

Yemen Humanitarian Senior Official Meeting II

12 November 2020

CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY

The second Senior Officials Meeting (SOM II) on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen took place in virtual format on 12 November 2020 with the participation of the main humanitarian actors active in the country. The participants – donors, United Nations agencies and International and Yemeni Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) – took stock of the situation in Yemen, assessed the deteriorating crisis and expressed their commitment to continue acting collectively along the following lines.

Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Participants noted with deep concern the marked deterioration of the humanitarian crisis, including the imminent risk of famine, due to increased violence and economic struggles, compounded by shortages of funding, restricted humanitarian space, politicisation of aid and limited imports of basic commodities. A spiralling economic collapse, exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19, is a realistic prospect.

On 18 September, the UN Security Council was briefed, within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2417, about the real threat of famine in Yemen further confirmed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and WFP Executive Director on 11 November. Unlike in previous years, the humanitarian response in Yemen 2020 is severely underfunded and additional resources are urgently required. Disbursement of pledges is critically awaited, notably from regional donors who dramatically reduced their contributions compared to prior years.

Humanitarian actors reiterated their firm commitment to continue providing life-saving support to the people of Yemen in line with donor accountability regulations and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. Donors reaffirmed their full support for international and Yemeni humanitarian actors, whose complementary action on the ground is indispensable to assist populations in need and are operating under such extreme and difficult conditions on the ground.

Donors reaffirmed the seven areas¹, which parties to the conflict must respect in Yemen to enable access and allow accountable, efficient, effective and principled delivery of assistance. Donors welcomed improvements achieved in some areas since the first SOM held on 13 February 2020. Donors noted that progress, however, remains insufficient and reaffirmed that they will continue to monitor progress against the agreed benchmarks. All restrictions, obstructions and interferences violating humanitarian principles must be sustainably removed once and for all.

¹ 1) Avoid taxation of humanitarian aid through levies or any other form of tax; 2) Implement WFP biometrics and re-targeting pilot project and bring it to scale; 3) Approval of Principle Agreements avoiding clauses in breach of humanitarian principles; 4) Facilitate the timely approval of project sub agreements; 5) Allow unrestricted needs assessments so aid can be allocated based on needs without exclusion of marginalised populations; 6) Respect humanitarian actors' independence and accountability in managing donors' grants and; 7) Facilitate humanitarian staff entry into Yemen, operational movement across the country and monitoring.

In the North, where most problems are reported, WFP retargeting and biometrics has just been launched and must continue, and approval of projects and Standard Operating Procedures must be swiftly implemented. In the South, it is essential to process the timely approval of project sub agreements and maintain the support in issuance of visas and approval of Principal Agreements.

Humanitarian actors agreed that, if and where the operating environment limits or obstructs the flow of principled and accountable aid, humanitarian programmes will continue to be adapted and recalibrated. In doing this, humanitarian actors shall focus on life-saving activities, as a matter of priority, striving to mitigate risk, optimise programming efficiency and effectiveness and target the most vulnerable people.

The participants reiterated their commitment to a constructive and sustained dialogue with all parties to support principled humanitarian operations on the ground. The participants condemned recent attacks against humanitarian organisations and called on the parties to ensure the security and safety of humanitarian workers.

The participants acknowledged that the humanitarian crisis will likely continue worsening unless urgent and decisive action is taken to address both the violence and key political and economic drivers of the increasing needs. The participants urged the parties to reach agreements on key economic measures that could alleviate the impact of the conflict on the general population, and the international community to support those efforts. Donors agreed on the critical necessity to enhance humanitarian and development coordination and provide recommendations and technical support toward economic recovery and addressing the drivers of the crisis.

The participants recalled the obligation by all parties to protect civilians and to comply with International Humanitarian Law. They reaffirmed their conviction that a long-term solution to the situation in Yemen requires an urgent, nationwide ceasefire, and a comprehensive peace agreement and urged all parties to actively engage and support the UN-led political process aiming at a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The participants agreed to:

1. Maintain a regular, constructive and consistent dialogue with all parties, assess the situation and its progress in the next months and reconvene before the 2021 pledging conference for Yemen.
2. Increase urgent advocacy, including at the highest level, with the parties for the respect of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, and the protection of civilians.
3. Intensify engagement with relevant Yemeni parties to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of progress of the seven areas to ensure principled humanitarian delivery.
4. Continue to adapt and recalibrate their programmes to adjust to circumstances on the ground in Yemen, whenever the operating environment limits or obstructs the flow of principled and accountable aid.
5. Continue to mobilise and increase much needed funding in Yemen to preserve life-saving assistance – such as food, water, healthcare, nutrition and protection – with focus,

on the most pressing and acute needs in the country. With the aim of avoiding a prospect of further downscaling of programmes by humanitarian actors in the coming months due to a lack of funding, substantial additional resources, including development funding, and prompt disbursements are urgently needed before the end of 2020 and in early 2021.

6. Mobilise a support package to prevent the economic collapse, including renewal of proven measures like foreign-exchange injections, as well as identify concrete modalities allowing a more focused developmental and financial support to address the drivers of the crisis in order to keep Yemen from the brink of collapse.
7. Follow up by dispatching high-level missions by the UN, NGOs and donors, where appropriate, to pursue advocacy on humanitarian matters pertaining to the Yemen crisis.

The participants to the SOM II mandated the European Commission and the Kingdom of Sweden, the two co-chairs and hosts of the SOM II, to debrief all relevant actors on the outcomes of this meeting, in particular all the Yemeni involved actors.