



Security Council

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Letter dated 11 March 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

We, the Permanent Representatives of Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Yemen, wish to draw your attention to the current risk posed by the floating oil tanker *Safer*, which belongs to the Government of the Republic of Yemen. We aim in the present letter to highlight the urgent need for an immediate solution to the aforementioned tanker issue and to share our assessment of the following two disastrous scenarios that address the increasing risks associated with the deteriorating status of this tanker for the Red Sea and the strait of Bab al-Mandab. This position was reflected in Security Council resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#), in which the Council emphasized the environmental risks and the need, without delay, for access for United Nations officials to inspect and maintain the tanker, which is located in the Houthi-controlled north of Yemen.

In the event of an explosion or leak:

- (a) The possibility of a spill of 181 million litres of oil in the Red Sea would be four times worse than the oil disaster of the *Exxon Valdez*, which took place in Alaska in 1989. Nearly 30 years since that incident, the affected region has not yet fully recovered;
- (b) The port of Hudaydah would be closed for several months, leading to an inability to continue the supply of fuel and essential needs. This could increase fuel prices by 800 per cent and double the price of goods and food, resulting in more economic challenges for the people of Yemen;
- (c) The fishing industry would require 25 years to recover. This would affect 1.7 million people working in the fishing industry and their dependants.

In the event of a major fire:

- (a) Toxic gases would affect 3 million people in Hudaydah;
- (b) Should toxic gases mix with rainwater, they would end up in aquifers, leading to possible poisoning and long-term health damage for at least 6 million people;
- (c) About 40 per cent of the agricultural land cultivated in Yemen would be covered with black clouds, which would result in the elimination of grains, fruits and vegetables, the value of which is estimated at \$70 million;
- (d) Eighty-five humanitarian organizations would have to suspend their operations in Hudaydah, which would disrupt the services that they provide for 7 million people in need, and this would be likely to force large numbers of the affected population to flee towards Sana'a or other areas of Yemen to seek aid and services, creating a wave of internally displaced persons.



As you know, delays since September 2018 have suspended the assessment multiple times, most recently in September 2019 because of the Houthis, who failed to agree to the deployment of the assessment team of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). We request the Security Council to shoulder its legal responsibilities and exercise maximum efforts towards the Houthis to allow UNOPS to find a way, without delay, to inspect and maintain the *Safer* oil tanker and avoid widespread environmental damage, a humanitarian disaster and the disruption of maritime commerce. We also avail ourselves of this opportunity to reiterate our support for the United Nations agencies working in Yemen and for the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen in order to avoid such a catastrophe.

Finally, our delegations kindly request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Permanent Representative of Djibouti

(Signed) Mohamed Fathi Ahmed **Edrees**
Permanent Representative of Egypt

(Signed) Sima Sami **Bahous**
Permanent Representative of Jordan

(Signed) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia

(Signed) Omer Mohamed Ahmed **Siddig**
Permanent Representative of the Sudan

(Signed) Abdullah Ali Fadhel **Al-Saadi**
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