25 April 2017, Geneva - Nearly 19 million people in Yemen are in desperate need of assistance. This is a country that has been battered by conflict for more than two years. This is a country that, before the conflict intensified, was already extremely vulnerable following years of poverty, political unrest, and weak rule of law.

Since the conflict intensified, some 325 attacks have been verified on health facilities, schools, markets, roads, and other infrastructure, added to the challenges and the population's many causes of misery.

The outbreak of cholera that began in October 2016, causing nearly 24,000 cases, has slowed, thanks to prompt intervention. WHO and its multiple health cluster partners established 27 centres for cholera treatment and expanded an electronic early warning system for outbreaks from 440 sites in 2015 to nearly 2000 sites last year.

Health needs go well beyond the prevention of outbreaks. Conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer are killing more people than bullets and bombs. Medicines that keep these conditions manageable are simply not available in sufficient quantities. Since March 2015, when the fighting began, the flow of essential medicines into the country has dried up by nearly 70%.

The disruption of essential health services has been severe. WHO estimates than fewer than 45% of health facilities are fully functioning. Nearly 300 have been damaged or destroyed. Most health workers who have fiercely stayed at their posts have not been paid regular salaries since August 2016.

Large swaths of the population are on the brink of famine. Between famine and death from starvation lies disease. Infections that a well-nourished body wards off become deadly in severely malnourished people, especially children and pregnant women.

The current WHO approach has three main objectives, which involves collaboration with multiple partners.

First, strengthening and expanding interventions like disease surveillance and vaccination. Earlier this month, WHO announced that nearly five million children in the war-torn country had been vaccinated against measles and polio in a nation-wide campaign that took two months and required the renting of more than 5,000 vehicles. These are the challenges of protecting health in a war zone.

Second, providing a standard minimum package of basic health services, starting with the most vulnerable districts. We know where these vulnerable districts are. WHO maintains seven operational hubs across the country and has 83 staff on the ground.

Third, provision of life-saving services to people with chronic conditions. These are among the most eminently preventable deaths. In February 2017, WHO conducted an unprecedented humanitarian mission to cross conflict lines in Taiz, Yemen, delivering 8 tons of essential medicines and supplies, where more than 350,000 people are in desperate need of the most basic health care.

Most significantly, WHO, the World Bank, and UNICEF are using the situation in Yemen to rebuild the country's health system, offering a model for a response that goes beyond emergency assistance to increase the resilience of fragile states. Putting a resilient health system in place is the most sustainable solution.

We can do the job, if we have the resources.

Thank you.

http://who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2017/pledging-event-yemen/en/