

Press release: Foreign Secretary visits Yemen to bolster support for UN peace process

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt visited Aden today on the first visit to Yemen by a Western foreign minister since the start of the conflict in 2015, and the first by a UK Foreign Secretary since 1996.

In a display of the UK's support to the Government of Yemen and for UN efforts to secure peace, the Foreign Secretary met Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister Salem Ahmed Saeed Al Khanbashi and Foreign Minister Khaled Al Yamani.

In the previous 48 hours, in Riyadh and Muscat respectively, Mr Hunt met Yemeni President Hadi and Houthi Spokesman Mohamed Abdel Salem.

While visiting the port of Aden Mr Hunt saw humanitarian aid being delivered and met aid workers, including representatives of the Aden Office of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to discuss the humanitarian response.

Mr Hunt's visit to Aden was part of a Yemen-focussed Gulf tour during which he also engaged regional leaders including Sultan Qaboos in Oman, Foreign Minister al Assaf in Saudi Arabia, and Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed in UAE, as part of a sustained UK diplomatic campaign to support the UN-led peace process. The Foreign Secretary previously attended the UN's Stockholm talks in December, and Quad (Saudi, UAE, US, UK) ministerial discussions in Warsaw in February.

Speaking from Aden the Foreign Secretary said:

We are now in the last chance saloon for the Stockholm peace process. The port of Hodeidah was supposed to be cleared of militia and left under neutral control by the beginning of January. The process could be dead within weeks if we do not see both sides sticking to their commitments in Stockholm.

People in Yemen are on the brink of starvation and none of the parties really want a return to hostilities – so now is the time to take a deep breath, put aside the anger and mistrust after four years of terrible fighting and take the risks that are always necessary at the start of any peace process.

The UK is the largest Western contributor of aid to the Yemen crisis. The additional £200million of aid announced by the Prime Minister on 25 February will support basic needs for over 3.8 million people, treat 20,000 vulnerable children for malnutrition and provide 2 million people with improved water

supply and basic sanitation. This brings the UK's total humanitarian contribution to the Yemen crisis to £770m since 2015.

Images of the visit will be available via Reuters.