

In Yemen, UN aid chief rallies support for relief efforts to prevent famine

27 February 2017 – The parties to the conflict in Yemen need to continue providing humanitarian access, and the international community needs to step up its funding for life-saving operations, the United Nations relief aid chief said today during his visit to the port city of Aden.

"I have come to Aden with the first humanitarian UN flight to lend support to the humanitarians who have been working in this city and in Yemen since the conflict escalated in March 2015," UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien told reporters there.

"Today, almost 19 million people in Yemen need humanitarian assistance. Seven million people don't know where their next meal is coming from and we now face a serious risk of famine," he added.

Mr. O'Brien said the purpose of his visit was also to meet with senior Government officials to discuss how to prevent a possible famine and how to better protect the civilians that are caught in this conflict.

In Aden and the surrounding governorates, 3.1 million people need humanitarian assistance, two thirds of whom are in desperate need of food, he warned.

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Yesterday, in meetings with President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, Prime Minister Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr and other senior officials, the top UN aid official stressed the need for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and to allow for unimpeded and immediate full access by humanitarian partners to all of Yemen.

Given the urgency of the situation, they also discussed the need to facilitate commercial imports of food, fuel and medicine, through all ports of Yemen, and the resumption of commercial flights to all of Yemen, Mr. O'Brien said.

"Yesterday, I saw with my own eyes the destruction of the war and the impact on the people living in Aden," he said, noting that he was especially pleased to know that two babies – a boy and a girl – were born while he was at a maternity hospital. "They are Yemen's hope and future," he said.

In the Aden hub, more than 55 humanitarian organizations are working to meet pressing needs.

"We are here to help and provide neutral, impartial life-saving

assistance to all people in need, regardless of where they are in Yemen,” Mr. O'Brien said, stressing that there are no military solutions to this conflict and only peace can provide a lasting solution to this unfolding humanitarian crisis.