



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 7 April 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Security Council has repeatedly discussed the situation of the *Safer* oil tanker, the ageing floating storage and offloading vessel that has been moored off the west coast of Yemen since 2015.

It is assessed that an oil spill from the *Safer* oil tanker, which is in an advanced state of deterioration, would spark an ecological, environmental and humanitarian catastrophe in the Red Sea and beyond. It would devastate the coast of Yemen, destroy livelihoods, deplete fisheries and potentially force the temporary closure of the ports of Hudaydah and Salif, which are essential to enabling the importation of commercial and humanitarian supplies that millions of people rely on to survive.

Depending on the season, the environmental impact would risk affecting Djibouti, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia and Somalia, and would be expected to disrupt vital maritime traffic through the Bab al-Mandab strait and the Red Sea, jeopardizing access to the Suez Canal.

The Security Council has repeatedly sought to facilitate efforts by the United Nations to assist in addressing this grave threat. I am taking this opportunity to update you on the steps taken by the United Nations in this respect.

Given the urgency of the matter, in September 2021, I requested the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen to reorient the approach and take the lead on the *Safer* oil tanker operation, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the entire United Nations system, as necessary.

In line with this request, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen established a coordination committee to oversee the required operational assessment and planning, as well as the development of an immediate commercial solution. The resulting plan was subsequently presented to United Nations principals and endorsed in December 2021, including the recommendation for SMIT Salvage to be the implementing partner, after extensive due diligence that allowed the company to be identified as uniquely qualified for the role and acceptable to the Yemeni parties.

In accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed with the de facto authorities in Sana'a on 5 March 2022, the plan envisages the provision of a replacement export capacity equivalent to the *Safer* oil tanker within 18 months of the necessary funds being mobilized and secured and the procurement contract being signed. However, as such capacity is not immediately available and the situation is



urgent, it has been agreed that the cargo of crude oil will initially be transferred to a temporary vessel, which will remain near the *Safer* oil tanker. The transfer, and the accompanying cleaning of *Safer*'s tanks, will take place over approximately 80 days, once the required resources have been mobilized and secured and upon the completion of the procurement process.

While the final cost of the operation will be contingent upon several factors, it is estimated that implementation could require a budget of at least \$80 million. It is therefore essential that the necessary resources be rapidly mobilized to enable the immediate commencement of the operation, including the contracting of relevant partners.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, with the support of UNDP, has initiated discussions with Member States and potential donors with respect to the possibility of convening a dedicated donor conference to immediately mobilize sufficient resources for the full implementation of the *Safer* oil tanker operation. I would like to thank those Member States that have already expressed their interest in supporting such an initiative.

Complementary to these efforts, UNDP is also assisting in the development of contingency plans to respond to any catastrophic leak from the *Safer* oil tanker prior to the planned operation being launched. The contingency plan is being undertaken with additional expertise drawn from within the United Nations system, including from the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Maritime Organization, as well as from the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

I wish to reiterate to the members of the Security Council the urgent need to address this potential regional disaster before it strikes and my endorsement of the operation plan to address the *Safer* oil tanker in the manner envisaged.

The attention and unity of the Security Council, speaking with one voice on this issue, constitutes the best chance for success, and I trust that I can count on your continued support as we undertake this critical operation. The Council will be kept abreast of ongoing developments regarding the implementation of the operational plan, as appropriate.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated to the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**