

Yemen's 'man-made catastrophe' is ravaging country, senior UN officials tell Security Council

18 August 2017 – Warning about escalating suffering in Yemen's man-made catastrophe, senior United Nations officials today addressed the Security Council, calling on the international community to push for a political solution to the more than two-year-old conflict.

Death looms for Yemenis by air, land and sea, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed told the 15-member Council in New York.

Reiterating one of the key points from Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, who addressed the Council just moment earlier, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said that that diseases and epidemics are at unprecedented levels in Yemen.

Those who survived cholera will continue to suffer the consequences of 'political cholera' that infects Yemen and continues to obstruct the road towards peace, added Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

He noted that while the international community is united in its support of a peaceful solution, certain parties to the conflict take advantage of internal divisions and focus on personal interests.

What is missing at this point is for the parties to the conflict, without any delays, excuses or procrastination, to demonstrate their intention to end the war and put the national interest above any personal gains, the UN envoy said.

Every day without serious action means more destruction and death, as well as the spread of terrorist groups UN envoy for Yemen

Every day spent without serious action means more destruction and death, he said, as well as the spread of terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and uncontrolled migration through the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, where more than 41 migrants died in early August after being forced to abandon their boats and jump.

Before the conflict, Yemen had been making progress, with fewer people hungry and rising school enrolment, Mr. O'Brien said in his statement.

All of this has not been sharply reversed, he said, noting that 17 million Yemenis are hungry, nearly 7 million facing famine, and about 16 million lack access to water or sanitation.



Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefs the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. UN Photo/Kim Haughton



Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed (on screen), the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, briefs the Security Council via video conference. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

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Mr. O'Brien highlighted several key challenges, including a funding shortage – the \$2.3 billion Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is only 39 per cent funded.

He also underscored the interference to movement of critical commercial and humanitarian supplies and staff.

“De facto authorities in Sana'a or local officials in areas under their control block, delay or otherwise interfere with humanitarian action,” said Mr. O'Brien.

The humanitarian official urged the international community to ensure that all ports are open to civilian, including to commercial traffic.

He called for those Governments and individuals with influence to influence the fighting parties to respect the international humanitarian and human rights law and to strengthen accountability.

With 1.2 million public employees not paid regularly for months, he also urged that civil servant salaries be paid so that the basic services in the country do not collapse.

“This human tragedy is deliberate and wanton – it is political and, with will and with courage which are both in short supply, it is stoppable,” he said, reiterating the UN's ongoing calls for a political solution to the conflict.