ICVA Statement for the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen
June 2, 2020

Good morning … Good afternoon, Al Salam Alikum

It is a great honor to greet you all at this important event today.

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies-ICVA would like to thank the co-hosts from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Nations for all their efforts in organizing this conference and ensuring participation of the NGO community.

ICVA is a global consortia of national and international NGOs and NGO networks. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to bring inputs from ICVA members in complementarity with the collective messages of INGOs you will hear today. Importantly the statement highlights key messages from local NGOs and NGO networks in Yemen who were not able to speak here today.”

Together, international, national and Local NGOs have been providing vital humanitarian assistance - reaching millions of affected people in Yemen throughout the ongoing crisis. Together they are now adapting to the changing situation due to the impacts of COVID-19. To do this, a full ecosystem of NGOs must be able to continue to operate, despite the very challenging environment, restricted access, limited funding, safety and security risks and ever-increasing needs.

We call on the international donor community to ensure much needed support and resources quickly reaches frontline NGOs so they can provide principled, impartial, neutral, and independent humanitarian assistance. Donors and their partners must work together to address challenges in unlocking and disbursing funds to NGOs particularly in the COVID-19 Response. The message from NGOs to donors is clear: the international community must urgently provide increased funding to meet existing humanitarian needs, plus additional funding to support the urgent response to COVID-19 in Yemen. The message from the voices of local NGOs in Yemen is equally clear: If you look away now, the consequences will be no less than catastrophic.

Even in this complex environment, NGOs call on donors to uphold their Grand Bargain commitments, particularly in providing flexible funding and risk-sharing that will better support partnership and localization efforts. Local and National NGOs and Local Civil Society Organizations need principled partnerships to support their work. We call on the humanitarian sector to step up efforts to strengthen meaningful participation of NGOs, including national NGOs, not only as implementers, but as key partners in humanitarian coordination and planning mechanisms, inside Yemen, and at regional and global levels.

The outbreak of COVID 19 in Yemen is a crisis layered on top of existing crisis, and the complexity of needs continues to worsen. While this pandemic calls people to stay at home, displaced people in Yemen themselves have to flee their homes and move away from it due to the conflict. New displacements are creating more humanitarian needs and pushing people into conditions where they are at risk of contracting Covid-19. The nature of this unprecedented pandemic hits mostly the elderly, and women and girls who are at greater risk of protection and health threats due to their disadvantaged economic situations and separation from social support systems. Urgent support must be given to strengthen partnerships between local women’s groups and humanitarian agencies; to promote learning in both directions and leverage these partnerships to become drivers of change for women’s participation, gender equality and gender-based violence prevention and response.
Yemen Cannot Breathe: As this crisis enters its sixth year, we keep hearing terrible statistics and numbers detailing how people suffer every day. Let us be reminded that behind each number is a human story, a life and future aspiration have tragically fallen apart over the past 5 years. One human being suffering is more than enough, but what do we do when needs and suffering are so widespread? It is clear: humanitarian response in Yemen cannot itself end the suffering of so many. **We call on the international community to step-up efforts to address the root causes of conflict, including to continue stressing the critical need for a ceasefire in all conflict settings in line with the UN Secretary General’s call.** Donors should match their humanitarian efforts with support to conflict resolution and peace building initiatives, avoiding siloed approaches, and maximizing linkages among humanitarian response, recovery efforts and peace building. This need is doubly so in the Covid-19 context. Finally, I would like to take this moment to pay tribute to all humanitarian workers and key actors in Yemen whose work is inspiring and to the people in Yemen who are still resilient. I salute you.