

28th February 2020

Item 2 General Debate on HC oral update

Defence for Children International (DCI) - Yemen

Madam President,

Nearly five years after the start of the conflict, Yemen remains the largest global emergency, with 24 million people out of the population of 30.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance. The conflict has left 3.6 million people, including 2 million children, internally displaced, and at least 500,000 public sector workers have been without salaries for three years. Humanitarian access to vulnerable populations remains severely constrained.

Since August 2019, a new conflict in southern Yemen has led to rising food insecurity, poor sanitation and lack of safe water. The water supply and sanitation systems have been severely affected by the conflict. An estimated 12.6 million people are in acute need of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and more than 17.8 million people require WASH assistance in general. Immunisation coverage has stagnated at the national level, resulting in outbreaks of measles, diphtheria and other vaccine-preventable diseases, and leaving the population vulnerable to polio. Thirty-seven per cent of children under 1 year are not fully vaccinated and therefore at higher risk of vaccine-preventable diseases. More than 687,000 suspected cases of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera and 898 associated deaths were recorded in the first nine months of 2019.

Children are bearing the brunt of the conflict: 2,000 children have been killed and 4,800 have been maimed since the conflict began; 2,700 boys have been recruited into armed forces and groups; and over 368,000 children under 5 years are suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). The damage and closure of schools and hospitals are threatening children's access to education and health services, rendering them vulnerable to serious protection concerns. At least 2 million children in Yemen are out of school. While an estimated 46 per cent of girls and 54 per cent of boys are enrolled in school, secondary-level girls are more likely to drop out due to security issues, lack of female teachers and the lack of appropriate WASH facilities.

The return of air strikes and the intensification of the internal fronts added additional risks and burdens that negatively affect civilians. Also, the continuation of the closure of Sana'a international airport, which put another severe impact on the health situation for the cases who need urgent intervention and medical treatments abroad. As there are 32,000 people may have died prematurely because they were unable to travel abroad for treatment. What more, is the low and limited supplies of the Petroleum products which threaten hospitals and health centers to stop their services for the patients.

We therefore:



- Call upon all parties to the conflict to stop violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, some of which may constitute war crimes, and to fully cooperate with the GEE.
- Call upon all States to cease all arms transfers to parties to the conflict
- Call on parties to the conflict to immediately cease and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict; and to ensure compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law including the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which Yemen is party.
- Urge the Yemeni authorities, in cooperation with international agencies, to ensure and maintain the access of humanitarian assistance, especially for children - including internally displaced and refugee children.
- Demanding for the opening of Sana'a International Airport for emergency health status.
- Call for speeding up the process of supplying the Petroleum products, especially for the health sector.