Yemen resilient and ‘unscathed’ in face of latest Gulf crisis

Despite the threat posed by recent tensions in the Gulf, Yemen was able to weather the crisis thanks in part to restraint exercised by its political leaders, the UN Special Envoy for the country said.

Martin Griffiths was speaking in the Security Council, where he updated ambassadors on developments towards ending nearly five years of war between Government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and the rebel group commonly known as the Houthis, which reportedly has links with Iran. He started that no major acts of military provocation” occurred in Yemen during the latest Gulf crisis, which was sparked by the killing of a top Iranian general by the United States.

“This achievement has not come by chance. Yemeni leaders and leaders from the region have deliberately exercised restraint and withheld from acts of provocation.”

Mr. Griffiths said the country “has been brushed by potential tragedy from regional tensions and, so far, appears to have emerged from it unscathed. This is evidence of its leaders’ desire to keep Yemen safe from such tensions but also to restore to its people, this year, the peace they so evidently deserve.” .......

Opening of the high-level interactive segment of The International Day Of Education Remarks by H.E. Tijjani Uhammad-Bande, President of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly

Deputy Secretary-General
Honorable Ministers
Ambassador / Permanent Representatives
Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this year’s edition of the International Day of Education. It is the second of its kind since the UN General Assembly through Resolution A/Res/73/25 of December 2018, declared the 24th January of every year the International Day of Education.

In commemorating this year’s International Day of Education, Dr. David Edwards, the General Secretary of the world’s largest teachers’ federation, along with award-winning teachers from different regions were invited to join us, so we can acknowledge, celebrate and hear the vital contributions of teachers to the attainment of inclusive quality education goals. I am also delighted that youth representatives are also able to join us today. One of them Ms. Lucia Burtnik, is listed as a panelist, and another, a teenager, Marta Borell Fijo, who though fortunate enough to enjoy the benefit of education, continues to draw attention to the plight of other children not so privileged. We appreciate the efforts of Dr. Edwards, Ms. Lucia, Ms. Marta and all other teachers and education enthusiasts for the great work they do.

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Yemen resilient and ‘unscathed’ in face of tensions

Ceasefire working

The Envoy noted that the tensions overall have tested the resilience of efforts to de-escalate military hostilities and implement two peace agreements. Warring parties met in Sweden in December 2018 for UN-brokered peace talks which led to a ceasefire in the rebel-held port of Hudaydah, critical for aid flows into a country that is experiencing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Griffiths underlined that although implementation has been unsatisfactory, the UN and both sides remain committed to the Stockholm Agreement.

“Though violence unfortunately continues in the southern districts, the relative calm at the frontlines in Hudaydah city shows that the measures to enhance the de-escalation—the ceasefire mechanism—is working, and this is something we can, and should, build on,” he said.

Yemen also is now less dangerous for civilians than prior to the Stockholm Agreement, according to a senior official with the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA.

Ramesh Rajasingham, Director of the Coordination Division at OCHA, told Council members that casualties last year were about 35 per cent lower than in 2018, while fatalities dropped by nearly half.

“But it is still a very dangerous place”, he said, pointing to deadly attacks and flare-ups along several front lines.

Opening of the high-level interactive segment

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have convened this meeting bearing in mind the fact that while we still have tremendous amount of work to do, to ensure that we reach full access, equality and quality of education needed to develop economies and tackle challenges that we face as humans, it is not just a gloomy story.

The progress that we have made and continue to make in Science, Technology, Medicine, et cetera, are pointers to this fact. In the past decades, we have eradicated or found treatments to diseases; our transportation systems are more effective and facilitate trade among nations; citizens around the world can now access information on almost anything in seconds; and young entrepreneurs are better able to access global education.

There has also been an increase in school enrollment rates worldwide, with more children going to, and staying in school longer. Rising enrollment has translated into high literacy rates within and across countries. For instance, the literacy rate for all males and females that are at least 15 years old is currently 86.3 percent. The literacy rate for males aged 15 and over is 90 per cent worldwide, and for females, 82.7 percent.
Support for land and irrigation helps stave off debts, brightens prospects for Yemeni farmer

The Arabic proverb, “Determination is key to everything,” finds resonance in the story of Adel, a 44-year-old villager from Lahj, a southern Yemeni governorate. Adel descends from a poor family that depends on agriculture as their main source of income.

“I learned about the intricacies of farming from my father whose father passed the knowledge on to him.” Adel said. “I love farming. It teaches patience and emphasizes the importance of working to harvest the result of our work.”

Before the war, Adel used to work as a farmer on a daily-wage basis in a number of farms where he was known for his solid experience and reputation for hard work. The money Adel earned allowed him a decent living and enabled him to support his wife to continue her college studies in biology at Aden University.

“My income was somehow stable and I was living a decent life but after the outbreak of the war, the increase in the price of fuel and devaluation of the national currency forced the landowners to abandon commercial cultivation on many agricultural lands. They replaced the skilled farmers with close relatives who would accept low wages,” Adel says.

Being jobless was hard for Adel. He was forced to take debts from friends and his brothers supported him financially during those tough times. More than once, he asked his wife to sell some of her jewels so that they could keep putting food on the table.

“In those days of acute financial hardships, my wife and I quarreled several times when I asked her to sell her jewels. I even asked her to abandon her academic education because I could not afford the tuition and transportation fees for her. She is excellent in her studies and I highly value education because I had to quit school when I was in sixth grade. We were both depressed,” he explained.

All that is in the past now.

The funding from the World Bank, and the partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS), has resulted in supporting 199 farmers in Lahj in which Adel was among those who benefited. This was under the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project (YECRP).

Adel was provided with a drip irrigation system, seeds, fertilizers and startup capital to rent a patch of land near a water well. The received support is worth USD 1,500. The grant that Adel received has created a virtuous income opportunity for him, He rented a patch of unutilized agricultural land and installed the drip irrigation system. He has been able to produce green pepper, arugula and parsley. I’ve made good profits, especially from the arugula and parsley harvest.”

UNDP and SMEPS have supported Adel with technical skills so that he makes the most of the grant through regular mentoring visits from agronomists.

“The misconceptions about drip irrigation systems I used to have were gone. Some of the farmers still think that drip irrigation deprives the plants of suitable quantities of water, but in fact it does not”, Adel observes.

Adel has noticed that the plants cultivated with the use of drip irrigation have a more vivid and flourishing shape than those sown in the traditional way. It saves water and time in a big way. Instead of taking 12 hours for watering half an acre, now it takes him only six hours to water a whole acre of land,” he explained.
“On call” - Rapid Response Teams (RRT) for Cholera

UNICEF with generous support from its partners has a range of interventions aimed at getting life saving support to communities in need

Sana’a Governorate, Bani Matar District, Yemen: After 5 years of conflict in Yemen, health and water systems are on the brink of collapse. The country has been dealing with one of the biggest cholera outbreaks in recent history. Since the outbreak began there have been over 2 million suspected cases of cholera have been reported, this has caused a crisis for many communities.

UNICEF with generous support from partners like the United Arab Emirates Imdad Fund and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre), has a range of interventions aimed at getting life saving support to communities in need.

Wafa’a Al-Hashidy is the leader of a special team, a Rapid Response Team or RRT, that is deployed as soon as a cholera case is reported. With her colleagues they deploy with a car full of supplies to communities in need. They arrive with hygiene kits, chlorine and educational materials, ready to teach the community how they can prevent the spread of cholera.
'Lifeline' for women and girls in Yemen

More than $100 million of the funding will go to Yemen, where nearly 80 per cent of the population requires humanitarian assistance due to the ongoing conflict. This includes over half a million pregnant women in need of antenatal care, skilled birth assistance and nutritional support.

Dr. Afrah Thabet, a Yemeni obstetrician stationed with UNFPA in the country, reported that only 50 percent of all health facilities are functioning, and of that number, only 37 percent provide reproductive health services.

She said the UN agency serves as a “lifeline” for millions of women and girls there as it is the sole provider of lifesaving reproductive health supplies and medicines.

Dr. Thabet explained that as conflict continues, many women and girls have been displaced and thus vulnerable to gender-based violence.

“In the absence of support, women and girls are readily becoming vulnerable to negative coping strategies such as child marriage, child labour and human trafficking,” she said.

“UNFPA is leading the coordination and provision of gender-based violence services throughout Yemen as chair of the GBV sub-cluster. More than 250,000 women were provided gender-based violence services in 2019, through 40 safe spaces, six shelters and three specialized mental health centres.”

Last year, UNFPA reached over 19 million people in more than 60 countries. More than seven million women received sexual and reproductive health services, including antenatal and postnatal care, emergency obstetric and newborn care, and the clinical management of rape. Another 2.4 million people obtained voluntary family planning services.

Said Dr. Thabet: “We hope that in 2020 we are able to do more to ensure the reproductive health and protection needs of women and girls in Yemen; and to see that every women and girl in Yemen is able to live in peace and realize her full potential and dreams. This too is my hope and dream.”
Solar Energy Helps Yemeni Hospitals Save Lives

Public health services in Yemen have worsened significantly due to the conflict, which has been ongoing for five years. According to the UN, about half of health facilities in the country are non-functional or only partially functioning. One of the main reasons are long-lasting power outages that have become all too regular in the country since the start of the war. Over the past five difficult years, and due to outages in remote and rural communities in particular, Yemenis have been unable to access vital healthcare services to acceptable standards. Some health professionals reported that they sometimes have to work with candlelight. And economic hardship and lack of transport options caused by fuel shortages has prevented people from reaching the few functional clinics remaining to seek better health services.

Before the conflict, only around two thirds of Yemenis had access to public electricity grid (with around 12% who had access to private electricity networks), which was already one the lowest access rates across the MENA region. In 2017, two years after the onset of the war, this number had dropped to below 10%.

One solution presented itself to solve the energy crisis in Yemen: harnessing the abundant supply of sunlight. The World Bank Yemen Emergency Electricity Access Project began installing solar systems in hard-to-reach areas, in particular in schools and health facilities. The World Bank’s International Development Agency, in partnership with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), is working with local providers with the objective to support hundreds of health facilities across Yemen.

As a result, millions of Yemenis will have access to reliable health facilities powered by solar energy, especially in rural areas. Clinics will be able to maintain the cold-chain necessary for immunization to help with access to essential vaccines, as well as other medicine and basic health services. Poor and vulnerable women in remote areas are generally the least likely to receive adequate health care in Yemen, in particular for pregnancies. But the Yemen Emergency Electricity Access Project also helps ensure that health care workers can reach them.

The Al-Salam Hospital in the Lahj Governorate was one of these facilities that had to close after the start of the war. It recently received new solar installations and is now able to receive patients again. Before the intervention, the lack of electricity prevented medical staff from providing vital health services, in particular at night. In particular, the hospital could not admit patients for emergency and critical cases, child delivery, or obstructed labor cases. After receiving modern and efficient solar power systems, Al-Salam Hospital now operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It has also recently opened a special wing for child delivery and newborn care services.

Health workers in the Al-Salam hospital reported that they no longer see electricity as an issue. They are enthusiastic to see the women in their community being able to deliver their babies in much safer conditions.

Aminah Hassan, one of the women who directly benefitted from the World Bank’s solar project, explains what having a local clinic equipped with solar power means to her family: “I used to give my children homemade herbal recipes as medicine when they got sick because the health center in our village had to close years ago. We could not afford to take them to a private hospital. But now that the clinic is working again, I can go there whenever I need without having to travel a long distance to get the health services me and my family need.”

The World Bank and the Yemen Emergency Electricity Access Project is also installing solar energy systems in schools and other public facilities to provide reliable and affordable access to clean water, lighting, and other primary services in the communities affected by the ongoing humanitarian crisis. This solar power project aims at increasing resilience in rural areas, where around 70% of Yemen’s population lives and where electricity remains a major part of the current development crisis.
Call for Applications
United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) has launched the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament training programme.

It is looking for 10 young persons (ages 18 – 24) motivated to use their talents to help raise awareness and promote change for a more peaceful and secure world. [https://www.un.org/disarmament/youth-champions-for-disarmament](https://www.un.org/disarmament/youth-champions-for-disarmament)

In addition to young people with an interest in international affairs or international relations, ODA also strongly encourages individuals with a background in other areas such as history, science, economics, languages, film, media, dance, song, theatre, visual arts, creative writing or any other field to submit an application.

ODA’s intention is to bring together an eclectic and geographically diverse group of young people, from across the globe, who can become advocates for disarmament.

The ten youth champions will receive training in general principles of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control through on-line courses and a two-week in-person study tour in Vienna, Geneva, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The study tour will take place in June 2020.

Youth Champions will exchange ideas with disarmament experts from think tanks, civil society organizations and the diplomatic field, and develop their own plans on how to engage in their communities on issues related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

ODA will support with mentoring and guidance throughout the programme.

The application requires three letters of recommendation and your most recent academic transcripts. The application deadline is 15 March 2020.

Fluency in English is required for participation.

ODA has asked for assistance in spreading the word about this programme in the countries you are based in. Please promote this initiative through your partners and on your digital platforms. Here is the link to the press release: [https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/dc3825.doc.htm](https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/dc3825.doc.htm)

For enquiries please send an email to disarmament-youth-champions@un.org.
Secretary-General's Message on

New Year's video message

From here at the United Nations, I join you in welcoming the New Year.

We enter 2020 with uncertainty and insecurity all around.

Persistent inequality and rising hatred.

A warring world and a warming planet.

Climate change is not only a long-term problem but a clear and present danger.

We cannot afford to be the generation that fiddled while the planet burned.

But there is also hope.

This year, my New Year’s message is to the greatest source of that hope: the world’s young people.

From climate action to gender equality to social justice and human rights, your generation is on the frontlines and in the headlines.

I am inspired by your passion and determination.

You are rightly demanding a role in shaping the future.

I am with you.

The United Nations stands with you – and belongs to you.

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

We are launching a Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, our blueprint for a fair globalization.

This year, the world needs young people to keep speaking out. Keep thinking big. Keep pushing boundaries. And keep up the pressure.

I wish you peace and happiness in 2020.

Thank you.