are only nominally less devastating, directly contributing to hunger, sickness, deprivation and death.

Operations are also being impacted financially. Now into the second quarter of 2016, the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan remains critically underfunded, at only 16 per cent. To date US\$296 million has been received against the US\$1.8 billion requested. In order for humanitarian agencies – both UN and NGOs - to continue their work, more funding is required now. Because it is so critical that this assistance reaches all in need across the country, without partiality, it is important that funding be given through the Humanitarian Response Plan released earlier this year.

Mr. President,

Commercial imports have notably decreased over the past two months, primarily because of delays in the coalition clearance process – in particular for vessels trying to reach Al Hudaydah Port. Delays in the delivery of commercial goods into Yemen have a direct humanitarian consequence. Constricting the pipeline of food, fuel and medical supplies into the country means that less will be available for civilian consumption and what is delivered will be available only at an inflated price. For example, in February only 15 per cent of the monthly fuel requirement was delivered while food imports fell by a quarter. As a consequence, prices rose and civilians faced greater hardship.

The Steering Committee of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) met for the first time on 11 April, to be followed by a second meeting on 18 April. In the past 12 hours the representative from the Government of Yemen to the Steering Committee affirmed to the United Nations that the Government of Yemen has agreed to the UNVIM head office being located in Djibouti. It is now a matter of urgency that during this upcoming meeting the UNVIM be fully operationalized as a single mechanism for the clearance of commercial vessels into Yemen. To delay further will have far-reaching consequences – increasing already severe humanitarian needs.

Mr. President,

Despite the overwhelming human tragedy that marks Yemen today, we maintain the hope that the parties to this conflict will choose the only path to a solution, namely negotiation and dialogue, over the coming weeks, no matter how challenging that path may seem. There is no military solution. We will continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need, but what is needed above all in Yemen is peace. Peace for nearly three and a half million children, the country's next generation, to return to school; for the displaced to return home; for livelihoods to recover; and for the rebuilding of social service infrastructure, heritage sites, and communities.

For the people of Yemen, peace is not an abstract, it is vital to their survival. I call on the parties to re-double their commitment to finding a negotiated political settlement to the conflict, and call upon all Member States and the Council to continue to support such genuine efforts. While this process develops meanwhile, we cannot simply wait and hope. Action is required. Parties to the conflict must recognise their responsibility to protect the civilians of Yemen and facilitate the unfettered delivery of impartial aid to the people in need. Similarly, the delivery of commercial goods to the country must be better managed through the UNVIM process to relieve the acute price and availability pressures on daily necessities. Building barriers around the people of Yemen – through access restrictions, delivery delays or visa denials for humanitarian staff – is not in the interest of peace, nor of the Yemeni people. It will prolong the suffering of those in need and drive more and more communities into real and life-threatening risk. The Cessation of Hostilities is a crucial window of action for both the parties to the conflict to consider peace and those civilians caught in its grasp to receive much needed aid.

Thank you.