

Vital that all Yemeni ports kept open for aid and commercial vessels, stresses UN humanitarian chief

24 December 2017 – With close to three-fourths of all people in Yemen in need of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations top relief official has underscored the need to keep all ports open to both aid and commercial vessels so that life-saving assistance reaches those in desperate need.

"I remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Yemen, where more than 22 million people need humanitarian assistance – 8.4 million of whom are [already on the edge of starvation](#)," said Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, in a statement Sunday.

The conflict in the country, well into its third year, has [resulted](#) in widespread hunger, malnutrition, internal displacement, the world's largest cholera outbreak, an alarming diphtheria outbreak and other complex [humanitarian challenges](#).

Amid such a situation, it is essential that commercial food, medicine and fuel imports – a lifeline for millions of civilians – can flow into all ports.

Commercial food imports are needed to keep food available and affordable in markets across the country, and fuel is essential to run generators in hospitals and health facilities as well as power critical services.

Furthermore, as aid supplies are often shipped on commercial vessels, it is all the more important to keep all ports open to humanitarian and commercial vessels, added Mr. Lowcock.

"I am committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve this as a matter of urgency, and I look forward to seeing commercial imports of critical supplies stabilize at adequate levels," he stated.

In that context, he said that he was "encouraged" by the news of the first commercial fuel imports docking on 24 December at the Hudaydah port (the closest port to the majority of Yemenis) since 6 November, while commercial food imports that resumed in recent weeks have continued.

Further in the statement, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that commercial imports alone will not be enough to address the vast humanitarian crisis in Yemen or to provide a sustainable solution.

"I therefore reiterate my call for all parties to the conflict to provide unconditional, sustained humanitarian access – for both staff and supplies – across the country and without interference," he said, adding:

“I also call on all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and engage meaningfully with the UN to achieve an inclusive, negotiated political settlement.”