Millions of Yemenis face a battle for survival on a daily basis. Ordinary women, girls, boys and men don’t have the necessities of life: shelter, clean water, food and access to healthcare. But while other crises make headlines, the humanitarian emergency in Yemen is largely overshadowed by armed violence and political turmoil.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Friends of Yemen, and to discuss how we can work together to support the Yemeni authorities to build political stability and economic development, while reducing humanitarian suffering.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The scale of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is staggering:
Almost 15 million people –57 per cent of the Yemeni population -- rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their day-to-day needs.
13.1 million people have no access to safe water or adequate sanitation.
8.6 million people have no access to health services.
10.6 million people are food insecure and more than a million children under five are acutely malnourished.
Two out of every five children are stunted. The physical and intellectual results of stunting can last a lifetime.
About 335,000 people are displaced, after years of conflict in the north. And the return of nearly 700,000 Yemeni migrant workers over the past year is putting even greater strain on the economy. At the same time, Yemen has kept its borders open to people fleeing from the Horn of Africa and hosts more than 245,000 refugees.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every day, humanitarian aid workers are working to provide aid to Yemenis in need throughout the country.

In doing so, they are confronted with two key challenges:
First, the security situation continues to restrict humanitarian access, particularly in areas of ongoing conflict, which is where aid is needed most urgently. We saw this in Amran Governorate earlier this year, when road blocks and ongoing hostilities led to the
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suspension of humanitarian programmes in the midst of a crisis, when people fleeing their homes desperately needed life-saving help and support.

Secondly, funding is a key constraint for humanitarian operations. Last year, the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan was only 56 per cent funded. As a result, we couldn’t meet people’s most basic needs. We had to suspend or curtail food distribution and health services for displaced people.

So far this year, only 49 per cent of the nearly $600 million needed for coordinated humanitarian action in Yemen has been raised. Without funding, there is real danger that people, especially children, will die from malnutrition and from preventable or curable diseases.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite insecurity, access constraints and limited funding, humanitarian agencies reached more than 5 million people across the country in 2013. This year, humanitarian partners hope to support 7.6 million people with aid that will save lives and lift them out of vulnerability. But I must remind you that this figures is just over half of the 14.7 million who need assistance.

We have already reached more than 3 million people so far this year with food assistance, basic health care and treatment for acute malnutrition.

Displaced families returning home have received support to restart their lives in post-conflict areas, while emergency shelter materials and other basic supplies have been distributed to people fleeing their homes due to conflict.

Last month, despite violent clashes in many parts of the country, a national polio vaccination campaign reached more than 96 per cent of nearly five million children targeted. Humanitarian partners have been working closely with the Yemeni authorities to devise sustainable solutions to long-term problems like protracted displacement and chronic malnutrition.

However, delays in implementing the political, social and economic reforms that emerged from the National Dialogue Conference are impeding progress towards restoring basic services, reducing poverty and re-establishing the authority of the state and the rule of law. Progress in all these areas is vital, if we are to reduce the chronic vulnerability of the Yemeni people and their reliance on outside aid. But three years after the beginning of the transition, the political situation remains highly unstable and the economy is under severe strain. Unless concrete actions are taken to lift people out of grinding poverty and hunger, there is a grave risk that all our efforts over the past three years to bring peace and stability and to build institutions will have been wasted.

I therefore welcome the emphasis in the Peace and National Partnership agreement that was signed on Sunday on the outcomes of the National Dialogue, on economic reform, and on alleviating poverty.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

We now have an opportunity for all parties to make urgent progress to relieve the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

I hope today’s meeting will bring a recommitment by all stakeholders – including the Yemeni authorities, but also donors, NGOs and the United Nations – to make immediate progress towards a better, more stable and more prosperous future for the Yemeni people.

Thank you.