25 May 2017 – A World Health Organization-chartered aircraft carrying intravenous fluids and cholera kits has successfully landed at Sana’a airport in Yemen. At 67 tonnes, it constitutes the largest planeload of medical goods WHO has brought into the country since the escalation of the conflict in March 2015.

“Flying a jumbo jet into a war zone is not easy,” said Dr Nevio Zagaria, WHO Representative in Yemen. “You need the agreement of the parties to the conflict to ensure the plane is not accidentally caught up in the crossfire. We’re thankful for their cooperation in allowing these life-saving supplies to reach the people of Yemen. We are also thankful for logistical support from the World Food Programme that allowed us to charter the plane.”

The supplies, sufficient for the treatment of 10 000 patients, are a welcome boost to the country’s response to a cholera outbreak which has caused more than almost 70 000 suspected cases since it began in October 2016. The epidemic had shown signs of slowing but recently reignited, causing 42 207 suspected cases and 420 deaths between 27 April 2017 and 24 May 2017.

WHO continues to work with local health authorities and partners to scale up the response to the disease. Fourteen new diarrhoea treatment centres have been set up across the country, in addition to the 26 treatment centres established during the first wave of the outbreak. WHO is also scaling up the network of oral rehydration points for the treatment of mild and moderate cases of dehydration. WHO is also helping to run the national and governorate emergency operations centres, supporting the disease surveillance system and providing medicines and cholera treatment in the affected districts.

Prior to Thursday’s delivery, WHO had already distributed more than 28 cholera kits, sufficient for the treatment of 2800 people, and more than 115 000 bags of intravenous fluids for the rehydration of severely affected cases.

A further 13 tonnes of supplies for the cholera response in the country’s southern governorates will travel to Aden via ship. The full shipment of 80 tonnes of supplies to Aden and Sana’a for the cholera response was made possible thanks to financial support from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and the World Bank. Further supplies are expected to arrive in the coming week and will be distributed geographically according to need.