

INGO Joint Statement on the complete opening of Hudaydah Port

16 January 2018

Seventeen aid agencies working in Yemen are urging for the complete and unconditional opening of Hudaydah port to allow for the uninterrupted flow of food and fuel. A thirty-day concession period enabling the delivery of commercial supplies has brought only brief reprieve within the context of a sustained blockade on Yemen's Red Sea Ports. Parties to Yemen's conflict have a responsibility to minimise the impact of war on civilians in Yemen by mitigating all factors that exacerbate death and suffering, as over 8 million people are already on the verge of starvation.

Thirty days is an insufficient period in which to halt and reverse the damage done to Yemen's food markets during November and December. Both humanitarian and commercial cargo has been discharged at Yemen's Red Sea Ports since the Saudi-led Coalition announced a temporary opening of the ports to commercial vessels on 20 December. However, uncertainty for shipping companies, importers and vendors about what will happen beyond this period is serving to sustain inflation that makes food unaffordable for most Yemeni people. While there has been a welcome increase in food imports during the concession period, less than 25 percent of the fuel typically expected to come through the Red Sea ports is currently coming into Yemen. Prices of key commodities have barely reduced since the blockade was first imposed, compounding overwhelming food insecurity across the country.

The flow of supplies getting into Yemen must be extended and improved to shift the circumstances driving widespread hunger, disease and suffering across the country. Shane Stevenson, Oxfam's Country Director in Yemen, said: "If Al-Hudaydah port is shut down again, millions of Yemenis will suffer without the food, fuel and clean water they need to survive. All parties to this seemingly never-ending war are playing with fire and need to stop callously jeopardising people's lives."

The blockade on all of Yemen's entry points in November 2017 by the Saudi-led coalition led to dramatic food and fuel shortages, and related price increases that have deprived people of access to clean water, food and health care. More than one million suspected cases of cholera have been identified in Yemen, and hundreds are now affected by diphtheria. A continued blockade, or lack of action to ensure sustained certainty of imports, will push Yemen over the edge with irreversible consequences.

Tamer Kirolos, Save the Children's Country Director in Yemen said: "Millions of Yemenis are in urgent need of food, medicines and fuel which can be shipped through Hudaydah port if the SLC blockade is fully lifted and the port works at its full capacity. The entire country is struggling for survival and children are, as always, the worst affected. There is no viable alternative to a fully functioning and accessible Hudaydah Port. Plans or deals by any party to the conflict that ignore this fact will only deepen the misery of the Yemeni people and hinder the work of the humanitarian community to save lives and alleviate suffering."

The reported impending delivery of new cranes to Hudaydah is a welcome sign of goodwill, and a positive step to increasing capacity at Yemen's most vital port. To continue this progress, the undersigned agencies now call on the Coalition to extend this further, by opening Hudaydah Port without conditions or timeframes that impinge on the flow of critical commercial supplies. We reiterate how critical Yemen's Red Sea ports are to ensuring the flow of supplies is as quick, cost-effective and secure as possible; no other ports have the capacity to replace the function of Hudaydah. We call on the international community to speak up and take responsibility for ensuring people in Yemen can access enough food to survive. It is beyond time to apply all diplomatic pressure to push the parties to make the humane choices needed to end this conflict.

Agency sign on by:

ACTED
Action Against Hunger
CARE International
Danish Refugee Council
Global Communities
International Rescue Committee
INTERSOS
Medecins du Monde
Mercy Corps
Norwegian Refugee Council
Oxfam
Relief International
Save the Children
Search for Common Ground
Vision Hope International
War Child UK
ZOA