

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and
Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien**
Remarks at High-Level Event on the Humanitarian situation in Yemen

New York, 21 September 2016

As delivered

Secretary of State Priti Patel, fellow co-chair Ambassador Hesham Yousef, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen is one of the worst in the world. Over 12 million Yemenis are in desperate need of life-saving assistance; basic services and the economy are in near total collapse. Livelihoods have been destroyed, the price of basic goods has skyrocketed; imports of food, fuel and medicines are severely limited.

Recognizing the severity of the mounting suffering, in July 2015 we declared Yemen a Level 3 crisis, setting in motion a UN-wide surge response. We understood the need to shift gears and put in place our most experienced staff, as well as to get more international groups – both UN and International NGOs – back in the country to deploy.

We have empowered senior leadership – notably in Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick, who has transformed the response by consolidating security management in country. The humanitarian response has stepped up as a result, enabling effective humanitarian response for the most vulnerable Yemenis, wherever they are, without distinction.

We are now reaching 4.2 million Yemenis every month.

Despite this progress, we continue to experience immense challenges in reaching people in need as the conflict drags on. Multiple levels of clearance with parties to the conflict, including among the growing number of local authorities, limits our reach. Destroyed civilian infrastructure, including roads and bridges, has resulted in long travel delays

within Yemen; while the destruction of the cranes at Hudaydah port, the biggest port in Yemen, have disrupted imports of humanitarian supplies. Despite the success of now getting in many ships under the new UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.

We call on all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and call on leaders to seize every opportunity to advocate for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Much highlighted by President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, earlier.

Providing protection and assistance to vulnerable people is at the centre of all our planning and our actions. Humanitarian actors must be provided safe passage to reach the most vulnerable, and civilians must be able to leave conflict zones and access safer areas where assistance can be provided.

This notwithstanding, the only solution to the suffering in Yemen is a political solution. We must never forget that.

Our colleagues on the ground continue to make progress on the humanitarian front - despite the difficult circumstances. Agency heads and I have agreed to further expand our field presence with emergency experienced staff. I am planning to travel myself to Yemen soon to get a better sense of how we have and how can scale up.

In line with OCHA's commitments under the 'Grand Bargain' and the 'new way of working', we will support the Humanitarian Coordinator to deliver a high-quality Humanitarian Needs Overview, to provide a sound, impartial evidence base for humanitarian response.

As manager of the Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund, OCHA aims to increase the amount of funding going to front-line responders, who continue to deliver every day, under extremely challenging circumstances. We aim to direct 70 per cent of Yemen Humanitarian Pooled Fund allocations to national and international NGOs.

We ask that, in addition to the efforts of humanitarian actors, that development agencies, international financial institutions, Member States and regional bodies make the necessary financial and policy pledges to enable our programmes to expand.

I want to thank the United Kingdom which just announced an increase of funding and support to Yemen for 2016 and 2017. A big thank you to those Member States who have kept the 2015 and 2016 response plans afloat, and to those who will make further pledges today.

I should add that the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated over US\$57 million for the Yemen response since 2015 and over \$125 million has been contributed through the Yemen Humanitarian Fund over the last three years

Today's event has many goals, but what Yemenis need the most from the donor community is that it deliver on its duty to fund life-saving intervention.

For our part we will continue to improve the humanitarian response and deploy more and more staff throughout the country. We will be tracking these donor and humanitarian policy commitments to ensure we collectively remain on target to provide the best humanitarian response possible. You can count on us to step up even more.

I will now pass the floor to Jamie McGoldrick to provide an update on the humanitarian situation in Yemen.