

UK becomes biggest European aid donor to Yemen

The UK will give £117 million (\$218 million) in new aid over the next 4 years to help Yemen meet international poverty targets, Gareth Thomas, International Development Minister, announced today. The pledge will strongly encourage Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, who are attending an international donors' conference in London later this week, to increase regional support for Yemen.

UK aid will now rise from £10 million this year to £50 million by 2011 – an increase of 400 per cent. Gareth Thomas, who visited Yemen last week, said: "8 million people in Yemen live on less than \$2 a day, making it the poorest country in the Arab world. With high illiteracy rates, nearly 5 per cent of women likely to die due to problems related to childbirth, and a rapidly rising population, Yemen is facing some serious development challenges.

"The UK is proud to become the leading EU aid donor to Yemen, which has not been getting the funding it needs. Our pledge today sends a clear message that the UK is committed to backing up promises made at last year's G8 summit in Gleneagles to increase aid for the world's poorest countries.

"When I met President Saleh in Yemen recently I was pleased to hear that he was personally committed to leading an ambitious reform programme, including plans to tackle corruption. But if more aid is not forthcoming then Yemen has little hope of helping millions of its people, who barely survive on less than \$1 a day, out of poverty".

The additional funding will be spent on 3 key areas: providing better basic services, including education for girls and supporting maternal healthcare.

working with the government to create more jobs for poor people through the private sector and looking for new sources of income outside of oil extraction.

helping to make the Government more accountable to its citizens and more responsive to their needs.

At present DFID, the UK's overseas aid department is providing £15 million over 4 years to help the Government of Yemen increase the number of children, particularly young girls, in primary and secondary

schools. DFID has also given £13 million to improve healthcare, school facilities, water supply and roads in local areas.

Yemen is the poorest country in the oil-rich Arab world and faces many challenges, but is also an important partner with the UK in fighting terrorism and promoting stability in the region. Reforms inside the country are underway, including the election of women and a wide range of new laws aimed at discouraging corruption by public officials.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh is leading the Yemen delegation on his first visit to Europe since being re-elected in September. The meeting will be attended by senior Ministers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Bahrain who represent the Gulf Cooperation Council. The World Bank, the EU and the UN will also be represented.

Facts about Yemen Poverty and Development Yemen has a population of 20 million, almost half of whom are under 15 years old;

4 in 10 people live on less than \$2 a day making Yemen the poorest country in the Arab world; Not enough aid gets to Yemen. On average each Yemeni receives \$12 in foreign assistance every year compared to \$33 for those living in equally poor parts of Africa and Asia; Almost 50 per cent of adults are illiterate; Only 40 per cent of girls go to primary school and 30 per cent to secondary school; Over their lifetime almost 1 in 20 Yemeni women will die as a result of complications during pregnancy; Only 69 per cent of people have access to water and 14 per cent to proper toilets and sanitation; The population rises by 3 per cent every year and is expected to double to 40 million by 2030, putting more pressure on limited resources; and Yemen is ranked 151 out of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index.

Economy The average Yemeni earns \$600 a year compared to the Middle East average of \$2200 .

Oil revenues, which make up 70 per cent of the Government's income, are expected to dry up by 2015; Yemen is ranked 90 out of 155 countries for overall ease of doing business by the World Bank.