

News story: Middle East Minister Alistair Burt issues stark warning as the number of people affected by humanitarian crises doubles over decade

The UK has renewed calls for the international community to reform the global humanitarian system to ensure aid continues to get to the 100 million people in desperate need of help right now.

Speaking on a visit to the Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum in Saudi Arabia, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt warned that the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has doubled over the last ten years. By 2030 more than half of the world's poor could be living in countries affected by conflict.

He demanded that global leaders act now to better support those affected by brutal and relentless conflict.

Alistair Burt said: "Whilst the number of conflicts is in decline, those that persist are becoming more complex, harder to resolve and lasting significantly longer. From Syria to South Sudan, merciless conflicts rage on and over the last few years, we have seen that people who are forced to flee their home countries become refugees for over ten years on average.

"The UK's focus is on bigger, better and faster humanitarian responses. We are already improving preparedness in emergency including investing in financial programmes such as disaster risk insurance schemes that help provide cheaper, faster and reliable finance when crises hit. But this is not enough, and international coordination is vital if we are to continue getting aid to those most in need together with an urgent examination of the failure of current intended processes to prevent, or bring to a conclusion, the conflict doing so much damage.

"Alongside this we must all take a longer-term approach to protracted crises, including supporting those countries and communities which host significant numbers of refugees who have fled relentless violence. This will help foster stability and security which is firmly in all our interests."

Mr Burt's comments come on a visit to Saudi Arabia's launch of the inaugural Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum. The UK welcomes this initiative by Saudi Arabia, permitting global leaders to discuss a range of humanitarian demands.

The Minister raised the dire humanitarian crisis in Yemen with his counterparts, reminding all parties of the need for permanent unhindered

access to the critical ports of Hodeidah and Saleef to ensure lifesaving food, fuel and medical supplies continue to enter the country. He also pressed for renewed engagement with a political process, underlining that there is no military solution to the conflict.

Background

- The Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, hosted by King Salman, is the first conference of its kind pulling together high level humanitarian representatives from across the Middle East region and further afield.