



**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT HIGH-LEVEL PLEDGING EVENT FOR THE HUMANITARIAN  
CRISIS IN YEMEN**

**Geneva, 27 February 2023**

**As delivered**

I thank the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland for again co-hosting this conference, and I thank all of you for your solidarity with the people of Yemen.

We ended last year with a measure of hope for the future of Yemen.

After years of death, displacement, destruction, starvation, and suffering, the truce delivered real dividends for people.

Civilian flights resumed from Sanaa; vital supplies arrived through the port of Hudaydah.

But the truce lapsed though after only six months.

Yes, key provisions have remained in place.

But the economy is in enormous difficulties.

Basic services risk to collapse.

And humanitarian needs continue to soar, while access is constrained, and funding perennially falls short.

Today, more than 21 million people – two in three Yemeni children, women, and men – need assistance and protection.

Pause and reflect for a moment what this staggering figure means.

The daily struggle for survival.

Parents unable to feed their children.

Women and girls too afraid to walk to school or even venture outside.

Families losing whatever hope they had left to ever return home.

Excellencies,

I am acutely aware that humanitarian needs worldwide are the highest they have ever been.

And I know that resources are stretched thin.

But I also know that your support can be the difference between life and death.

Today, we are appealing for \$4.3 billion to support 17.3 million of the most vulnerable people in Yemen.

This will enable us to sustain vital operations that have proven their worth.

Last year, almost 11 million people received life-saving assistance – from food and clean water to shelter, protection, and education.

Thanks to this assistance – as well as the truce and other factors – two million fewer people suffered acute hunger.

And the number of people living on the brink of famine fell from over 150,000 to virtually zero.

But these gains remain fragile.

If support dries up now, aid agencies will be forced to scale back or suspend programming, at terrible human cost.

Excellencies,

Beyond sustained support, our humanitarian colleagues and partners need sustained access to people in need.

Bureaucratic impediments, interference, movement restrictions – particularly in Houthi-controlled areas – make it that much harder to reach affected populations.

Even worse, aid workers themselves are increasingly coming under attack.

I call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate the safe, rapid, and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to all civilians in need, in line with obligations under international humanitarian law.

Humanitarians – including female Yemeni aid workers – must be able to carry out their work safely, independently, rapidly, and without hindrance or arbitrary restrictions.

Excellencies,

This marks the seventh time in seven years that we had to convene a pledging conference for the people of Yemen.

The people of Yemen deserve our support. But more than that, they deserve a credible path out of perpetual conflict and a chance to rebuild their communities and country.

Humanitarian aid is a band aid. It saves lives, but it cannot resolve the conflict itself.

We have a real opportunity this year to change Yemen's trajectory and move towards peace.

By renewing and expanding the truce.

By advancing the political process facilitated by my Special Envoy.

And through sustained investments at scale in Yemen's economy to restore basic services and build long-term resilience.

Excellencies,

The international community has the power and the means to end this crisis.

And it begins by funding our appeal fully and committing to disbursing funds quickly.

And allow me a very personal observation. When I was High Commissioner for Refugees, I visited Yemen several times – and I have been from Saada to Aden, from East to West. And I will never forget the enormous generosity of the Yemeni people.

At the time, even with all the problems, with all the difficulties, Yemenis were receiving Somali refugees in big numbers, coming to the coast, and they were granting to all of them prima facie refugee status.

I don't know many developed countries in the world able to give prima facie refugee status to Somali refugees.

This extraordinary generosity needs to be matched by our own solidarity with Yemeni people.

And so, together, let us at long last turn the tide of suffering.

Let us give hope to the people of Yemen.

Shukran.