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Note to the Secretary-General

UPDATE ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN YEMEN

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SECURITY

1. In the year since fighting escalated in Yemen, some 6,400 people have been killed – at least half of them civilians, and 930 of them children. Humanitarian needs, already grim for the past decade, have increased by 33 per cent, rendering millions of people in need of some assistance. Some 2.4 million people have been internally displaced, 1.8 million children have dropped out of school, and the country's entire healthcare system is on the brink of collapse. With a quarter of all businesses in the country having closed down and around 70 per cent of businesses forced to lay off staff, household livelihoods have been wiped out.
2. The recent announcement by the Special Envoy that the parties have agreed to a ceasefire to take effect on 10 April, to be followed by political talks on 18 April in Kuwait, is welcome news. In the meantime, airstrikes continue in Aden, Hajjah, Al Jawf, Marib, Sana'a and Taizz Governorates, and there is a concern that in the days leading up to the ceasefire, parties may intensify their efforts to take new ground. The Humanitarian Coordinator is leading a review of all stocks in-country, so that agencies are able to continue to deliver in areas where needs are highest, despite shifting conflict lines.
3. Despite relative calm achieved in the border areas as a result of direct talks between Coalition and Houthi forces, the situation in other parts of the country has rapidly deteriorated over the past two weeks, with significant humanitarian impact. On 11 March forces aligned with the Government of Yemen (GoY), with support from the Coalition, launched an attack on Al-Houthi/Saleh groups along the western approach to the Taizz City enclave opening up access to portions of the enclave – where some 175,000 people had been virtually cut off from commercial and humanitarian supplies for eight months. Since then, fighting has been intense, and there are reports of conflict related deaths, injuries and displacement. Fighting has also spread north to the border with Ibb Governorate, and to the eastern parts of Taizz City. A quarter of all displaced people in Yemen are located in Taizz and Ibb Governorates.
4. Following reports of access to Taizz enclave improving, some assistance has been provided. However, insecurity and fluid conflict lines forced UN agencies and NGOs to temporarily offload their assistance at nearby warehouses, outside the city. In addition, a planned Government convoy from Aden was cancelled as Houthi forces reportedly re-gained some of the areas previously taken by the pro-GoY forces. The UN has deployed additional staff to its sub-office in Ibb Governorate from where humanitarian operations in Taizz are being coordinated.
5. Despite pressure by the GoY for the UN to re-deploy an international presence in Aden, severe levels of insecurity continue to prevent this. International staff from NGOs in the area are effectively "bunkered down" where they work. Despite these security challenges, significant amounts of humanitarian aid are being delivered in Aden and other southern Governorates – primarily by national implementing partners and through Gulf charities.

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update

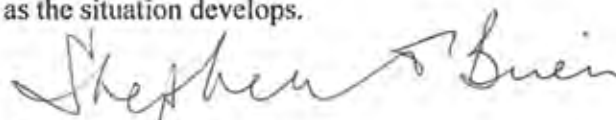
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6. Despite steady improvements over the past several months, fuel and food imports to Yemen sharply decreased in February. These decreases are primarily due to bureaucratic requirements, rising insurance costs, and credit line uncertainties causing commercial fatigue and, consequently, fewer ships berthing at Yemeni ports.
7. Formal transfer of responsibility for the clearance of commercial vessels from the Coalition to the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) has yet to take place. There appears to be a lack of will to do so, possibly related to the financial gains associated with vessel clearance. The first meeting of the UNVIM Steering Committee, comprised of the UN, GoY and the Coalition, has now been set for 7 April in Riyadh. The UN team will seek to position the UNVIM as the process for the clearance of commercial vessels to ports not under the control of the GoY.
8. The Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations in New York has on several occasions this past month noted that it had not been consulted on the location of the UNVIM head office. I can confirm, however, that on 7 October a decision was taken in Aden by the then Minister of Transport of Yemen His Excellency Mr. Badr Basalma in consultation with the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Amer Daoudi, that due to security concerns and lack of appropriate communications equipment, the UNVIM head office would be based in Djibouti for the first six months of operations or until the security situation in Aden improved. This issue may be raised by the GoY at the Steering Committee.
9. I will continue to update you as the situation develops.



Stephen O'Brien
28 March 2016

cc: Mr. Eliasson
Mr. Mulet
Mr. Feltman
Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed
Ms. Clark
Mr. Daoudi
Mr. McGoldrick
Ms. Cousin
Mr. Lake
Mr. Grandi
Dr. Chan