Yemen parties underscore ‘strong desire’ for peace, UN Envoy reports

Martin Griffiths was in the capital, Sana’a, this week for two days of talks with leaders and representatives of the Ansar Allah rebel movement and the rival General People’s Congress, the party of the current and former President.

The rebels, also known as Houthis, and pro-Government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, have been battling for more than three years.

“I am reassured by the messages I have received, which have been positive and constructive. All parties have not only underscored their strong desire for peace, but have also engaged with me on concrete ideas for achieving peace,” Mr. Griffiths told journalists on Wednesday, adding that he will continue talks with the parties in the coming days.

Hudaydah ‘one airstrike away from unstoppable epidemic’:
UN humanitarian chief in Yemen

Lise Grande said in a statement from the capital Sana’a, that “for weeks, we’ve been doing everything possible to help hundreds of thousands of people living in and near Hudaydah”, however, “these airstrikes are putting innocent civilians at extreme risk”.

The port is the primary gateway for food and humanitarian supplies into the war-stricken country, and together with the city overall, it has been in the hands of Houthi rebels since the end of 2014, who have been battling government forces aided by a Saudi-led coalition, which has been deploying war planes since fighting escalated in 2015.

Overall, 22 million people— or 75 per cent of the Yemeni population—require some form of humanitarian help or protection, including nearly 8.5 million who do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Coalition forces moved on Hudaydah in the middle of last month, but diplomatic moves led by the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, have helped to prevent an all-out military invasion of the city, while the warring parties negotiate a potential deal that could allow fighters to leave.

Nevertheless, local health facilities reported in mid-July that around 328 had been injured and nearly 50 killed during fighting to that point.
Yemen parties underscore ‘strong ….

The UN Envoy expressed thanks to rebel leader Abdel Malek al-Houthi, with whom he held a “fruitful discussion” in Sana’a.

He also expressed hopes of meeting soon with President Abed Rabboh Mansour Hadi, in a follow-up to talks held last week which he described as “positive”.

“I look forward to work with all the parties urgently to find a solution first that will restore security and stability in (Hodeida) but also create positive conditions for a rapid and urgent restart of political negotiations in the coming days,” he said, referring to the battle for the key port city.

On Thursday, Mr. Griffiths briefed a closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council.

John Ging, Director of Operations with the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, also addressed the 15 ambassadors on the situation in Yemen, where more than 22 million people require some form of aid or protection assistance.

The crisis in Yemen has its genesis in the 2011 Arab Spring uprising, which swept across the country amid ongoing rebel insurgency.

Although anti-Government protests led to the ouster of the then President, the transfer of power to Mr. Hadi, his deputy, proved rocky.

The Office of the UN Special Envoy supports the return to a peaceful political transition in Yemen, engaging with all sides — as well as civil society, women, youth and others — in the process.

Hudaydah ‘one airstrike away from ….

“Since the start of the recent military offensive,” said Ms. Grande, “humanitarian partners have been providing food, water, emergency kits, cash and healthcare.” She added that 80 per cent of those displaced by fighting had received some form of help.

Airstrikes earlier this week near a reproductive health centre and public laboratory in Hudaydah, also hit and damaged a sanitation facility and water station in the Zabid neighbourhood, she said. That water station "supplies the majority of the water" to the whole city she stressed.

As one of the epicentres of the large cholera outbreak which began last year across Yemen, she said that the deadly water-bourne disease “is already present in neighbourhoods across the city and governorate. Damage to sanitation, water and health facilities jeopardizes everything that we are trying to do…We could be one airstrike away from an unstoppable epidemic.”
UNDP Yemen, in partnership with Oxfam, is conducting a series of Community Protection workshops for 300 beneficiaries from the targeted districts of Craiter, Attawahi and Mualla in Aden with the funding support from Government of Japan. The sessions run from July 4th to 19th, 2018. They are expected to enhance community protection mechanisms empower those who have been through traumatic experiences during and after the 2015 war and its devastating psychosocial impacts on the lives and relationships of the communities in Aden. Youth participants identify the behavior, influences and prejudices that negatively impact their neighborhood and devise mechanisms to protect their community from future shocks. “We really enjoyed the training, we were able to get rid of the negative energy and we were comfortable because we found privacy” a female participant said.

The coaching partners, Creative People’s Solution Foundation, Ability for Human Investment, Alaidaroos Association and Wogod for Human Security will train the beneficiaries on three main topics, i) how to overcome trauma; ii) conflict management and; iii) the role of youth in the community. The training will be concluded by developing community initiatives proposed by the participants themselves to provide capacity building in psychosocial support, facilitate legal aid and conflict resolutions, mobilize neighborhoods organizations and social leaders with a view of sustaining initiatives. The intervention targets Aden’s most vulnerable neighborhoods affected by the conflict and those who returned after the conflict with the focus on livelihood improvement and protection. The project’s pillers are: i) analysis on local needs and opportunities to recover, ii) restoring the disrupted livelihoods of crisis-affected populations and; iii) strengthening community-based protection mechanisms with a focus on women and youth.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a United Nations agency that advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.

UNDP in Yemen aims to restore livelihoods, social cohesion and security, reflecting a minimum of conditions necessary for resilience while focusing on the community level. In this regard, our priorities for Yemen are: Supporting a Peaceful Solution; Economic Recovery; Restoring Basic Services; Preparing the Ground; and Empowerment of vulnerable groups.
The World Health Organization (WHO) said that Hudaydah had registered the highest incidences of suspected cholera cases of any city; around 14 per cent of those reported nationwide since the start of the crippling epidemic, in April 2017.

In addition to that highly infectious disease, there have been 209 suspected cases of diphtheria and 252 of measles.

“The intensification of fighting in Hudaydah endangered not only those directly affected but also the 70 per cent of the population who depended on vital supplies, including health-care supplies, that flowed through Hudaydah port.

“The port constituted a lifeline not only for the city but for all the northern governorates,” he added.

Although fighting has decreased and the port remains operational, from 13 June to 7 July a total of 328 injured and 46 deaths were recorded there, according to local health facilities.

Already plagued with one of the highest malnutrition rates in the country, at just over 25 per cent, Mr. Jašarević said that “the current surge in fighting will likely further exacerbate the situation”.

The port remains open and the city has seven fully-functioning therapeutic feeding centers, with seven others in neighbouring governorates, he updated.

For now, the port remains open and Hudaydah can be reached through a narrow passage with many checkpoints, but no blockade, he said.

The WHO spokesperson said its main pillar of operation are trauma care, cholera, malnutrition, and continuity of care.

Speaking for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Joel Millman told journalists in Geneva that agency had received a “generous contribution from Kuwait of $10 million, earmarked for humanitarian assistance in Yemen”.

He added that IOM’s overall request for Yemen was $96.2 million, while the appeal for the entire humanitarian community’s Humanitarian Response Plan, was for nearly $3 billion.

Turning to the humanitarian situation on the ground, Mr. Millman said that as the war enters its third year, half the country’s population is living in areas directly affected by the conflict, and more than two thirds of the population – would require humanitarian aid during 2018.

Nearly 90 per cent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been displaced for at least one year or more, including 69 per cent who have been displaced for more than two years.

“The protracted nature of the displacement is straining IDPs and host communities’ abilities to cope,” he said.

A further one million IDPs had returned to their areas of origin but remained in dire need of aid. IOM called on all parties in the conflict “to respect international humanitarian law and not to target any civilians, including migrants.”
Over 35,000 Yemeni families flee war-torn Hodeidah: UN

More than 35,000 families have recently been displaced from Yemen's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah due to fierce fighting between government forces and Houthi rebels, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

"Intense artillery shelling and airstrikes in Al Tuhayata and Zabid districts (south of Hodeidah) continue to trigger displacement," OCHA said on its Twitter account.

"By July 13, approximately 35,000 displaced households have been verified and 20,000 of them have received assistance," it said.

On June 13, the Yemeni government forces backed by the Saudi-led coalition began an all-out offensive to retake the strategic port city.

Earlier this month, the United Arab Emirates declared a pause in military operations inside the intensely populated Hodeidah city to support the UN envoy's peace efforts that aimed to convince the rebels to withdraw to avoid any military confrontations.

However, the coalition military operations against the rebels continued south of Hodeidah to secure the villages, districts and roads leading to the port city.

"Hodeidah and Saleef sea ports are operational," OCHA said, adding that "Hodeidah city is relatively calm following an announced pause in military operations by the United Arab Emirates earlier in the week with sporadic airstrikes and artillery shelling reported near the airport".

OCHA said roads leading to Hodeidah airport, seaport and the main road linking Hodeidah with the capital Sanaa (all those roads are under Houthis' control) remain blocked by sand and concrete barriers.

It said that most of the displaced families headed to Sanaa and Ibb province.
IOM Delivers Food, Tents and Medical Assistance to Thousands of Newly Displaced Yemenis

IOM, the UN Migration Agency staff in Yemen are delivering assistance to thousands of people displaced by heavy fighting around the strategic port city of Al Hudaydah.

“We and our partners are working in a difficult environment in hopes of alleviating some of the hardship people are experiencing by providing food, and non-food items (NFIs), shelter kits and good quality tents we’ve just received from the Department for International Development (UK),” said Stefano Pes, IOM Yemen’s Officer in Charge.

“The situation is very bad and we’re doing our best to provide them with temporary shelter and support for the time being.”

Civilian casualties and mass displacements continue to mount amidst intense fighting that began on 12 June. It has caused further damage to ravaged public services that has affected water supplies, forced shops to close resulting in shortages in essential commodities, complicated the delivery of humanitarian assistance and resulted in the closure of a temporary feeding centre in Zabid.

The fortunate few are traveling to the relative safety of Sana’a, Aden and Thamar but the majority of the population have already exhausted their reserves, forcing them to seek protection wherever they can.

Fifty IOM staff are working in various locations to assist migrants and an estimated 50,000 newly displaced Yemenis in Al Hudaydah. In coordination with its partners, IOM is providing shelter kits and NFIs to 1,400 households in Bait Al Fakeeh. In Hays and Al Khookh, internally displaced persons (IDPs) have received 165 food baskets and IOM’s Migrant Response Point (MRP) compound is today sheltering and providing services to 41 displaced Yemenis. The organization has also provided 7,830 meals to children in three Al Hudaydah schools. The IDPs have received 400 boxes of dates, nearly 1,600 people have received free consultations at IOM’s clinic and 40 pregnant women have received counselling.

Located in the western part of the country, Al Hudaydah is the primary gateway for food and humanitarian aid for a population on the verge of starvation. Humanitarian organizations fear the port closure will lead to further forced displacements of people in a country where two million are already displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance.
WHO airlifts 168 tonnes of life-saving medicines and medical supplies to Yemen

Seven WHO-chartered aircraft have landed in Sana’a Airport this week, while between 30 to 50 tonnes of medicines and medical supplies reach Aden regularly by a UN ship run by the World Food Programme (WFP). In total this week more than 200 tonnes of life-saving medicines and medical supplies, and emergency equipment have been delivered in Yemen by WHO, in partnership with WFP and the logistic cluster, as health needs in Yemen grow at an alarming pace.

The shipments contain Interagency Emergency Health Kits (IEHK), surgical kits, cholera kits, intravenous (IV) fluids and various types of antibiotics which are much-needed by health facilities across the country, particularly in Hudaydah and Aden. Around 120 tonnes of these supplies will be distributed to Al Hudaydah as part of WHO plans to scale up health interventions in the governorates affected by the recent intensification of the military operations.

“It takes a lot of effort, coordination and negotiation to succeed in bringing these supplies into the country. As the conflict continues, Yemen’s health system is moving towards the abyss”.

This year, WHO has expanded its operations in Yemen, airlifting and shipping hundreds of tonnes of essential medicines and medical supplies. Most hospitals in Yemen are totally dependent on these supplies to keep providing services to those in need.

The new WHO shipments arrive as dozens of thousands of families flee the conflict Al Hudaydah to neighboring governorates, doubling the burden on health facilities in hosting areas.

“Part of these medicines will be distributed to health facilities where displaced people in Al Hudaydah seek health services. Among them are patients with chronic diseases, children suffering from infectious diseases and malnutrition, and women in urgent need of reproductive and maternal health services,” added Dr Zagaria. The other part of the supplies, together with fuel, water and oxygen, will be distributed within the regular quarterly distribution plan which keeps some 145 tertiary and secondary hospitals across the country functioning.
In her message for the Day, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Natalia Kanem took that a step further, saying: “Family planning is not only a matter of human rights; it is also central to women’s empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development”.

Yet, in developing regions, the UNFPA chief pointed out that some 214 million women still lack safe and effective family planning, for reasons ranging from lack of information or services, to lack of support from their partners or communities,

“This threatens their ability to build a better future for themselves, their families and their communities,” she explained.

UNFPA supports family planning in developing countries by ensuring a reliable supply of a full range of modern contraceptives, strengthening national health systems and promoting gender equality.

“UNFPA is fully committed to continuing to support countries’ efforts to uphold the right of individuals, especially women, to plan a family,” Ms. Kanem continued. “We are striving to end all unmet need for voluntary family planning in developing countries, by 2030”.

“But, we cannot do this alone,” underscored the Executive Director, outlining the need for governments, parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society to join forces to make it happen”.

As a first step, she suggested that for a mere 20 cents per person annually, developed countries could close the global family planning funding gap, which Ms. Kanem said would be “a strategic and doable investment in the world’s future”.

The Day was inspired by public interest generated by one particular date of huge significance. The UN estimated that it was 11 July, 1987, which the world's population reached five billion people.