

UN agency warns conditions around Yemen's key port city of Hudaydah still 'very bad', as staff rush to deliver aid

United Nations migration agency staff in Yemen say the key port city of Hudaydah remains “a difficult environment” for the delivery of aid to thousands of people displaced by heavy fighting this week.

“The situation is [very bad](#) and we're doing our best to provide them with temporary shelter and support for the time being,” said Stefano Pes, [IOM](#) Yemen's Officer in Charge, noting that agency staff and partners are working in a difficult environment to deliver food, and non-food items, shelter kits and good quality tents.

Hudaydah – the primary gateway for food and humanitarian aid for a population on the verge of starvation – has been racked by fighting between Houthi rebels, who control the port, and government forces backed by a Saudi-led military coalition.

Civilian casualties and mass displacements continue to mount amidst intense fighting that began on 12 June.

It has caused further damage to public services which are stretched to the limit, affecting water supplies, forcing shops to close and resulting in shortages in essential commodities. This has complicated the delivery of humanitarian assistance and resulted in the closure of a temporary feeding centre in Zabid.

The fortunate few who are able to leave, are traveling to the relative safety of Sana'a, Aden and Thamar but the majority of the population have already exhausted their reserves, forcing them to seek protection wherever they can, said the agency.

About 50 IOM staff are working in various locations to assist migrants and an estimated 50,000 newly displaced Yemenis in Hudaydah. IOM has also provided 7,830 meals to children in three Hudaydah schools.

The crisis in Yemen has its genesis in the 2011 Arab Spring uprising, which swept across the country amid ongoing rebel insurgency. Although anti-Government protests led to the ouster of the then President, the transfer of power to Mr. Hadi, his deputy, led to further instability and conflict.

Close to 7,000 evacuated from Syrian towns after enduring nearly 3-year siege

After close to three years of siege, 6,900 women, children and men were finally able to leave the Syrian towns of Foah and Kafraya over the past few days, following a local agreement between parties to the conflict.

The two largely Shia pro-Government towns, in the mostly rebel-held Idlib Governorate, had been besieged by non-state armed groups since October 2015, and people trapped there have been in dire need of life-saving assistance, including food and medical care. The United Nations has not been able to deliver humanitarian assistance to the towns since September 2017.

The civilians were escorted out by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to the Al-Eiss crossing in southern rural Aleppo Governorate. In addition, 17 persons in need of urgent medical care, were brought to hospitals in Aleppo city, accompanied by 21 family members.

On Monday, it was reported by the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) that another 430 conflict-affected Syrians were evacuated from Dara'a Governorate to northern Syria, also following an agreement by parties to the conflict. Humanitarian agencies on the ground are responding to the best of their capacities to the most urgent needs in the various reception areas.

“The United Nations was not party to the negotiated agreement or its implementation, but stands ready to provide all people in need with humanitarian assistance wherever they are,” said UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq during a press briefing at UN Headquarters on Thursday, as he stressed that “any evacuation of civilians should be safe, voluntary, well-informed and to a place of their own choosing” and that “all people displaced through such agreements must retain the right of return as soon as the situation allows”.

As needs assessments are ongoing in areas where control has recently changed, humanitarian organisations have started delivering basic help. This week, convoys brought life-saving aid to 19,500 people in dire need in and around Beit Jin (Rural Damascus governorate), to 15,000 people in Nassib and Um Elmayathen (Dara'a governorate), and to 89,000 people in the Al-Houla area (Homs governorate) and the Harbnafseh area (Hama governorate). For Beit Jin, this was the first time that aid reached the formerly besieged area since 2013.

The humanitarian crisis in Syria, now in its eighth year, continues to be characterized by unparalleled suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. Some 13.1 million people require critical aid, including close to 3

million people trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Despite enormous challenges, the UN and its humanitarian partners continue to deliver life-saving assistance and support to millions of people across the country every month.

Multilateral trade challenged by 'increasingly unilateral trade measures,' UN forum hears

Despite the improved economic growth, risks to the economic outlook are rising, the United Nations economic and social affairs chief said on Thursday, warning against “increasingly unilateral trade measures” that are challenging the multilateral trading system.

“Efforts are needed to revitalize a global partnership for sustainable development to build a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system,” said Liu Zhenmin, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, during a high-level policy dialogue with international financial and trade institutions, held at the UN Headquarters.

“Stronger economic growth in itself is not sufficient to ensure that these gains are widely shared,” he added.

The dialogue was organized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to exchange views and insights on trends in the global economy and international trade, in the context of sustainable development.

Representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) offered their projections for economic growth, international trade and other trends and challenges.

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 by UN Member States, require transformative changes across all of the economic, environmental, and social spheres.

“All in all, a mixed picture emerges from this frontier work on sustainable development scenarios. If we continue merely with incremental progress as in the past, lots of short-term progress might come at the expense of long-term deterioration in other areas,” Mr. Liu said.

The most recent forecast from the DESA’s World Economic Situation and

Prospects indicates that world economic output is expected to expand by 3.2 per cent in both 2018 and 2019.

“This improvement reflects a further uptick in the growth outlook for developed economies in 2018. It comes on the strength of accelerating wage growth, broadly favourable investment conditions, and the short-term impact of a fiscal stimulus package in the United States,” he noted.

The generally positive macroeconomic conditions create the basis for policymakers to take measures that will help to make meaningful progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)– which aim to eradicate poverty and hunger and protect the environment – and offer an opportunity to raise living standards on a broad scale, especially in developing regions.

“However, in parallel with the improvement in economic growth, we have seen a rise in risks to the economic outlook,” he said, warning that “increasingly unilateral trade measures are challenging the multilateral trading system.”

Mr. Liu also said that the recent acceleration in economic growth also comes with an environmental cost, and at the current rate, efforts to combat climate change are insufficient to meet the objectives of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which commits countries to keep the rise in carbon emissions from the dawn of the industrial era, to below 2 degrees Celsius.

[UN chief welcomes new push by El Salvador's political parties to begin fresh dialogue](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed the decision announced on Wednesday by El Salvador's political parties to set up a new [“negotiating framework”](#).

In a statement from his Spokesperson, the UN chief describes the framework as an effort “to reach medium and long-term agreements for the benefit of the country.”

The statement released on Wednesday night added: “He congratulates the members of civil society, constituted in a UN-facilitated Group in Support of Political Dialogue, who have helped bring into being the commitment of political parties.”

The statement added that Mr. Guterres hoped “the political parties will now join their efforts in translating their commitment into concrete agreements that will benefit all Salvadorians.”

Acute political problems and virtually endemic gang violence in the country have led some families to seek refuge outside the country, with many choosing to head north into Mexico and on to the border with the United States.

In recent years a growing number of people across El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have fled violence at the hands of organized criminal groups – including murder, rape, abduction and forcible recruitment of children into gangs.

El Salvador is also one of the main countries from which asylum-seekers have been separated from their [children](#) along the southern border of the United States.

[UNHCR welcomes deal to end latest migrant stand-off in Mediterranean Sea](#)

UN Refugee Agency chief [Filippo Grandi](#), on Thursday gave a cautious welcome to the decision by several EU countries to take in some 450 migrants who have been stranded at sea for days, warning that a “ship-by-ship” arrangement was not sustainable.

The development comes after the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Spain and Portugal ended a disembarkation stand-off involving the migrants – who had set out from the Libya coast – by agreeing to take them in and process any asylum claims.

High Commissioner Grandi’s comments follow the rescue of the migrants near the Italian coast. They were reportedly picked up by two ships; one was operated by EU border agency Frontex, the other by Italian police.

In a statement, the [UNHCR](#) chief noted that at an EU Summit in June, some Member States had agreed to a more collaborative and well-managed approach to dealing with people rescued at sea.

He also underlined that while States “have obligations to save lives” under international law, those rescued at sea did not have “the unfettered right” to choose their final destination.

“We hope that these arrangements will now be quickly and effectively implemented,” he said. “As well as ending an ordeal for these individuals, this sets a positive example of how...countries can uphold sea rescue and manage borders while simultaneously meeting international asylum obligations.”

Noting that solutions are needed that go beyond “piecemeal or ship-by-ship

arrangements”, Grandi warned that “lives will be at risk with each new attempted boat journey”.

He cautioned that EU arrangements for managing the rescue, disembarkation and follow-up processing of migrants are far from adequate.

Too little was being done to address the desperation that drives people to flee by sea in dangerous boats, Mr. Grandi insisted, just as these migrants had done.

Since the beginning of the year, 50,872 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

This compares to 109,746 at the same point last year, and 241,859 by the middle of 2016, according to [IOM](#), the UN Migration Agency.

Although slightly fewer people now risk their lives travelling from North Africa to Italy than to Spain, it remains the region’s deadliest sea route, with 1,104 deaths to date this year.

This is almost four times the number of drownings as the Spanish route has registered since 1 January, despite having almost similar arrival totals, at around 18,000.