

Speech by Mr Ueli Maurer, Vice President of the Federal Council, Head of the Federal Department of Finance, Switzerland, High-level Pledging Conference for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

REPORT

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Secretary-General Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

On behalf of the Swiss government, welcome to Geneva. My special thanks to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Guterres, and to Ms Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden. It is an honour for the Swiss Confederation to chair this conference for a second time, alongside Sweden and the United Nations.

For my country and for the international community, Geneva is at the centre of humanitarian action and commitment. But it is on the ground that our efforts must make a difference, and that is why we are here today.

The armed conflict in Yemen is entering its fourth year. The humanitarian crisis affecting Yemen is getting worse. 22.2 million people in a population of 29.3 million need humanitarian assistance. 3.4 million more than last year.

Over 3 million people have been forced to leave their homes and displaced inside Yemen. Over 30% of districts in Yemen are at high risk of famine.

We are here today above all to protect the Yemeni people.

The air and ground operations in several regions of the country are increasing those people's vulnerability and suffering. A large number of civilians are still falling victim to the conflict. The situation is alarming, and Switzerland remains very concerned by the aerial bombardments and indiscriminate attacks affecting the civilian population and infrastructures.

My country calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, including the requirements on the conduct of hostilities, and to put the necessary measures in place to respect and protect civilians and civilian infrastructures. We call on the parties to the conflict to make a particular effort to protect medical workers and facilities, patients and the humanitarian personnel working to help the people in need. Switzerland also reminds the parties of the need to protect persons hors de combat.

The access issues are also a major source of concern for us. The limits and restrictions on the delivery of food and medicines, and supplies of fuel and electricity, are having a grave impact on the population. Switzerland calls on all parties to the conflict to allow rapid, unrestricted, long-term humanitarian access throughout the country. The humanitarian aid must reach those who need it. And those in need must have better access to that aid.

Switzerland calls for all ports in the country, including the airport in Sanaa, to be permanently reopened to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and access for humanitarian workers. My country also calls on the de facto authorities in Sanaa to facilitate access for humanitarian organisations.

It is time to renew our solidarity with the people of Yemen. It is time to put an end to this humanitarian disaster.

The commitment of nearly a billion dollars by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is an important contribution to the Humanitarian Response Plan – it will meet about 1/3 of the needs of the Yemeni population. However, it remains our responsibility to fund this Plan adequately and without delay.

This year Switzerland is contributing 13 million Swiss francs, about 13.9 million US dollars to the Humanitarian Response Plan.

Yemen is facing the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. The funding of the Humanitarian Response Plan is crucial – but it is not enough. We must use today's event to appeal once more for the political resolution

of the conflict. Switzerland calls for a cessation of hostilities. My country remains ready to support the political process, and invites all parties to come to the negotiating table, without preconditions, to seek a joint solution to the conflict affecting Yemen. The dignity of the people of Yemen is at stake. The root causes of the crisis and the challenges that humanitarian actors cannot overcome must be addressed. With this in mind, Switzerland wishes the incoming special envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, the best of success in this considerable endeavour.

We are hoping along with the United Nations and Sweden to secure generous support today for the people in Yemen – for all of the women, men, girls and boys affected by this major humanitarian disaster.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/speech-mr-ueli-maurer-vice-president-federal-council-head-federal-department-finance>