



Security Council

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Tuesday, 15 September 2020, 10 a.m.

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Provisional

President: Mr. Abarry. (Niger)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Dominican Republic	Mrs. Cedano
Estonia	Mr. Auväärt
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Ms. Norman-Chalet
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council.

Earlier this year, I warned that Yemen was at a critical juncture. I said that either the guns would be silenced, and the political process would resume, or Yemen would slip back away from that road to peace. Unfortunately, this is exactly what seems to be happening. Increased fighting, greater humanitarian needs and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic are still taking their toll.

That does not mean that, together, we cannot turn the corner and move back towards finding a solution to this conflict, but it requires the parties to choose and to decide. We all know what needs to be done and what choices need to be made if Yemen is to emerge successfully from this conflict.

Last week, I sent the two parties an advanced draft text of the joint declaration that, as you know, Mr. President, we have been negotiating over the past six months. The draft document reflects and balances the comments from prior rounds of the talks during those months and, importantly, I believe, incorporates inputs from civil society, women's groups and other components of Yemen's voice for peace.

Now is the time for the parties to swiftly conclude the negotiations and finalize the joint declaration. My appeal at this time is very simple: choose peace; end this conflict; work with us urgently on the joint declaration.

Nowhere is the importance of this choice more evident than in Ma'rib, the governorate to the east of Sana'a. Heavy fighting continues to take place — if anything it has increased — along its front lines, including along the governorates' borders with Al-Jawf, Sana'a and Al-Bayda governorates. The situation in Ma'rib is of concern in a number of different ways — principally, the high degree of loss of lives and the real threat to hundreds of thousands of people and others in need. Ma'rib has played the role in this war of a safe haven for those people displaced from other parts of Yemen who came to Ma'rib for safety. And a battle there, which is threatened, would tragically displace them yet again, forcing them to move yet further from their homes.

The political importance of Ma'rib must also not be underestimated. Military shifts and consequences and events in Ma'rib have ripple effects on the dynamics of the conflict across Yemen. If Ma'rib falls, simply put, this would undermine the prospects of convening an inclusive political process that brings about a transition based on partnership and plurality.

In Al-Hudaydah, meanwhile, reports of ceasefire violations continue daily. The United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), led by Lieutenant General Guha, continues to experience restrictions that hamper the Mission's operations. You, Mr. President, will recall the tragic shooting in March of Government of Yemen liaison officer Colonel Al-Sulayhi, who later died of his wounds. UNMHA is engaging with both parties to ensure such incidents do not reoccur, and to pave the way for a return to a functioning joint set-up overseen by the Redeployment Coordination Committee. These steps should further the implementation of the Hodeidah Agreement.

I am also deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences of fuel shortages in Ansar Allah-controlled parts of northern Yemen. I want to emphasize the importance of ensuring that civilians can regularly and reliably access adequate supplies of fuel and other essential goods. I know that Mark Lowcock will describe this as a basic principle of humanitarian protection and assistance. The flow of essential commercial imports, including food, fuel and medical supplies, and their

distribution throughout Yemen to civilians are of course of the highest priority.

I am also deeply concerned that Ansar Allah recently announced the closure of Sana'a airport to humanitarian flights. As I am sure Mark will discuss, this has the potential to seriously impact the United Nations operations, as well as the operations of other humanitarian agencies in that part of Yemen providing critical assistance, which may be thus prevented from entering Sana'a.

We, the Council and ourselves together, need to also remain focused on ensuring the earliest possible arrival of the United Nations technical mission to assess the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker in the ports of Al-Hudaydah. I know that we will be hearing more from Mark on that issue.

I would also like to report that, if logistical arrangements permitting, which are always complicated in Yemen and even more so now at the time of the pandemic, we expect to see the parties this week in Switzerland to continue their discussions on the implementation of prisoner exchanges, under the joint auspices of my Office and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to which I pay tribute for its work on that project. The parties committed to releasing conflict-related prisoners and detainees back in 2018 in Stockholm and furthered their discussions to fulfil that commitment in Amman earlier this year. I hope this meeting will actually result in the release of some prisoners and some evidence of the implementation of those commitments, particularly given the threat of COVID-19 in places of detention.

I want to emphasize the vital role of Yemeni civil society in demanding an end to the conflict. They truly are champions of peace. Civil society has also vocally advocated for measures to bring relief to the population, including recently in a very marked way the release of prisoners and detainees. Civil society's role is central in maintaining the pressure for a peaceful resolution needed in every conflict, including in Yemen. It has provided analysis, ideas and language on issues of importance to Yemenis — from public service delivery to economic reform to peacebuilding — not only to my Office, but to all of us who are interested in improving the circumstances and prospects of Yemen. We have been engaging with various groups and will continue with respect to the joint declaration negotiations, and discussing in detail plans to ensure their meaningful

inclusion in a future political process, which we hope will not be long off.

Also, as part of these inclusion efforts, we are organizing a skills-building workshop with the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group — I think we have discussed their role and significance in this Chamber before — but we have also stepped up our engagement with the Group of Nine women's organizations to seek their inputs in our joint declaration. In that regard, I want to pay specific tribute here to the close relationship that we continue to enjoy with UN-Women, for which we are very grateful.

I want to close by emphasizing that, although, as I have said perhaps rather boringly before, the situation is very dire, the parties can choose to either continue this trajectory of escalating violence or to make the compromises necessary to revive the political process and allow for a political settlement. These choices are clear and evident and in the hands of the parties. The United Nations and the members of the Council must and, I am sure, will do everything possible to push for and support the latter outcome. We play a supporting role. The outcome lies in the hands of the parties. We are there and we will watch with the people of Yemen to see what choices they make and how they may swiftly be implemented.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: Two years ago, I warned the Security Council that we were losing the fight against famine in Yemen. At the time we identified five urgent priorities: first, protecting civilians; secondly, humanitarian access; thirdly, funding; fourthly, the need to support the economy; and, fifthly, progress towards peace.

Progress was made. Donors swiftly allocated more funds, meeting almost 90 per cent of our funding requirements. With more money in the bank, food aid beneficiaries increased from 8 million to 12 million people a month. Health, education, water and other programmes were also expanded. In parallel, Yemen's partners took steps to strengthen the economy. Foreign-exchange injections stabilized the then-collapsing Yemeni rial; that helped many more people afford food and other essential goods, nearly all of which, as all present are aware, have to be imported into Yemen.

With Martin's support, the parties signed the Stockholm Agreement in 2018, which calmed the conflict at a critical time and helped keep Al-Hudaydah port open for essential imports. The results of all this were clear: millions of lives were saved; there was no large-scale famine. But today the spectre of famine has returned. The risk has become so serious that we have again notified the Council, as we are required to do under the terms of resolution 2417 (2018), just as we did two years ago. The same five priority actions that worked then can work today. Unfortunately, those who are in a position to help and who have a particular responsibility to do so are mostly choosing not to.

Let us start with the protection of civilians. Conflict has continued to escalate in recent weeks, particularly in central Yemen. In August, more civilians were killed across the country than in any other month this year. One in four civilian casualties in Yemen are now people who are killed or injured in their own homes. Like Martin, I remain extremely worried about Ma'rib, where more than 1 million people have sought refuge since 2015. A major confrontation there would be disastrous for civilians. So, I reinforce Martin's message to the parties to work urgently to agree a nationwide ceasefire, including in Ma'rib. De-escalation played a major role in averting famine two years ago; we need similar steps now.

The second point is humanitarian access. In the south, we continue to face challenges, including insecurity and bureaucratic impediments. But those challenges remain less severe than what we encounter in the north. I am, like Martin, deeply concerned that the Ansar Allah authorities have closed Sana'a airport to United Nations and humanitarian flights. The authorities attribute that decision to fuel shortages in the north. Those shortages are having severe humanitarian consequences, which I will come to in a moment. But that does not justify closing the airport, and I would emphasize that safe and reliable transport for aid personnel is one of the basic conditions the United Nations requires to work anywhere in the world. A rapid solution is essential if aid workers are to remain safely in the north and if we are to maintain the operations on the necessary scale.

In the coming weeks, about 100 metric tons of humanitarian cargo is due to fly into Sana'a airport, including essential vaccines and other medical supplies. We also need faster progress on the wider operating environment for aid agencies. Over the last few months,

we saw significant improvements on assessments, project agreements and other issues, but it is now more than a year since a plan was agreed to pilot biometric registration of food aid beneficiaries. That pilot still has not started.

You will be expecting another update from me, Mr. President, on the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. The United Nations team has submitted a revised proposal for the assessment and initial repair mission, and we have held several rounds of constructive technical discussions with the Ansar Allah authorities. Frustrating as the endless delays have been, we are not giving up, and we hope that the new proposal will be quickly approved so that work can start.

The third point is funding for the aid operation. Increased funding two years ago was the main reason famine was prevented. This year we have received only 30 per cent of what is needed. Aid agencies with staff in Yemen all agree that this is the biggest challenge for their work today. Several donors, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, which have a particular responsibility that they have discharged in recent years, have so far given nothing to this year's United Nations plan. It is particularly reprehensible to promise money, which gives people hope that help may be on the way, and then to dash those hopes by simply failing to fulfil the promise.

More than 9 million people have been affected by deepening cuts to aid programmes, including food, water and health care. Continuing to hold back money from the humanitarian response now will be a death sentence for many families. So yet again I call on all donors to pay their pledges now and increase their support.

My fourth point is Yemen's economy. The economy has shrunk by 45 per cent since 2015. The Government also estimates that remittances from abroad were supporting half the population before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Those remittances have fallen by up to 70 per cent in the wake of the pandemic. So, Yemenis have much less money in their pockets to feed their families or pay medical bills, and the money they do have is worth much less. The rial has collapsed again. In the south, it is trading at more than 800 to the United States dollar; that is the lowest value that the currency has ever seen.

This is pushing food prices even higher. Today food is about 140 per cent more expensive than before the conflict. Fuel costs in the informal market are now more than double the official rate in many areas; that is mainly due to the acute shortages in the north that I mentioned earlier. Only about half the normal value of commercial fuel has entered Al-Hudaydah since June. Right now, because of the blockade, more than three months' worth of fuel is stuck outside the port awaiting Government permission to enter. The resulting shortages mean that water, sanitation and health services are shutting down because they do not have enough fuel to keep going. That directly affect the services provided by humanitarian agencies, too. A group of non-governmental organizations has estimated that fuel shortages have so far reduced water and sanitation assistance to at least 2.5 million people and has disrupted food aid for at least half a million people, with another 300,000 people at risk.

Resolving the dispute that is behind the fuel blockade is essential to stopping Yemen's drift towards famine. I also want to reiterate my call on Yemen's partners to provide regular foreign-exchange injections. Just as it did two years ago, that would bring down basic commodity prices, and it would allow more people to eat.

My fifth point is progress towards peace. Martin has just briefed the Council on his efforts to secure a nationwide ceasefire and resume and make progress in the political process. That is more important than ever. Data show very clearly that the worst hunger in Yemen is mainly in conflict-affected areas.

This is the thirty-first time we have briefed the Security Council on Yemen since I took up this role. Every month I present the facts and figures, but there is a tendency to forget that the facts and figures are all about real people. On Sunday, two days ago, I spent a few hours on the phone talking to people from all over Yemen. I wanted to hear their concerns and ask what message they had for powerful countries and people, like all present here, who hold their fate in their hands. I spoke to Jamila, a mother of five who fled the fighting in Taiz. Her family have had their food aid cut in half. She wants the Council to know that they cannot keep going without its help. I spoke to Abdulrahman, in Sana'a. He told me that his six children come crying to him every day in hunger, and that he has even less to give them now because the aid he was receiving has been cut. His message to the Council is that Yemenis are human

beings who deserve respect. He hopes the Council will again support basic assistance for his family.

Samia, in Aden, told me life there has never been worse. COVID-19 killed the main earners in her family, and she says they now have no sources of income. She is asking the Council to look at Yemen with compassion and humanity, and at least offer food and medicine.

I also talked to Mohammed, who fled Sa'ada to seek refuge in Sana'a after air strikes destroyed his house and the bus he used to drive. His family had been receiving aid every month, but it too has been cut back. His children are now too hungry to go to school. Every night, they ask him: "Daddy, where is the food? When is it coming?" He does not have an answer for them, and he is hoping the Council will do something to help. He is worried the world has forgotten about people like him or — worse — has decided to do nothing.

When one talks to people like this — and there are millions just like them all across Yemen — and listens to their articulate, human and emotional stories, the main thing one learns is they are just like us, except that they are victims of people and forces over whom they have no influence or control. Their stories may be hard to hear, but they are a lot harder to live.

Yemen is in the state it is because those with power and influence have decided there are things more important than the fate of these people. Is it not way past time for a different decision?

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings. I would also like to thank the Yemenis who today, through Mr. Lowcock, have spoken to the Security Council. It is because the situation is so desperate for Yemenis like those who spoke that the Security Council and the parties on the ground need to act.

We are extremely concerned that the humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to plunge to new depths as the country battles an economic crisis, an increasing risk of famine and a major outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). While we assess that Yemen is over the initial COVID-19 peak, we are concerned about

the potential for new waves of infection and even more deaths. It is vital that public health mitigation efforts continue, and we call on all Yemeni parties to report cases transparently, ensure unrestricted humanitarian access and facilitate the response of the United Nations.

The indirect effects of COVID-19, including on Yemen's fragile economy, will have a far longer-lasting impact. Yemen's currency has collapsed to record lows, leading food prices to rise by over 20 per cent since January. Urgent external financial assistance to the Central Bank is now needed to stabilize prices and enable more people to afford food.

In the light of this economic crisis, recent food security and economic data suggest that conditions in Yemen already mirror, or are even worse than, those of late 2018, when pockets of famine were last identified across the country. As we have heard, famine is now a realistic prospect in Yemen this year.

In addition to economic support, the key action the international community can take to prevent famine is to urgently provide significant funding to the United Nations humanitarian appeal. With the General Assembly high-level annual debate fast approaching, the United Nations has received only \$900 million this year, as compared to around \$2.6 billion at this point last year. This funding gap is curtailing the humanitarian response, and 7 million people will stop receiving food if new funding is not in place by October.

In response to this funding crisis, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary announced £25 million in funding for Yemen earlier this month, in addition to what the United Kingdom has already pledged. We welcome other countries' announcements of extra funds but call on all donors to play their part and urgently provide funding to the United Nations appeal. We call on all countries that have given money in previous years to do so at the same level this year.

A political solution is needed desperately to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and end the conflict for good. As I have said repeatedly in the Council, the United Kingdom fully supports the painstaking and patient efforts of Mr. Griffiths. Today I urge the Yemeni parties — by which I mean the Government of Yemen just as much as the Houthis — to cooperate with him and to agree to his proposals as soon as possible. The window of opportunity to end this conflict will close. It is in the hands of the parties to work with Mr. Griffiths and reach an agreement. It is in their hands to act in the

interests of their people. Are they ready to do so, or will they act in their own self-interest?

I welcome Security Council unity on this issue here and at the ministerial level. Later this week, we will be co-hosting an event on Yemen, with the Secretary-General and others, that will demonstrate our close Council and international coordination. We must stay united in our messages to the parties and our support for Special Envoy Griffiths so that he can reach an agreement.

The United Kingdom remains extremely concerned about the situation in Ma'rib. The Houthi offensive is not only leading to a distressing loss of life, but it also threatens to derail the political process at this crucial stage. We welcome and fully support the Special Envoy's strong statements on Ma'rib. I urge the Council and the wider international community to send a strong, unified message to the Houthis that they must cease their offensive on Ma'rib and negotiate peace.

Finally, we must not forget the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, on which the Council has been briefed many times, including in various meetings earlier this summer. The tanker poses a significant environmental and economic threat to the region. While I welcome progress made in negotiations between the Houthis and the United Nations Office for Project Services on the scope of the assessment and repair mission, the mission needs to happen urgently. The Houthis must follow through on their promises by allowing the United Nations experts to board the tanker to carry out their work as soon as possible.

Time is running out. The parties need to move quickly to agree a ceasefire and engage in a comprehensive political process. If they do not, the Council should be ready to take action.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their valuable briefings. I reiterate my country's support for their efforts.

Tunisia is following with great concern the developments in Yemen and regrets the military escalation and the return of infighting, which threatens to further exacerbate the situation and increase the suffering of the Yemeni people, in addition to obstructing efforts to reach a political solution.

We stress that Yemen can emerge from this crisis only by discarding military options, putting an end to the escalation, initiating peaceful political dialogue, positively engaging with the Special Envoy's initiative and returning to the negotiating table to reach a political settlement based on the agreed terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015).

We stress that a military option can only plunge Yemen deeper into the spiral of violence. United Nations reports indicate distressing levels of loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and humanitarian tragedies — undermining opportunities to achieve a political solution and restore peace and security.

We call on all Yemeni parties to join a ceasefire, put an end to the military offensive in response, *inter alia*, to the Secretary-General's appeal and resolution 2532 (2020), and prioritize the interests of the Yemeni people in the face of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis. We commend the efforts of Mr. Griffiths and look forward to the Yemeni parties' agreement on the joint declaration as a first step towards more comprehensive and direct negotiations and as a ray of hope in the reform of the economic system and in the improvement of the humanitarian conditions, with the reopening of the Sana'a International Airport, the payment of salaries and the facilitation of the entry of imports into Yemen through Al-Hudaydah.

The conflict has contributed to deepening the suffering of the Yemeni people, which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease, a lack of medical infrastructure and proper health facilities, and deteriorating economic conditions. We would like to mention the UNICEF report that warned against a famine in Yemen that, as it worsens, will intensify food shortages. Against the backdrop of the critical humanitarian conditions, we stress the importance of facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid, and we call on donor countries to support the Yemeni people.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we reiterate the call to take the necessary measures without delay or preconditions to facilitate the arrival of a United Nations team of experts to assess the situation and follow through with urgent steps to avoid an unprecedented environmental crisis, which could

have severe humanitarian and economic repercussions in the region.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

The United Nations is committed to promoting the Yemeni peace process and improving the humanitarian situation on the ground. China commends such efforts.

Over the past two years, the situation in Yemen has experienced twists and turns. All parties have suffered great losses, and the country's people are also suffering unspeakable misery. Facts have proved time and again that military means will not solve the country's problems; wars lead only to tragedy. The international community has never given up its efforts to solve the Yemeni issue politically. Thanks to the mediation of the United Nations and other countries in the region, the parties to the conflict in Yemen conducted talks and negotiations and achieved the Stockholm Agreement and, subsequently, the Riyadh agreement. The Security Council has adopted relevant resolutions and deployed the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement to monitor the ceasefire on the ground. Special Envoy Griffiths has proposed a new peace initiative and is actively conducting good offices. At the same time, we need to recognize that the implementation of the existing agreements is not yet satisfactory. The Stockholm Agreement is at a stalemate, and the implementation of the Riyadh agreement has been erratic. The parties to the conflict have complicated, intertwined differences and often move back and forth between the battlefield and the negotiating table. Mutual trust is seriously lacking, and the comprehensive political process stalls time and again.

China believes that no matter what difficulties and setbacks there are, the overall direction of solving the Yemeni issue politically should remain unchanged, and the sovereignty, unity and independence and territorial integrity of the country should be respected and maintained. To achieve a breakthrough in the political process, all parties should make joint efforts.

First, all parties to the conflict in Yemen should embrace a ceasefire and refrain from violence. At present, several areas in the north and south of Yemen have seen escalation in military actions. We urge the parties to heed the ceasefire initiative of the Secretary-

General and his Special Envoy and stop the use of force so as to create conditions for the political process.

Secondly, the United Nations should hold in-depth consultations with the parties and showcase the benefits of negotiations and a truce through a detailed agreement so as to encourage all the parties to sit down and have a true negotiation. All the parties should consider the interests of the Yemeni people as their priorities and coordinate with the Special Envoy, while being flexible and making the right choices.

Thirdly, the parties to the conflict should honour their commitment and build mutual trust. China hopes that the Special Envoy and the International Committee for the Red Cross will accelerate the consultations with the Yemeni Government and the Houthis on the exchange of prisoners in order to realize a large-scale prisoner exchange.

Fourthly, countries of the region and regional organizations should play a constructive role, out of the realization that peace, stability, development and prosperity in Yemen are in the overall interests of the countries of the region. We would like to encourage these countries to exert positive influences on all the parties to the conflict and promote negotiation and peace.

With regard to the humanitarian situation in the country, every briefing by Under-Secretary-General Lowcock leaves us with a heavy heart. People in Yemen are faced with a violent conflict, economic crisis, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), floods, locusts, plague and many other challenges, and are quite mired in a major humanitarian disaster. The international community must help the country to make great efforts to improve its humanitarian situation, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, including women, children and the disabled. Donor countries should honour their commitments as soon as possible. The parties to the conflict should facilitate the humanitarian actions undertaken by United Nations agencies and ensure access so as to save lives. The United Nations should also facilitate forward-looking measures by parties that have active control of the country's regions to fight against the pandemic. China has provided several batches of supplies to Yemen to help the country with its COVID-19 response and is willing to continue to support and assist the Government and the people of Yemen.

With regard to access to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we have not seen any real progress yet, which is disheartening. The engine room was flooded again recently. The Council should urge all the relevant parties to take concrete actions to ensure that the United Nations technical team can carry out a safety assessment and the repair of the tanker as soon as possible.

Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America): I want to thank Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock for their insightful but sobering briefings. Mr. Griffiths' conclusion gave heart-breaking human face to what we are discussing today and the challenges that we have been seeking to address for some time. In that regard, I also want to make clear, as we have in each of our monthly meetings, that the United States strongly supports his and Mr. Lowcock's efforts and will continue to do so.

In that vein, the United States urges the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Houthis to work with Special Envoy Griffiths towards agreement on the final draft of the joint declaration. We regret that this process has not yet made more progress. As we just heard so clearly, the Yemeni people, struggling with an economic crisis, food insecurity, fuel shortages, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and an enduring conflict, deserve such a step forward towards stability and security.

But as we well know, another destabilizing force is felt through the Islamic Republic of Iran, which holds little interest in fostering stability and security in Yemen, or anywhere else in the region. Just the opposite: Iran continues to send lethal aid to the Houthis, fuelling the Houthis' ongoing offense near Ma'rib as well as the larger conflict. On 20 August, the United States initiated the process that will restore virtually all United Nations sanctions on Iran, which had been lifted under sub-paragraph (a) of paragraph 7 of resolution 2231 (2015). As Secretary Pompeo said on that day, the United States will never allow the world's largest State sponsor of terrorism to freely buy and sell planes, tanks, missiles and other kinds of conventional weapons. These United Nations sanctions will continue the arms embargo.

The arms embargo is an essential component in our efforts to curb Tehran's destabilizing actions in Yemen as well as those it is taking against its neighbours. We have said it before, and we will say it again today: the Security Council is utterly failing in its mission to maintain international peace and security by allowing

Iran to maintain and expand its destabilizing activity in the region unhindered. The Houthis unconscionable persistent cross-border aerial attacks that destroy civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, including recently on Abha airport, are additional evidence of the urgent need to maintain the embargo and push back against further Iranian encroachment.

We are encouraged by the resumption of the cabinet formation discussions between the Southern Transitional Council and the Government of the Republic of Yemen, and we strongly urge both parties to continue progress on the implementation of the Riyadh agreement. In particular, swift cabinet formation is urgently needed so that the Government can work as a unified body to respond to the needs of the Yemeni people and work the most effectively with the Special Envoy on the political process.

Turning specifically to the humanitarian situation, the United States shares the concerns expressed today over the major funding gaps for aid operations this year and the potential implications of the deteriorating economic outlook regarding worsening food insecurity.

The Trump Administration has contributed more than \$1.3 billion in humanitarian assistance to Yemen over the past two years. Even with this partial suspension of certain assistance operations in Houthi-controlled areas of northern Yemen due to Houthi interference, we remain the largest single donor to Yemen's humanitarian response this year.

We urge our partners and other donor nations, including those in the region, to step up, contribute and help fulfil the humanitarian response plan's request. We also urge donors that have not yet disbursed their 2020 pledges to do so expeditiously, as well as to consider additional financial support to help stabilize the Yemeni currency and allow continued flows of essential commercial imports.

We reiterate our call on the Houthis to cease the obstruction of, and interference in, aid operations. Our partners must be able to independently assess needs and respond in line with humanitarian principles. The unhindered flow of essential goods into and throughout Yemen is more vital than ever given the increasing food insecurity plaguing so many Yemenis.

The United States notes with serious concern the Houthis' decision to manufacture a fuel shortage in northern Yemen, choosing profit over the lives of

Yemenis. Let us be clear: the decrease in fuel imports through Al-Hudaydah port in recent months was caused by Houthi misappropriation of fuel tax and customs receipts from the Central Bank of Yemen that were supposed to have funded Government salaries in northern Yemen. The current shortages would not exist were it not for this inexcusable Houthi fraud.

We call on the Houthis and the Government of the Republic of Yemen to expeditiously agree to the Special Envoy's request to hold discussions on fuel imports and associated revenue disbursements. In the interim, we thank the Government for facilitating the entry of oil tankers into Al-Hudaydah port, including two tankers earlier this month, despite the Houthis' unfailing intransigence, so that Yemenis can get the fuel they need.

We also call on the Houthis to reverse their announced decision to close the Sana'a airport to the United Nations and other international relief aircraft as a result of this crisis of their own making. This is simply another example of Houthi extortion using international assistance. Meanwhile, the Yemeni people continue to suffer. This is inexcusable.

We urge the Houthis to cease their continuous assault on religious freedom, and we demand the immediate and unconditional release of the Yemeni citizen Levi Salem Musa Marhabi. Mr. Marhabi has been wrongfully detained by the Houthis for four years despite a Houthi "court" ordering his release in September 2019. His health continues to deteriorate as he languishes in a Sana'a prison, where the threat of contracting COVID-19 is all too real. Mr. Marhabi is one member of an ever-shrinking community of Yemeni Jews, who have been an important part of Yemen's diverse social fabric for thousands of years. The Houthis must respect freedom of religion and refrain from oppressing members of minority groups.

Finally, as other colleagues have highlighted, we continue to monitor the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and the grave environmental, economic and humanitarian dangers posed by a potential spill. We call on the Houthis to approve once and for all the United Nations mission plan for the *FSO SAFER* assessment and to live up to their commitments and permit United Nations technical teams immediate and unconditional access to the deteriorating vessel.

Mr. Auväärt (Estonia): I would like to thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

The ongoing hostilities in Yemen, which show no signs of de-escalation, are deeply worrisome, as they result in a growing number of civilian casualties and the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis. The people of Yemen have been suffering for far too long. It is unacceptable to seek territorial gains and engage in economic warfare at their expense.

Maximum international efforts must be made for the parties to cease fighting and engage constructively with the United Nations Special Envoy. We call on the parties to agree to the joint declaration without further delay. This will make way for the start of the next phase of the comprehensive political process, which is the only means to finding sustainable peace.

We are also concerned about the continuous tensions in the south. We urge the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council to continue implementing the provisions of the Riyadh agreement. That includes forming a joint Government, which is crucial for moving towards a broader political solution in Yemen.

We note the recently published report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (A/HRC/45/6). It is appalling to read the report's finding that all parties to the conflict are responsible for human rights violations, as well as violations of international humanitarian law.

In that context, we remind all parties of their obligation to take all necessary measures to protect civilians, especially vulnerable groups, such as women and children. We also stress the importance of taking all measures to protect against sexual and gender-based violence and violations of other fundamental freedoms. Accountability for all violations and crimes must be guaranteed.

We fully support the report's recommendation to the Security Council to integrate the human rights dimensions of the conflict in Yemen more fully into its agenda.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we are deeply concerned about the need to scale down humanitarian operations due to a lack of funding, especially considering the reported risk of famine. We call for intensified efforts to find a long-term solution to

ensure the import of fuel and commercial items through Al-Hudaydah port, which is critically important from the humanitarian perspective.

Finally, we reiterate our call to the Houthi authorities to take immediate and concrete steps without preconditions to allow the United Nations mission to access the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker in order to prevent a large-scale catastrophe.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings. We welcome our colleague the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the Security Council and look forward to his statement regarding developments in his homeland.

South Africa reiterates its support to the Special Envoy in his quest for a peaceful solution to the situation in Yemen despite the escalating violence that persists amid the unyielding coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. My delegation would like to reiterate that the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is inextricably linked to the political impasse. As such, my intervention will focus on those two elements, namely, the humanitarian and the political situation.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, South Africa continues to express its concern regarding the devastating impact on the people of Yemen, in particular women, children, the elderly, internally displaced persons and those with disabilities, South Africa also expresses its concern over the suspension by the Houthis of all United Nations humanitarian flights into Sana'a and the response to the blockade by the coalition's commercial vessels in Al-Hudaydah, an entry point for more than 70 per cent of Yemeni imports of commercial goods.

We urge the parties to collaborate with the Office of the Special Envoy to seek an urgent solution to ensure the continued flow of commercial imports of food into Yemen through Al-Hudaydah port. We note that, despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, 14 million Yemenis are food insecure, of which nearly 10 million are acutely food insecure. The humanitarian situation in Yemen is extremely fragile, and any disruption in the pipeline of critical supplies has the potential to bring millions of people closer to starvation and death. Currently, only 25 per cent of humanitarian requirements have been funded in 2020, as Mr. Lowcock just informed

the Council. United Nations agencies are now forced to reduce or close more programmes. We therefore urgently call donors to adhere to their pledges made at recent pledging conferences to avoid Yemen's slipping into famine.

South Africa calls on all parties to the conflict to agree to a unified set of measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, improve the delivery of humanitarian aid and provide impetus to the overall political negotiations to end the war in Yemen and alleviate the suffering of Yemeni people.

We have consistently highlighted the importance for all parties to abide by their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to take all the measures necessary to end and prevent violations against civilians.

On the political impasse, South Africa is concerned about the recent drone strikes by Houthis against targets in Saudi Arabia at the Abha International Airport, Najran and Riyadh. At the same time, the escalating military tension and continued clashes in Yemen's embattled Ma'rib and neighbouring Al-Jawf are also of grave concern to South Africa. We urge all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities in line with the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and resolution 2532 (2020), as well as to agree on confidence-building measures, such as the payment of civil servant salaries, the reopening of the Sana'a airport and the lifting of commercial import restrictions.

We reiterate our position that a military response is not a viable solution and call on all parties to approach the resumption of the political negotiations with a spirit of compromise, while placing the interests of Yemenis at the centre of a negotiated political settlement. We appeal to all parties to avoid the stance of gaining absolute positions.

South Africa calls on all parties to engage in good faith and without preconditions with Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in order to reach a comprehensive negotiated settlement to end the conflict, and that this be done in parallel to efforts to agree on a joint declaration to implement the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements.

South Africa also urges the Houthis to adhere to the agreement to provide access to United Nations inspectors to access and assess the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker to avoid a man-made disaster in the Red Sea. We

therefore hope that looming threat will be dealt with on a purely technical basis and without politicization.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates that the only solution to the conflict in Yemen will be an inclusive Yemeni-led, Yemeni-owned political settlement that delivers on the hopes of the Yemeni people for a strong economic and political future. In this context, we also call for the full and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of an inclusive political process.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): We heard earlier that this was the thirty-third briefing on Yemen and the humanitarian situation, and I think that we have never had a more sombre briefing than we had today. I have hardly ever heard Martin Griffiths, who is the eternal optimist, as down and frustrated as he was today. Mark Lowcock described the humanitarian situation as very dramatic. We must not get used to these kinds of briefings.

On the political process, we offer full support to what Mr. Griffiths has been trying to do. We fully support his call for re-engagement in the political process. I also commend him for his approach to the involvement of women. That is key for us. We believe that the joint declaration and the Riyadh agreement processes must be inclusive and that the voices of women and marginalized people have to feature in them.

Germany supports the political process. As Ambassador Allen mentioned earlier, we will co-host a conference with the involvement of the Secretary-General on Thursday to find a way forward from the political impasse.

Let me concentrate on the humanitarian situation.

The violation of international humanitarian law and human rights by all parties is appalling. We have heard about the harassment of aid workers, the blocking of food and fuel imports and the closure of the Sana'a airport for humanitarian aid. How negative can one get? I appeal to the Iranians for once to do something positive and put pressure on the Houthis to allow humanitarian aid in, open the Sana'a airport and finally allow an inspection and work to be done on the *FSO SAFER* tanker. There continues to be sexual and gender-based violence. We continue to witness the repression of journalists, members of the judiciary and human rights activists. There are ongoing air strikes, which are disproportionate with regard to their impact on civilians. I listened carefully to what Mr. Lowcock

said about last month being the worst this year with regard to the killing of civilians.

With regard to the humanitarian funding gap — and Mr. Lowcock said this very clearly — there is a serious risk of famine. Germany pledged an additional \$150 million as part of its \$450 million in humanitarian aid to the country in 2020. We have disbursed 90 per cent of that \$450 million.

I am appalled at what Mr. Lowcock very frankly said, namely, that members of the coalition — the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — have not honoured their pledges. How cynical can one be, just to quote Mr. Lowcock, to promise money and then dash hopes? Continuing to hold this money back is issuing a death penalty for civilians, to quote Mr. Lowcock again. Therefore, I would like to end my short intervention by appealing to those countries that have not honoured their pledges to do so and urgently get the money to the humanitarian aid organizations so that they can help the people of Yemen, including those whose messages Mr. Lowcock conveyed to us today.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their relevant and thought-provoking briefings.

During my statement today I wish to focus on three issues: recent political developments, the latest report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts and the importance of accountability in Yemen, and, finally, the ongoing saga of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker.

Belgium, like its partners in the European Union, continues to support the efforts of the Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Griffiths, to secure a nationwide ceasefire, implement confidence-building measures and restart an inclusive political process. During our most recent meeting, in late August, Martin stated that he feared losing momentum for the joint declaration. Indeed, the negotiations cannot go on forever.

Belgium is alarmed by recent reports of the suspension of all United Nations and humanitarian flights to Sana'a by the Houthis. The Houthis seem to be drawing a link between that suspension and the coalition's continued blockade of ships transporting fuel to the port of Al-Hudaydah, demonstrating once

again the urgent need to agree on the outstanding issues in the negotiations on the joint declaration.

Belgium also remains deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in Ma'rib and Al-Hudaydah, which threatens the already fragile political process. The only way to overcome the multiple crises in Yemen is to put an end to the war and resolve deep-rooted differences through dialogue. We urge all parties to remain engaged in the peace talks, under the auspices of the United Nations, and to implement the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements.

In this war, as in so many others, it is civilians who are suffering the most. The war in Yemen has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians. Mark outlined the terrible humanitarian catastrophe that is raging in the country. Famine is a real threat for millions of Yemenis. In its third report, released last week, the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen found that all parties involved in the conflict continue to commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, noting a consistent pattern of attacks against civilians. This is occurring not only in the context of hostilities but also far from the front lines, and such violations are widespread. The report notes in particular the killing of civilians, torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, rape and other forms of sexual violence, the denial of a fair trial and the recruitment of children under the age of 15 to participate actively in hostilities. Such violations may constitute war crimes.

Belgium therefore strongly calls on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians, in particular women and children, and their obligations under international human rights law. Ensuring justice for the perpetrators of all violations committed in Yemen remains vital. The importance of this has been underscored by the Council time and again.

We have recently been informed of a new water leak, similar to that in May, in the engine room of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. Apparently, the leak has been contained. But one day, and that day may come soon, we will not be so lucky. That incident demonstrates once again why it is crucial that a United Nations team of experts have full and immediate access to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We urge the Houthi leadership to

stop delaying the process. We must avert an imminent environmental, humanitarian and economic disaster.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Griffiths, and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for presenting an overview of the political and humanitarian situations in Yemen.

We continue to witness the developments in the situation in the Republic of Yemen, where for the sixth year running we are seeing an acute conflict that is negatively impacting the security and stability of not only the country but also of the region as a whole. We are concerned by the fact that the hostilities are continuing and that civilians are the main ones affected. Because humanitarian issues and challenges are taking centre stage, there must be an immediate reaction on the part of the international community.

We are also concerned by the information from the United Nations to the effect that because of insufficient funding, basic assistance programmes are being discontinued; this includes programmes aimed at ensuring food security and access to water and medical services. In these conditions, where the national health system has been undermined by the long-standing conflict, what is needed is collective action to help Yemen in its fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic. We call upon donors, including from other countries in the region, to increase their relevant support.

At the same time, we believe that humanitarian assistance should be impartial in nature. One should not classify the Yemenis as the “good ones” and the “bad ones”. It will be possible to really improve the humanitarian situation in the country only if a political and diplomatic settlement to the conflict is found. There is no possible military solution to the situation in Yemen. However, so far, the implementation of the Riyadh, Stockholm and Al-Hudaydah agreements has not yielded the results that we want, namely, a country-wide ceasefire, and the relaunching, as soon as possible, of an inclusive inter-Yemeni dialogue. The stalling of those agreements could lead to further escalation. The only entities that could profit from such a situation are extremists and terrorists, who could use Yemen to expand their influence far beyond the boundaries of the country.

We support the work done by Mr. Griffiths and understand the difficulties he has to face when providing mediation services. The most important thing here is that the parties in Yemen are showing understanding and general agreement with the fact that they need to launch a nation-wide dialogue aimed at discussing the future of the country. What is of vital importance here is to ensure that the views of all political, social, ethnic and religious groups in Yemen are taken into account.

We also understand that the devil is in the details, and that is why it has not been possible to agree on the plan proposed by Martin. One of the issues mentioned is that of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We believe that solutions to the tanker issue that would be acceptable to all parties could be found provided that all of the parties’ interests are duly taken into account.

Russia maintains contacts with all the Yemeni and outside stakeholders and will continue to encourage their search for compromise in support of the efforts made by the United Nations and Mr. Griffiths himself. We will continue to back the efforts made by the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, and we expect that our colleagues in the Security Council and the international community as a whole will do so as well.

The situation in Yemen is directly affecting the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea region. Whether or not the crises in the Middle East are interlinked is an issue that could be discussed in academic circles, but for us there should be no doubt in that respect. We are convinced that all efforts to settle the conflict in Yemen and other countries in the region should be interlinked and undertaken in parallel with other steps aimed at generally de-escalating the situation in the Middle East.

We stand ready to work together on promoting peace and stability in the Middle East as a whole, including on the basis of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), which called on the Secretary-General, together with the States of the region, to develop a security and confidence architecture in the region.

We have proposed our own concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf. There are a number of other peace initiatives, and they have one main element in common: the principle of inclusiveness. We oppose any attempt to place the blame on one party or one country, as was voiced here today, especially since the countries in the region, including the country that was accused

again today, could play a positive role in generally de-escalating the situation, including in Yemen. We see that some countries in the region demonstrate readiness to normalize relations, and we expect that they will show the same constructive attitude towards their other neighbours. We once again invite all interested parties to launch a comprehensive dialogue aimed at creating an atmosphere conducive to cooperation in the region.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

There is an urgent need to find a political solution to the crisis in Yemen. We are concerned about the continuing clashes there, particularly in Ma'rib. We call on the Yemeni parties to put an end to all hostilities, and particularly on the Houthis to stop attacks in Ma'rib province. Attacks carried out by the Houthis in Saudi territory must also cease immediately. We deplore the ongoing clashes observed in the South. The Riyadh agreement must be fully implemented. Discussions on the formation of a new Government must be brought to a successful conclusion, as it is an important step for the resumption of political talks.

The Yemeni parties must urgently engage in dialogue with the Special Envoy and reach agreement on the draft joint statement he has proposed. That should enable a ceasefire, in accordance with resolution 2532 (2020), confidence-building measures and the resumption of negotiations to reach an inclusive political agreement. In that context, it is also essential that the Stockholm Agreement be fully implemented, including with regard to the payment of wages, in the light of the deteriorating situation in Al-Hudaydah.

The humanitarian situation, particularly the worsening of food security, remains tragic. The spectre of famine looms once again. The figures presented by Mark Lowcock speak for themselves. In addition to the ongoing conflict, the coronavirus disease pandemic, the economic and humanitarian crises and the locust crisis every day increase the number of people living with food insecurity.

We must therefore do everything we can collectively to avert such a disaster. Even as needs are increasing, the humanitarian response plan remains underfunded and many humanitarian programmes are on hold. The humanitarian response must be commensurate with the needs. All parties must ensure unhindered humanitarian access to all vulnerable people. In that

regard, the Houthis' decision to close the Sana'a airport to United Nations and humanitarian flights is totally unacceptable. We call on them to reverse that decision.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we call on the Houthis to authorize access, without delay or preconditions, to the United Nations expert mission. An oil leak would have catastrophic consequences. Urgent action is therefore necessary.

Finally, we cannot repeat often enough that the protection of civilians must be a top priority. Respect for international humanitarian law is non-negotiable. France will remain fully mobilized for a political solution in Yemen. More broadly, the French authorities are fully committed to the search for a solution that would lead to regional de-escalation.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their updates.

Unfortunately, after months of hope, we are confronted with heart-breaking indications of the very direction we were trying to avoid. Nonetheless, as long as there is political will on all sides, progress is attainable.

Before I highlight three points that Indonesia believes could save the future of Yemen, let me take this opportunity to underline Indonesia's support for Yemen's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and independence. Those must be our guiding principles for Yemen. My statement will focus on the humanitarian impact arising from the conflict.

First, we would again like to stress that the Yemeni crisis can be resolved only through a political process. Sadly, each component of the conflict has become a political bargaining chip for the parties, even as they inflict greater suffering on the people of Yemen.

While Mr. Lowcock has alluded to the fuel crisis in Yemen, Sana'a airport will be closed, even to humanitarian assistance. This development will further affect the availability of health and medical supplies for humanitarian assistance. As clearly stated by both Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock, we appeal to those controlling the airport to open it for the sake of humanity.

Indonesia therefore urges the Houthis and the Government of Yemen to continue to work with the Special Envoy, particularly with a view to reaching a

joint declaration and achieving a nationwide ceasefire. We support the call of Mr. Griffiths to engage and finalize a joint declaration. Failing to do so would mean that instead of peace, the parties prefer war.

After years of conflict, it is clear that the military approach has succeeded only in bringing further misery to the people of Yemen. We therefore condemn the continuous Houthi attacks, including on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We also call for the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020), and in particular endorse the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. Indonesia fully supports the push of the Special Envoy for an inclusive Yemeni-led and -owned peace process facilitated by the United Nations.

Secondly, we must avoid a humanitarian catastrophe as a result of the conflict in an era of depleted resources and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Alongside the economic and food insecurity crises, we all know about the depletion of funding for humanitarian assistance, the collapsing health-care system and the impact of COVID-19. In the face of growing violence, Yemen is on the brink of famine. Mr. Lowcock is once again ringing the alarm on the spectre of famine. These factors underline the depth of the crisis and the precipitous danger facing Yemen at a time when there is no movement on the three proposals made by the Special Envoy. My delegation therefore again highlights the wisdom of a political solution.

On the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, two months have elapsed since our previous Council meeting on this issue (see S/2020/721) and we should continue that discussion. It is disappointing that the tanker has not yet been assessed and repaired, and my delegation again urges the Houthis to expeditiously allow the United Nations team to begin its work. We hope that progress can be made on each and every element of the five urgent priorities highlighted by Mr. Lowcock.

Thirdly, agreed commitments are the building blocks to a broader political solution. All previous agreements and the input of the Council remain relevant in charting the political settlement to end the conflict. We reaffirm the importance of the inclusiveness of all relevant demographics and the implementation of all previous agreements and relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015). These are all legally binding commitments. The Council should therefore play the role of custodian. Parties should also abide by

international humanitarian law and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

In conclusion, I would like to once again quote Secretary-General Guterres, who said that "the pursuit of peace is a continuous process based on choices and decisions we make every day". It is therefore a matter of choice of all parties as to whether they will allow the worst thing to happen to their people and nation or choose to pursue peace and save their people. I, for one, choose peace for the people of Yemen for the sake of every Mohammed, Jamila, Samia and Abdulrahman, as well as all Yemeni brothers and sisters that have yearned for peace for too long.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We begin by extending our gratitude to Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock, not only for their updates this morning, but also for their continued commitment to the people of Yemen.

The situation in Yemen demands urgent action, and now, more than ever, we must maintain our engagement. While the window of opportunity for peace has not yet closed, it is quickly narrowing. I recall Mr. Lowcock's previous caution to the Security Council in which he stressed that if we do not help now, Yemen may fall into the abyss (see S/PV.8753).

We must act expeditiously to save Yemen and its people, who have been affected by years of conflict and now are assailed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the threat of famine, torrential rains, economic adversity and an underfunded humanitarian response plan. These are the perfect conditions for the realization of Under-Secretary-General Lowcock's grave warning. In this regard, we urge all donors that have pledged funds to make the necessary disbursements as soon as possible. We recognize that humanitarian aid is not a solution, but it is indeed an avenue through which we can provide relief to the people of Yemen until a sustainable solution can be achieved.

The security situation remains extremely tense and volatile, and we reiterate the need for an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process. This point cannot be overstated. The only solution is a political one, and there will be no durable political solution unless it is inclusive of all people and groups, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious belief or other demographic variables.

Of equal importance to sustainable peace is accountability for all infractions of international law, including human rights abuses. We encourage the international community and all relevant actors to support Yemen's justice system through capacity-building to allow for the effective prosecution of these crimes and to promote justice and reconciliation.

We call on all parties to take concrete steps to address the issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. To this end, we make a resounding appeal to all parties to prioritize the environment and the people of Yemen and of the wider region. The threat posed by the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker is avoidable, and inaction on this issue can only be regarded as reckless. It is with a great sense of urgency that we encourage actors with influence to actively engage with the parties to make progress on this issue. We reaffirm our support for Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and his team, as we stand in solidarity with the people of Yemen.

Finally, I must add that I am tired of saying the same thing and hearing the same thing over and over and over again in response to the reports of Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock of the fast-approaching catastrophic point of no return. I am heartbroken and frustrated. Last night on CNN, I was reminded of the horrific inhumanity when I saw the painfully disturbing images of emaciated children — countless children sick and dying of starvation — and of helpless mothers pleading for us to step up our efforts. Yes, where is our compassion? Children are dying. People are suffering. Famine in the twenty-first century is unacceptable and will be an utter disgrace — a stain on the international community. More must be done, and more must be done now. Time is not on our side. I agree with what the Permanent Representative of Indonesia just said: it is time to make better choices.

Mrs. Cedano (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings. In hearing about the growing deterioration of the situation in Yemen, we share the immense concern they have expressed today. Hostilities are increasing, and the civilian population, especially women and children, continue to be the innocent victims of indiscriminate attacks. In addition, forced disappearances and sexual violence and torture continue to be a common practice during the conflict. The repression of journalists, media collaborators and human rights defenders is increasing, hindering their ability to report on

violations of international humanitarian and human rights law — information that can ultimately help to protect the civilian population.

This is all very alarming, and the bleak picture on the horizon is further marred by a lack of accountability. There is a dearth of concrete legal procedures to hold perpetrators accountable and provide remedies to victims. The absence of the rule of law increases the number of violations, thus perpetuating a vicious circle.

The suffering of the people of Yemen has been exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the unsustainable economic situation and further worsened by fuel shortages, especially in the north of the country. We urge all parties to work constructively with the Special Envoy to find an immediate solution to this situation.

Even more threats are on the horizon, such as the risk posed by the lack of access to the *FSO SAFER* tanker and the imminent closure of humanitarian assistance programmes due to lack of funds, which could lead to a famine situation by the end of this year, as Mr. Lowcock has already said. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, two years after the international community mobilized to prevent a famine in Yemen, similar conditions are now emerging, worsening key indicators beyond the levels seen in October 2018. Intensified conflict and limited access to affected areas also undermine efforts to control desert locusts, further aggravating food insecurity not only in Yemen but in nearby countries.

Overall, food insecurity has increased by 56 per cent since the conflict intensified in 2015, and severe acute malnutrition among children has increased by 150 per cent. This situation is affecting at least 8 million people, some of whom are no longer receiving assistance or are receiving much less than what they were receiving before.

After five years of conflict, neither side can claim victory. On the contrary, Yemen has been torn apart, and its people are suffering the consequences. There is no military solution to this war. Only a political agreement can lead the way. That is why we urge all parties to move without delay towards the adoption of the joint declaration proposed by the Special Envoy as the gateway to a definitive solution to this horrible conflict.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock for

their informative briefings. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to our meeting today.

Two months ago, Mr. Martin Griffiths informed the Security Council that Yemen was experiencing extremely difficult times (see S/PV.8753). It is regrettable that the picture today is in no way brighter. We are deeply concerned about the military escalation in different parts of Yemen and the announcement on 25 August by the Southern Transitional Council on suspending its participation in the ongoing consultations to implement the Riyadh agreement. The political process in Yemen is again at risk of returning to a stalemate.

We are also deeply concerned about the evidence shown in a report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (A/HRC/45/6), commissioned by the Human Rights Council, that Yemeni teenagers have been recruited and exploited for violence purposes, some of whom have even been sexually abused in the past few years. All those behind those immoral and unacceptable acts must be brought to justice.

The economic crisis, the prolonged conflict, floods, food insecurity, desert locusts, the fragile health-care system and the coronavirus disease pandemic have deepened the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. In addition, there is no progress on the funding for aid programmes in Yemen. The United Nations aid programmes for Yemen are expected to be further scaled back, or even closed, in the coming months if the situation remains unresolved.

Moreover, humanitarian assistance work could be disrupted due to the recent closure of Sana'a International Airport in Yemen by the Houthis. The airport represents very important access for the World Health Organization, UNICEF and other organizations to provide relief goods and vital medical supplies to Yemen during the coronavirus disease pandemic. The slow progress on the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker issue again remains troubling. The United Nations technical team has not been allowed to access the tanker. It is urgent to take immediate action on the ageing tanker without further delay. In that regard, I would like to make the following points.

First, we urge all the parties concerned in Yemen to stop the fighting and resume talks so that negotiations on a nationwide ceasefire can restart. We also support the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in

working together with the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council to ensure that the peace process will not be derailed.

Secondly, we emphasize the need to provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance work. We call on the Houthis to reopen Sana'a International Airport so that United Nations aid supplies can be brought to Yemen in a timely manner. We also call for further efforts by the international community, the United Nations and donors to find a way to fulfil their commitments to Yemen.

In that vein, I would like to mention that, a few days ago, two 6-year-old boys, Ayaan Moosa and Mikaeel Ishaq from east London, set up a lemonade stand to raise money for the people of Yemen. We believe that the Yemeni people, as well as we ourselves, are very grateful for the good deeds of those two brave British boys. We believe that that small act can set an example for us and bring more hope to the Yemeni people.

Thirdly, it is urgent to address the issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We urge the Houthis to facilitate the necessary procedures so that the United Nations technical team can carry out its tasks on the tanker. The life of Yemenis and others in the Gulf region are being threatened every passing day. We need to act now if we are to prevent a catastrophe in the region.

Fourthly, it is important for all parties to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement and the Riyadh agreement with United Nations mediation. The meaningful participation of women in the political process should also be ensured and further promoted.

Last but not least, we commend Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and the United Nations team for their tireless work and support their peace proposals for Yemen.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Niger.

I would like to thank Martin Griffiths and Mark Lowcock for their excellent presentations. We heard the heart-rending messages of Yemenis, who need compassion, humanity and solidarity in these difficult times. I think that Ms. King eloquently expressed our feelings.

My country is following with great concern the evolving situation in Yemen, marked by persistent

fighting, differences between the separatists in the south and the Government with regard to the implementation of the Riyadh agreement and the alarming deterioration in the living conditions of a population trapped in a conflict that has been ongoing for six years.

The conflict now seems to be turning into a real quagmire, whose most worrisome trend is the widening scope of the violence beyond Yemen's borders. If that trend were to continue, the conflict in Yemen would clearly take on a new dimension that would risk serious threats to peace and security in the region.

Despite the tireless efforts of the United Nations since the beginning of this crisis, as well as the Special Envoy's many hopeful initiatives, including the announcement of a nationwide ceasefire, our fervent hopes for the return of peace in Yemen have been slow to materialize. In addition to the military stalemate, there seems to be an impasse in the negotiations due to the increased intransigence over the terms and a growing climate of mistrust.

My delegation is convinced that only a political solution can lead to lasting peace in the country. We also believe that no progress can be made in addressing this crisis without a cessation of hostilities and the commitment of the parties to making the necessary concessions to move the political process forward. We therefore call on all the parties to the conflict to demonstrate responsibility and compassion by ending the hostilities and resuming dialogue once and for all. In that regard, I must say that the interest expressed by the Yemeni Government and the Houthis in the Special Envoy's proposals is a glimmer of hope. We must do everything possible to maintain that momentum and use every opportunity to revive the peace talks.

In that regard, we call on regional actors and Council members with influence over the parties to the conflict to spare no effort in holding them to their commitments under the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements. The successful conclusion of a joint declaration on a national ceasefire would also enable the brave people of Yemen to close this dark chapter in their history and again move towards the country's reconstruction and development.

Long before the coronavirus disease pandemic, the humanitarian situation in Yemen was of the greatest concern. Today it is even more worrisome, exacerbated by a combination of factors, including the rapid spread of the pandemic, the fragile health system, floods, food

insecurity, the fuel crisis and obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

To prevent a further deterioration of the situation, we are appealing to the international community for more funding to ensure continuing assistance programmes, on which several million people now depend. I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all those who are helping the people of Yemen and encourage others, including the neighbouring countries, to do the same.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express its concern over the situation concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which has been moored off the coast of Yemen for several years. Our concern is all the greater owing to its advanced state of disrepair. The vessel could explode at any time, or dump its cargo in the Red Sea. After the explosion on 4 August in the port of Beirut and the oil spill in Mauritius, it is urgent to act to prevent an environmental disaster in the Red Sea. That is why we call on the Houthis to honour their commitments by issuing the necessary authorizations to the United Nations expert team as soon as possible and to facilitate its mandate on the ground.

The Niger welcomes the commitment of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and his team and reaffirms its full support for the efforts to restore peace in Yemen.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to wish you, Mr. President, every success in presiding over the Council's work this month. I wish your delegation every success and all members of the Council health and safety.

The Government of Yemen, led by His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, reiterates its eagerness to establish a durable peace in Yemen based on the three agreed terms of reference: the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism and the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, especially resolution 2216 (2015), and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

Over the past period, the Government has demonstrated greater flexibility and has responded more positively to all initiatives and proposals aimed at achieving progress in the comprehensive peace process.

We reiterate once again our support of the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and our positive engagement in all efforts aimed at reaching a ceasefire, as well as humanitarian and economic measures, and the resumption of the political process.

On the other hand, the Houthi militias are undermining those efforts. They have continued their escalation and war against the people of Yemen. They are launching ballistic missiles and drones on Yemeni cities, especially in Ma'rib governorate. Innocent civilians, mainly women and children, are falling victim to such attacks. This is a clear indication of their open rejection of peace efforts. The Houthis are undermining humanitarian action, stealing relief aid and assistance and imposing levies, setting a dangerous precedent that violates all principles of humanitarian action. They target homes and houses of worship, exploit children and force them into their absurd war, and detain and assault women. They continue to undermine freedom and use blackmail for their racist, factional project. They exploit the suffering of the Yemeni people for political gains, while committing other violations that run counter to international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Government is committed to implementing mechanisms aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Riyadh agreement, in line with the instructions of the President of the Republic. He is establishing a new phase, uniting efforts to resist the Iranian-Houthi project and put an end to the coup d'état, while restoring State institutions and establishing the comprehensive peace that the Yemeni people deserve. In this vein, the President has issued decrees appointing a new Governor and security director in the governorate of Aden.

The designated Prime Minister, Mr. Maen Abdulmalek Saeed, is undertaking consultations with different political components to form a new Government, in line with the text of the agreement. He is outlining the priorities of the Government in different economic and development reform areas in order to save the national economy from collapse. He is trying to normalize the situation in the respective governorates. The new Government will comprise competent and experienced officers able to face the current challenges and adapt to new developments. They will work on targeting the necessary reforms, eliminating sources of corruption and reactivating State institutions, enabling them to undertake the duties they owe to citizens. In

this vein, we commend our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who stood by the Yemeni people to alleviate their suffering at the different stages to ensure the implementation of the Riyadh agreement.

The Houthi militias continue to undermine the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, in particular the agreement on the city of Al-Hudaydah, which unfortunately has reached a new stage of escalation, intensifying the conflict and aggravating the suffering of Yemenis, owing to the negligence of Houthi militias, who have shirked their responsibilities in connection with the agreement. They have disrupted the work of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and constrained its movement. The Mission has been unable to investigate the Houthi militias targeting of the Yemeni liaison officer Colonel Muhammed Al-Sulayhi, who supposedly enjoyed the protection of the Mission. Not only have the militias rejected the invitation, but they have also bombarded the observation post where the targeting took place to prevent any investigation by the United Nations.

The frequency of the militias' violations has increased, especially with the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah. They have refused to demine the area, open humanitarian corridors or allow United Nations patrols to move inside the city. They have used Al-Hudaydah as a base for air strikes using drones and booby-trapped and remotely operated vessels. They have also violated the agreement on Al-Hudaydah by mobilizing in the governorates of Al-Jawf, Ma'rib and Al-Bayda. Facing restrictions on movement and the undermining of the work of the Mission, the Government is calling for the transfer of the Mission's headquarters to another neutral place in Al-Hudaydah to safeguard its work in line with the mandate of resolution 2452 (2019).

We want peace. We want to implement the agreement signed between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis. It should be a positive step towards comprehensive peace, aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people.

What happened after the Stockholm Agreement was reached? Why did the Houthis sign on to the agreement? We were on the verge of liberating our cities from Houthi control. However, in order to comply with the international community and the United Nations, we went to Stockholm to reach that agreement. Who has undermined that agreement? It is the Houthis, unfortunately. They are stealing

the revenues of the ports, including oil revenues. They are stealing humanitarian assistance. They are mobilizing and escalating elsewhere in Yemen, such as in Hadur, Al-Bayda, Al-Jawf, and today they are threatening Ma'rib.

Who is trying to achieve peace? The Government of Yemen looks forward to peace after the coup d'état of 21 September 2014, which led to the Yemeni people suffering the worse humanitarian crisis ever. That is why we are calling on the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Houthis to end their escalation in Ma'rib and stop launching ballistic missiles on civilians living in that populous city. They have to stop launching missiles on the territory of the brotherly country of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Government of Yemen, Mr. Martin and the Council might remember the Kuwait agreement, which took 100 days to negotiate. In this vein, we would like to thank Kuwait for hosting those consultations. Following 100 days of negotiations, the Government of Yemen accepted the terms. It was the Houthis who rejected them because they wanted the conflict to persist. They are using the suffering of the Yemeni people to impose an agenda of continued racial and factional project in Yemen.

The Government of Yemen was anxious to facilitate access of oil derivatives to the port of Al-Hudaydah, although the Houthi militias violated the mechanism agreed with the Office of the Special Envoy when they withdrew more than 50 billion rials from the proceeds of oil derivatives from the special account in the Central Bank of Al-Hudaydah, which had been allocated to pay the salaries of civil servants in Yemen. On 26 August, we proposed a new initiative for access of oil derivatives to the port of Al-Hudaydah, including giving access to all vessels conforming to requirements, so long as those proceeds are put into a new special account that is not under the control of the Houthis, using a new mechanism under which the United Nations would guarantee that such revenues will not be used until agreement is reached on their expenditure.

We must restore the money that was withdrawn from the special account in the Central Bank and agree on an expenditure mechanism for the money that was collected previously and that will be collected later, so that those revenues can be used to pay salaries based on 2014 payroll records. Such revenues must not be confiscated or used by militias to finance their absurd

war against Yemen and the Yemeni people. They are exploiting the suffering of the Yemeni people, in a desperate attempt to cover up the theft of the proceeds of oil derivatives, which would cover the needs of the areas under militia control for almost seven months.

Allow me to make another point. The proposals made by Mr. Griffiths, including the first draft of the joint declaration on a ceasefire, confidence-building measures related to economic and humanitarian measures and the resumption of a political process, have all been agreed upon by the Government of Yemen without any reservations. Mr. Griffiths knows that full well. But who rejected those proposals at the beginning? It was the Houthis, and this begs the question: why? Because they want to change the facts on the ground and want continued suffering for the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni Government has warned for almost two years of a potential environmental and economic catastrophe due to oil leakage from or the sinking or explosion of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and of the terrible repercussions of such an incident on Yemen, the countries of the region and international navigation in the Red Sea. Secretary-General António Guterres also warned, in a letter to the Security Council, against the continued delays and procrastination by the Houthi militias, which are preventing United Nations technical teams from reaching the tanker to assess the situation and remove the oil.

The international community and the Council have made every effort to prevent such a catastrophe, the possibility of which is looming larger by the day. Despite everything I have mentioned, the Houthi militias continue to exploit this issue and use it for political blackmail, proposing unrealistic conditions to the United Nations with total disregard for all our efforts. We call on the Security Council once again to shoulder its responsibilities and adopt firm measures to counter this intransigence and procrastination. We must bring more pressure to bear on the militias to prevent an imminent disaster.

In conclusion, we are concerned that the Council might be holding its next meeting on the issue once the disaster has happened and that we will then just be discussing its repercussions. Such an outcome would only magnify the suffering of the Yemeni people at the hands of the Houthi militias.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.