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**OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR
AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR YEMEN**

On the eve of the international pledging conference, COVID-19 is spreading in Yemen

Sana'a, 29 May 2020 – Seven weeks after the first case of COVID-19 was announced in Yemen on 10 April, the virus is spreading unchecked and unmitigated across the country.

“A tragedy is unfolding in Yemen” said Ms. Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen.

“Without sufficient testing capacity, it’s impossible to know precisely how many people are impacted. What we do know is that hospitals are having to turn people away and there are shortages of everything.”

Preliminary reports from intensive care unit (ICUs) indicate a case fatality rate of nearly 20 per cent compared to the global average of 7 percent.

“Two years ago, Yemen faced the worst cholera outbreak in modern history. Last year, Yemen was on the brink of famine. This year, tens of thousands of families have lost everything in once-in-a-generation flooding,” said Ms. Grande. “Working together, we’ve been able to push back on cholera and push back the famine but if we don’t get the funding we need and if more isn’t done to suppress the virus, COVID-19 could engulf Yemen.”

Of 41 major UN programmes in Yemen, 30 will close in the next few weeks. A week after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was announced, agencies were forced to suspend incentives for up to 10,000 frontline health workers from lack of funding.

“The international community has stood with the people of Yemen throughout the conflict, providing generous support for the world’s largest humanitarian operation,” said Ms. Grande. “Millions of innocent people have been saved because donors have stepped forward and helped.”

“With the resources we have, we’re doing what we can,” said Ms. Grande.

“14,000 volunteers are fanning out across the country informing communities about the virus, how it is transmitted and what they can do to protect themselves. We’re scouring markets around the world to procure the supplies Yemen needs. More than 4,520 metric tons of medical equipment, testing kits and medicine has already arrived in country; 4,500 metric tons are on the way. Supplies are coming by sea, land and air.”

Partners are helping to build, upgrade, equip and train staff in 59 intensive care units across Yemen. An advance team has arrived in country ahead of possibly deploying two high capacity mobile field hospitals. Partners are starting to pay allowances for nurses and doctors and intend to expand this to 9,000 frontline COVID-19 workers as soon as funding is received.

“We have to do more and we can do more,” said Ms. Grande. “If we receive funding.”

Yemen remains the world’s worst humanitarian disaster. Nearly 80 per cent of the population requires some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. On 2 June at the High-Level Pledging Event in Riyadh, aid agencies will be asking donors for US\$2.41 billion to cover essential activities from June through to December, including programmes to address COVID-19.
