



Security Council

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Letter dated 10 June 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

By its resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested me to present a review of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) within five months of the date of adoption of that resolution. The Special Political Mission, established pursuant to paragraph 1 of resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), is designed to support the implementation of the Agreement on the City of Hudaydah and Ports of Hudaydah, Salif, and Ra's Isa, as set out in the Stockholm Agreement (see [S/2018/1134](#)), for an initial period of six months from 16 January 2019.

The Security Council decided further that, to support the parties in implementing their commitments in accordance with the Hudaydah Agreement, UNMHA should undertake the following mandate:

(a) Lead and support the functioning of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, assisted by a secretariat staffed by United Nations personnel, to oversee the governorate-wide ceasefire, the redeployment of forces and mine action operations;

(b) Monitor the compliance of the parties with the ceasefire in Hudaydah governorate and the mutual redeployment of forces from the city of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa;

(c) Work with the parties so that the security of the city of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa is assured by local security forces in accordance with Yemeni law;

(d) Facilitate and coordinate United Nations support to assist the parties to fully implement the Hudaydah Agreement.

Six months since the United Nations-brokered Stockholm Agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Houthi movement, and five months since the adoption of resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), the situation in Hudaydah continues to remain a focus of developments in Yemen.

Establishment of the Redeployment Coordination Committee mechanism

As indicated in my report of 28 December 2018 on the status of implementation of Security Council resolution [2451 \(2018\)](#) ([S/2018/1173](#)), the United Nations worked with the parties to establish the Redeployment Coordination Committee envisaged in the resolution. The mechanism brings together designated representatives from each party and associated staff under the leadership of the Head of UNMHA in his role as



Chair of the Committee. Building on the initial work carried out by the advance team,¹ as mandated by the Council, UNMHA has focused considerable efforts on building relationships with and confidence between the parties to ensure the effectiveness of the Committee as a mechanism for consultation and de-escalation. To this end, since late December 2018, the United Nations has successfully convened four joint meetings of the Committee to discuss and agree on the modalities for monitoring the ceasefire, the mutual redeployment of forces and the composition of local security forces, while UNMHA has continued to monitor the compliance of the parties with the Hudaydah Agreement and has provided political, mediation and operational support to the Committee and its Chair.

Reaching agreement on all aspects of the related activities has proved challenging and the original timelines envisaged in the Hudaydah Agreement have slipped. The Yemeni parties, however, have recognized that the timelines were ambitious and have agreed to revise them, in coordination with the United Nations. Both parties have repeatedly reiterated their commitment to implementing the Hudaydah Agreement.

Since the establishment of UNMHA, there have been two joint meetings of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, one from 3 to 6 February 2019² and another on 16 and 17 February 2019,³ as well as extensive bilateral engagement by the Chair of the Committee with the parties to agree on the modalities for the redeployment and the composition of the local security forces that will secure the city and the three ports once redeployments are completed. As a cumulative result of these activities, the parties agreed on a framework for phase 1 of the redeployment of forces from the three Red Sea ports and from critical parts of the city associated with humanitarian facilities. This process saw UNMHA share a detailed concept of operations for phase 1 with the parties on 21 March 2019, which was eventually approved on 14 April 2019.

Given the position of both parties that there should be no gap between the implementation of phases 1 and 2, UNMHA subsequently worked to develop a proposal for phase 2 that would lead to the demilitarization of the city of Hudaydah. UNMHA shared a first draft of a detailed concept of operations for phase 2 with the parties on 21 April 2019, and consultations are ongoing to finalize that plan. The composition of local security forces is particularly salient for phase 2. Because the matter concerns broader political questions, my Special Envoy for Yemen is facilitating negotiations between the parties with a view to reaching an agreement on this outstanding issue, which will subsequently be implemented through the Redeployment Coordination Committee with the support of UNMHA.

In order to hold joint meetings of the Committee and bilateral meetings with the Government of Yemen, Committee representatives required UNMHA to conduct complex frontline crossings, which were facilitated by both parties. Unfortunately, on a number of occasions, incidents were alleged or transpired during the crossing process, which eventually led to the suspension by the Houthis of such movements. With frontline crossings suspended, the Chair of the Committee continued to engage bilaterally with the parties. For meetings with the representatives of the Government

¹ See my reports on the status of implementation of Security Council resolution 2451 (2018) for the period from 21 to 28 December 2018 (S/2018/1173) and the period from 29 December 2018 to 4 January 2019 (S/2019/11), which describe the joint meetings of the Committee held on 26 and 27 December 2018 and from 1 to 3 January 2019.

² See www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-02-07/note-correspondents-meeting-of-the-redeployment-coordination-committee.

³ See www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-02-17/meeting-of-the-redeployment-coordination-committee.

of Yemen to the Committee, he was required to travel outside of Hudaydah, either to Aden or Riyadh. He continued to advocate a return to joint meetings.

UNMHA deployment and operations

Following the adoption of resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), the Organization has been actively working to establish and sustain UNMHA. In response, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has worked closely with the Department of Operational Support, the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Safety and Security, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and the United Nations country team in Yemen. These efforts have been designed to enable UNMHA to establish its capacities across substantive, support and security components in a safe and secure manner in Hudaydah, while working in a complementary manner with other elements of the United Nations presence in the country.

The above notwithstanding, the mission start-up process has not been without difficulty. The complex, austere and evolving nature of the environment in Hudaydah has presented challenges across administrative, logistical, operational and security issues, requiring UNMHA to retain an agile, flexible and often innovative approach to its activities.

To this end, UNMHA has drawn on the support of the Office of the Special Envoy and other United Nations partners, including other missions, to make the best use of facilities, personnel and assets to launch, establish and maintain its mandated tasks.

The Mission has only just maintained its initial operational capability to deliver on its mandate. This coincided with the slow start with which the parties have moved forward with the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement.

The success of UNMHA continues to depend on the full cooperation of the parties to ensure its rapid deployment and sustained operations, particularly during the process of onboarding sufficient personnel and attendant supporting resources. In this regard, the Organization has encountered significant challenges with the de facto authorities in Sana'a on a range of administrative and bureaucratic matters required to enable such deployments. Most issues have been resolved on a case-by-case basis, but the operating constraints for the Mission have resulted in the loss of invaluable time. The Organization is pursuing all avenues to overcome systematically the difficulties encountered, in particular those related to receiving administrative approvals (such as visas and residency authorizations and customs clearance for strategic assets), to ensure the timely arrival of personnel and the establishment of adequate mission support and security elements.

Critical to the continued success of the Mission is the immediate availability of sufficient capacities to enable staff to support and execute the core functions of the Mission with respect to leading and supporting the Redeployment Coordination Committee process; the conduct of planning, monitoring and reporting tasks; and implementation of coordination and coherence functions. Recognizing the imperative for immediate deployment to execute these core functions, the Organization drew upon military, police and civilian personnel from Headquarters and other existing United Nations missions, deploying, with the approval of their contributing Member States, personnel and assets on a temporary basis. These personnel, some of whom remain in place currently, have enabled UNMHA to launch and sustain minimum capability during the conduct of a generation process to bring on board new, UNMHA-specific military and police personnel, who are now entering the Mission in increasing strength.

Owing to the nature of the required tasks, the harsh operating environment in Hudaydah itself and the requirement for secure and sustainable life support capacities, a range of enabling assets and resources have also been positioned to facilitate the safe conduct of the operation, particularly during these early stages.

This includes the provision of adequate on-site medical and casualty evacuation capacities and modalities (augmenting the United Nations country team resources already in Hudaydah and available across Yemen), suitably robust office space and accommodation, air and ground transportation capabilities, sufficient personal protective equipment and effective communications assets, along with required personnel.

This sees the Mission currently operating from a maritime vessel secured in the port of Hudaydah, while land-based facilities are brought up to appropriate security standards. All patrol and support activities are conducted in armoured vehicles equipped with emergency trauma bags and with trained personnel in each convoy. All activities are planned and coordinated with the United Nations Designated Security Official and the Department of Safety and Security, as appropriate, along with the requisite authorities of each party to ensure appropriate local security provisions and deconfliction, where necessary. The effective and safe functioning of the Mission is a key priority for the Organization and, more importantly, for the people of Yemen themselves, who see UNMHA as a ray of hope in the process of reaching a wider peace in the country.

Current situation

Since entering into force on 18 December 2018, the ceasefire continues to hold in Hudaydah governorate insofar as neither side has been observed attempting any major offensive operations to seize new territory. Nevertheless, a pattern of incidents persists in the main hotspots (including Hali, Durayhimi, Hays and Tuhayta' districts), particularly using indirect fire and sniping, often resulting in retaliatory actions between the parties. Exchanges of direct and indirect fire are also reported in the critical frontline areas of the city of Hudaydah: al-Sha'b (formerly known as al-Saleh) and July 7, both in the Hali district; and around the airport, in the Hawak district. These incidents notwithstanding, the Mission's presence, including through the conduct of monitoring and presence patrols across the city of Hudaydah and the ports, is assessed as continuing to have a tangible calming and moderating effect, while also actively playing a role in preventing escalatory activity through its liaison role. This is evidenced by an overall reduction in violence, a decrease in the number of reported civilian casualties, a growing number of returnees to the area and more observed economic activity in Hudaydah since the establishment of UNMHA.

After several months of impasse, the Mission initiated a redeployment from the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa in early May, based on a previous offer from the Houthi movement, with a view to kick-starting the redeployment process.

This was undertaken with the aim of facilitating the establishment of a leading role for the United Nations in supporting the Yemen Red Sea Ports Corporation in managing the ports and enhancing the monitoring role of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism in accordance with the Hudaydah Agreement. The full implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement will play an important role in ensuring effective humanitarian access into Yemen, where many millions continue to require life-saving assistance, the vast majority of which transits through Hudaydah.

In terms of operational activities on the ground, from 11 to 14 May 2019, Houthi military forces redeployed from the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa. Their movements were monitored by UNMHA in accordance with the Hudaydah Agreement, and the Mission continues to conduct regular monitoring of the ports and

the surrounding areas, supported by elements of the Yemeni Mine Action Centre, who are in place to address concerns with mines and explosive remnants of war. This redeployment is significant as it is the first practical step on the ground towards the broader mutual redeployments to be undertaken by both parties as agreed in the concept of operations for phase 1, to which both Yemeni parties continue to express commitment.

Additionally, as part of its mandated tasks, UNMHA has served as a liaison between humanitarian actors and the military leadership of the parties in Hudaydah to support planning, coordination and conduct of humanitarian tasks. For example, on 26 February 2019, UNMHA facilitated a frontline crossing – in coordination with both parties, who demined and removed obstacles to allow the passage of a multi-agency humanitarian team – to the Red Sea Mills, where 51,000 metric tons of grain are stored, enough to feed more than 3.7 million people for a month. This was the first time since September 2018 that the United Nations had been able to access this critical humanitarian facility.

In all these endeavours, close cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and UNMHA has been critical to ensure coherence and coordination between each operational and political step within a highly complex environment. The continued lockstep coordination between the Office and UNMHA will be integral to effective United Nations support to the parties going forward. In this regard, my Special Envoy and the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee continue to work together and with the parties to finalize the outstanding negotiations to allow for the full implementation of phases 1 and 2 of the Hudaydah Agreement, as well as to resolve the issue of local security forces. Indeed, an agreement on local security forces is a key determining factor to move forward with the implementation of phases 1 and 2; without such an agreement, it will be extremely challenging to make further progress.

In recent weeks, tensions and distrust between the parties have increased. The parties have traded mutual accusations that the other seeks to abandon the Hudaydah Agreement and undermine United Nations-led efforts to achieve peace. There have even been allegations of bias against my Special Envoy.

Let me reiterate that the United Nations, acting pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and with impartiality, will continue to do its utmost to support the parties to deliver on their commitments, as set out in the Agreement. Success in this regard will require the good will and flexibility of the parties to reach a sensible compromise.

Outlook

Recent tensions and hardening rhetoric in the Gulf region threaten to implicate Yemen, which risks deepening and prolonging the civil war. As I have stated repeatedly, the war can only be solved through political dialogue.

The humanitarian costs of continuing the war – now in its fifth year – are too high to allow the fragile gains achieved through the Hudaydah Agreement to be squandered. Importantly, the port of Hudaydah, a vital lifeline, remains open and operational for both humanitarian and commercial imports; however, maintaining the international consensus and Security Council unity to prevent a battle for the city of Hudaydah and the three Red Sea ports is of utmost importance.

The situation remains fragile, and the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement, although slow, is a litmus test for the readiness of the parties to further engage pragmatically to achieve a negotiated political solution to end the conflict. Allow me to emphasize that the responsibility for the full and timely implementation

of the Hudaydah Agreement lies squarely with the parties. Their political will remains the main driver of whether the coming period will see further implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement or a return to open conflict in Hudaydah and humanitarian catastrophe. The Hudaydah Agreement itself provides the necessary latitude to account for the main concerns of both parties, but it requires realistic and pragmatic compromise within this framework to see its intent realized fully. I count on the good will and flexibility of the parties to reach agreement on the outstanding issues in the immediate future, and their commitment to continue to dialogue with both the Mission and each other to achieve this. In this regard, the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and UNMHA will do their part to support the parties and proceed with the full implementation of phases 1 and 2.

Even with the best of intentions, recent history has shown our collective expectations will need to be tempered. If the parties reach agreement on local security forces and approve the concept of operations for phase 2, meaning that full implementation of phases 1 and 2 can commence, we can anticipate the need for a lengthy commitment to complete fully the clearance of military manifestations and likely even longer for the clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Such complex tasks, requiring in the latter case adherence to internationally recognized standards, will necessarily last beyond the length of time required for the redeployment of military forces. Successful implementation and monitoring of each of these steps can only serve to increase the confidence of the parties and the Security Council in the viability of the Hudaydah Agreement and a broader political process, which remains the ultimate goal.

As such, we should all recall that the negotiations required to reach this point have been enormously exacting. The work of the United Nations has been made even more difficult as a result of the challenges of organizing direct, face-to-face meetings of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and conducting such activities in the context of the ongoing conflict outside of Hudaydah. The United Nations will continue to play its part.

However, ultimately success depends on the willingness of the parties to follow through with the implementation of their political commitments as contained in the Hudaydah Agreement.

Observations

Based on the assessment of the United Nations, the mandate entrusted to UNMHA by the Security Council in its resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#) continues to be achievable and appropriate for the situation on the ground. The proposed composition and operational aspects of UNMHA set out in the annex to my letter dated 31 December 2018 to the President of the Council ([S/2019/28](#)), which were approved by the Council, are also assessed as remaining valid, while requiring significant flexibility in their application.

In essence, based on the time it has taken to reach where we are today, the Mission has only just commenced the physical delivery of its mandate, having had to spend considerable time establishing the necessary conditions, agreements and mechanisms for the implementation of its mandate. With the stretching of the timeline for the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement, UNMHA has necessarily had to adjust its planned activities and objectives accordingly. For the sake of the Yemeni people, we all remain focused on achieving the most rapid progress possible, yet our global experience in supporting the implementation of peace agreements at their outset would advise patience and fortitude to stay the course. The progress made thus far, and the absence of a return to open conflict, give sufficient reason to hope that the parties will deliver on their commitments, and that a long-awaited pivot to peace

will be made. In this context, the expectations for the Mission remain high. Despite slow progress and various obstacles, UNMHA has established itself effectively and is functioning and delivering on its mandate.

Thanks to the commitment of troop- and police-contributing countries, the Mission is scaling up to deploy additional monitors. The initial months since the adoption of resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#) have been utilized to develop relationships with the parties, solidify vital procedures and processes, ensure that strategic assets are in place, and enable the Mission to be best placed to respond to the redeployments when they occur.

The Mission is focused on supporting the Redeployment Coordination Committee to oversee the ceasefire, the redeployment of forces and mine action operations, and on facilitating and coordinating United Nations support to assist the parties to fully implement the Hudaydah Agreement. Furthermore, it serves as a credible and effective conflict prevention tool at a critical entry point for humanitarian assistance to Yemen and as an impartial arbiter of conditions on the ground. Through these functions, UNMHA plays a key role in building the foundation for sustainable peace in Hudaydah, upon which a wider effort to reach a negotiated political settlement in Yemen can be based.

The conditions on the ground and resulting requirements of a United Nations role in Hudaydah may evolve over time. This may present an opportunity for adjustments and changes in how the Organization responds. With the understanding that the Security Council intends to extend the mandate of UNMHA for a further six months, I propose that another review of UNMHA be undertaken three months prior to the expiry of its mandate, for consideration by the Council, to ensure that the Mission remains appropriately configured and tasked to be able to respond to evolving developments on the ground. Until that time, the United Nations will continue its work through UNMHA, and through my Special Envoy, to reach a negotiated political settlement to the wider conflict in Yemen.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**