



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8642**<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Thursday, 17 October 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Matjila . . . . .	(South Africa)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic . . . . .	Ms. Morrison González
	Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany . . . . .	Mr. Schulz
	Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Soemirat
	Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Duclos
	Poland . . . . .	Mr. Lewicki
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

**The President:** 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. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen;

Mr. Griffiths is joining the meeting via video-conference from Riyadh.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

**Mr. Lowcock:** As Council members have heard me say many times before, Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian crisis and the location of the Organization's largest relief operation. More than 250 humanitarian agencies — most of them Yemeni — are working to deliver the United Nations response plan. Together, we are reaching more than 12 million people across the country every month. But as the aid operation has expanded, the drivers of the crisis have continued to get worse. In fact, it often feels in Yemen that the more we achieve, the bigger and more complicated the problem becomes.

For more than a year, we have advocated progress on five key priorities: first, the protection of civilians; secondly, humanitarian access; thirdly, funding for the aid operation; fourthly, support for the economy; and fifthly, a political solution. I would like to update the Council on where these issues now stand.

Let me start with protection of civilians. September was the deadliest month for civilians so far this year, with reports of 388 having been killed or injured due to conflict across the country. That is an average of 13 people every day. There are many gruesome examples. Last week, four children in Al-Hudaydah were killed when unexploded ordnance from previous

rounds of shelling detonated nearby. All four were from the same family. On 23 and 24 September, air strikes killed 22 civilians in a mosque in Amran and a family home in Al-Dhale'e. And in Sa'dah last week, air strikes damaged a United Nations-supported water system that serves 12,000 people. That was the fourth time that facility had been hit since 2016.

As Mr. Griffiths will tell the Council during his briefing, violence decreased a little in October, but with more than 30 active front lines, we can only hope that recent steps towards de-escalation, on which Martin will brief the Council, will continue. I continue to call for a nationwide ceasefire. In parallel to these efforts, all parties must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The second issue is humanitarian access, which remains extremely challenging, particularly in the north. Agencies there must still navigate more than 100 different restrictions imposed by Ansar Allah authorities, in addition to frequent harassment and attempts at interference. In September, Ansar Allah authorities effectively expelled or refused entry to several United Nations personnel, including a senior official. Movement restrictions also remain severe. To cite one example, local authorities recently blocked humanitarian assessments in Hajjah and Al-Hudaydah, where the authorities themselves tell us that more than 12,000 families have been affected by floods. We are engaging with Ansar Allah authorities and have underlined our expectation that they will take action to improve the operating environment in accordance with humanitarian principles. We have seen some progress, with dozens of blocked projects recently cleared to start, but many more projects remain pending.

On a separate note, we hope recent discussions with Ansar Allah authorities will finally pave the way for a United Nations-led assessment of the decaying *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. This assessment is the first step in preventing a major potential environmental and humanitarian catastrophe in the Red Sea. The United Nations remains eager to assist with the *FSO SAFER*. It is entirely up to Ansar Allah whether we are able to do so. We have, of course, been here before.

In the south, we are encouraged by reports that talks between the Government and the Southern Transitional Council are progressing. Mr. Griffiths will provide further details on those reports. A renewal of hostilities

in the south would put civilians in harm's way and impact humanitarian operations. Last month, several humanitarian organizations suspended activities in parts of Abyan and Shabwah as a result of clashes there. These programmes have now mostly resumed but continue to face difficulties near front lines.

The Government has made substantial progress in clearing backlogs of pending humanitarian projects, with many recently approved to begin. But several other projects are still awaiting Government clearance, which is delaying assistance for people who need it.

The third point is funding for the aid operation. For much of the year, agencies have struggled to raise enough money. Over the last few months, funding gaps have forced key programmes to close. I therefore welcome the generous contributions we have received in the past several weeks. At the General Assembly high-level week last month, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gave the United Nations \$500 million for the response plan, bringing its total contributions to this year's plan to \$708 million. Earlier in September, the United Arab Emirates allocated \$200 million to my Office and the World Food Programme, bringing its total to \$380 million.

Other donors have also stepped forward. Kuwait has just given \$88 million. In the past two months, the United States, Germany, the European Commission and others have also given substantial additional funds on top of their earlier contributions. With hundreds of millions of dollars in new funding over the past six weeks, the response plan has gone from 45 per cent funded in early September to 65 per cent funded today. Although substantial gaps remain, United Nations agencies have reopened many programmes that had been suspended, including support for health-care facilities, malnutrition treatment centres and vaccination campaigns. Other programmes should come back online soon.

The fourth point is the economy. Last year, economic collapse pushed Yemen to the brink of widespread famine. We should therefore all be concerned that indicators are again pointing in that direction. The exchange rate is fluctuating at between 580 and 595 rial to the dollar. That is more than double the rate when the conflict escalated five years ago. Because Yemen imports almost everything, consumer prices have also more than doubled, pushing basic goods out of reach for millions of people. Therefore, although there may be food in the markets, fewer people can afford it.

Five hundred and eighty rial to the dollar is of course an improvement over the sustained 600-rial rate that we had seen for the past six weeks, and I want to commend the Government of Yemen for its efforts to stabilize the exchange rate and pay more civil servant salaries and strengthen the economy. But ultimately those efforts cannot manoeuvre around a fundamental obstacle — the lack of foreign exchange. I call on Yemen's partners to provide regular injections of foreign exchange at a scale that will keep the exchange rate stable and help return food and other commodity prices to more affordable levels.

I also want to repeat my concern about the humanitarian impact of recent Government regulations on commercial fuel imports, which have contributed to severe fuel shortages in many areas. Fuel is essential to transporting food to markets, pumping drinking water and powering sanitation systems. Nearly three-quarters of hospitals rely on fuel to provide care, and aid organizations need fuel for their work.

Over the past several weeks, those regulations, imposed by the Government, have blocked commercial fuel imports from Al-Hudaydah. We understand, however, that yesterday the Government cleared eight vessels carrying the equivalent of more than a month's supply of average fuel imports. Several of those vessels have already started sailing for Al-Hudaydah. One of them arrived this morning. That is something I welcome.

It is important to understand the central role of fuel in determining the humanitarian needs in Yemen and our ability to meet them. As severe shortages have gripped many areas in recent weeks, fuel prices have doubled or even tripled. Very quickly, that pushed the cost of food and drinking water, which many people already could not afford, to even higher prices. Without fuel, municipal water systems in three cities have simply stopped working altogether, and others have cut back services. Sanitation plants have reduced operations. Large quantities of human, animal and commercial waste have accumulated in the streets, greatly exacerbating the risk of cholera and other diseases.

Rising fuel prices also mean families are less likely to get help when they need it because transport simply becomes unaffordable or unavailable. In some areas, the number of people reporting to health-care facilities over the past several weeks has dropped by 50 per cent because sick people could not get there. At

the same time, mobile health teams are struggling to reach patients where they are because the teams do not have fuel either.

Therefore, I once again welcome the step, which I just announced, towards more flexibility, but I also call on the Government to manage commercial imports in a way that sustainably avoids exacerbating humanitarian needs. I also call on Ansar Allah authorities to avoid any steps that could worsen shortages or push price rises higher. Everything possible has to be done to ensure that families are able to buy what they need to survive and that essential services can continue.

The funding we have received for the response plan will allow humanitarian agencies to continue keeping millions of people alive. That is cause for optimism, but there is much more to do if our aim is not just to reduce people's suffering, but to end it altogether. The only way to achieve that is to stop the war, and I am sure that Martin Griffiths will address that shortly.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I apologize for being late to this important meeting and I thank you, Mr. President, for allowing that, and Mark Lowcock for stepping forward. I am in Riyadh at the moment. We were hoping to have news by the time of this meeting on an agreement in the south, which I will talk about during this brief briefing, if I may. I thank you once again, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council.

In recent months, I have warned darkly of the perils facing Yemen, including the prospects for instability in the south and the frightening risks of the country being drawn into a regional conflict. I have seemed perhaps at times to have abandoned the creed of the mediator, which is to find and nurture any and all signs of hope.

Today, I want to claim that there are indeed signs of hope for the people of Yemen, even in the middle of the misery that Mark Lowcock described earlier with his usual accuracy and deftness and that, to those involved, must sometimes seem endless. Yes, there are signs of hope, but they are fragile and in need of our diligent care and attention.

In my briefing today, I will seek to point to those signs of hope — in the south, of course, as I have already mentioned, but also in the reduction in violence very recently in the north, to which Mark Lowcock referred

earlier. They are also apparent in a growing generosity of spirit within and among the parties, which often seems lacking, in, for example, freeing some of those detained and imprisoned and finding creative ways to allow desperately needed oil ships, to which Mark also made several references, to enter Al-Hudaydah in a very impressive way over the past several days. As Mark has been telling us, they are much needed. Those are perhaps small signs in a frightening season but something for us to nurture.

In the south, the situation remains volatile, but with a tenuous calm in Aden it is worth noting that there has been no large-scale fighting in the areas of dispute, despite our deep concerns in the Council beginning in August. I believe that this can be taken as a testimony to the restraint shown by those on the ground and their leaders. As I said at the outset, many of us, including myself in Riyadh, had hoped that an agreement could have been announced today. I understand that we are not quite there yet, but it certainly does seem that very significant progress was made during the Jeddah talks under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Thanks to the Saudis' strenuous diplomatic efforts, there are encouraging signs, as I said, that an agreement aimed at resolving the issues between the Government of Yemen under President Hadi Mansour and the Southern Transitional Council may be well within reach. I am sure that it is as important to the members of the Council as it is to me that this be done swiftly, as the Government needs to return safely and with full authority to Aden and State institutions must be allowed to be fully functional again with all speed. Law and order must be restored and services delivered to the people of the south. The hiatus in Government activities, particularly the disruption of basic service delivery, threatens people's lives.

I would like to say that the leadership of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is of key importance in that context, not just in the mediation that we have seen in the Jeddah talks, but also in the other contexts to which I will refer today, in trying to create new opportunities for the parties to engage with new confidence among them. I am grateful to him for that.

I welcome, as I did publicly at the time it was announced on 20 September, the initiative by Ansar Allah, under the leadership of Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi, to suspend all drone and ballistic missile attacks on

Saudi Arabia. I also welcome the reduction of violence that followed that announcement. Mark is, of course, quite right to remind us about the unconscionably high level of civilian casualties in September and, indeed, the degree of military activity on those fronts that he was referring to. That is the objective truth. It is also true, as he said, that since the beginning of October — 10 days into that initiative — the number of air strikes has fallen considerably across Yemen. I am obviously encouraged by that. It is, however, a very recent and obviously very fragile gain, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

My good friend and colleague Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha has just assumed his duty as the Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) and Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee. God bless him for carrying out those tasks. I wish him success in his endeavour. We met when he came to the region and are in daily contact about the issues that are facing him. I am very grateful to him for taking up this opportunity under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

Confidence-building is the keystone to the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. I would like to emphasize that the presence and work of UNMHA in Al-Hudaydah, and the ways it has tailored — sometimes subtly and sometimes radically — its operations to the needs on the ground are indeed more groundbreaking than I think many of us have realized. In that context, the leadership shown by Lieutenant General Lollsgaard, his staff and now Lieutenant General Guha in prioritizing the establishment of a joint operations centre, along with the two parties, as agreed in the meeting of the Committee on the boat in the Red Sea — on which we have already reported — has already resulted in a tangible reduction in ceasefire violations. We are confident that that process will continue.

In addition, the redeployment of forces, which is so central to the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, will continue to be a primary focus. I think that those two parts of the strategy on Al-Hudaydah under UNMHA and its parties in the Committee will ensure our steady progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the Stockholm Agreement, which are essentially humanitarian and crucial to the success and sustainability of the humanitarian programme in Yemen. In that connection, this month — as I referred to at the beginning of my briefing — the parties have

shown their strong commitment to finding some understanding on some measures that will alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. I welcome the release of 290 detainees by the authorities in Sana'a. It was remarkable to see the joy — which we have wanted and waited to see — of the many families welcoming back their respective loved ones. I hope — and I am sure that we all do — that that step will be the start of further initiatives. We are engaged even today in talks with the parties that will facilitate the release of all detainees.

I would like to use this statement to invite the parties to meet with us and our partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross — whose President, Mr. Peter Maurer, has been just this week in Riyadh focusing on this issue — to resume at the nearest opportunity the discussions on the further releases set out, mandated, required and hoped for by the Stockholm Agreement.

I am very grateful for the news Mark delivered — and this is not the first time either of us have referred to this issue — about President Hadi Mansour's decision to allow those fuel ships into Al-Hudaydah. That important decision has not only humanitarian consequences — which Mark has already outlined — but also consequences in terms of confidence. That important decision will respond to humanitarian needs. It is a good example of an issue of great humanitarian importance that can also, as I have said, potentially build vital confidence between the parties to address their differences, which, of course, is my focus. I therefore thank Mr. Hadi Mansour for that.

As we speak and as I was coming to this briefing, thanks to the support of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and the concerted, detailed, difficult and ultimately positive efforts of the parties to the conflict, humanitarian assistance is, as we speak, being delivered to people in need in Ad Durayhimi. I cannot express to the Council the full extent of my respect for Resident Coordinator Lise Grande, as well as the World Food Programme and its leader, Mr. David Beasley, whom we have been so often privileged to hear speak in the Chamber and whose staff have diligently pursued this difficult, tricky, necessary and ultimately successful task. I thank them all for making this happen. That may just be part of the daily tasks of those humanitarians, but I must say that for the people of Ad Durayhimi, this is a day of real consequence.



In Taiz, we have heard reports of potential offers from both parties to open humanitarian corridors. I mention that because, of course, Taiz was one of the issues agreed upon in Sweden, precisely in order to seek such openings. I hope that those reports translate into reality. God knows that Taiz deserves some good news, so I hope an agreement comes on the heels of the promises that are being made.

Finally, as I said at the outset, there are signs of hope. We can clearly see that there are opportunities here that need to be grasped. At the same time, let us be under no illusion about the challenges and the difficulties ahead. Today we have some positive indications, and I hope that by the time the Council meets again on this issue we shall have more clarity, more certainty and more reason to hope.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

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

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank our two briefers and commend all the work that their teams are doing on the ground.

I think that we have heard a very wide-ranging description of what is going on the ground at the moment. There are some very good parts, as Mr. Lowcock said, but also some things that we need to watch very carefully. I will speak to those points in a moment.

I want to begin by expressing support for our progress to date with regard to the political process. Martin's plan to move forward, with political consultations in parallel, with the ongoing implementation of the Stockholm Agreement is very welcome. We obviously support that action as quickly as possible. We welcome the presence of Lieutenant General Guha, and we will have a chance to hear from him in consultations. But in the meantime, the reduction in violations of the Stockholm Agreement is very welcome.

The United Kingdom was also pleased that during the General Assembly high-level week we were able to have meetings with a number of colleagues and with Martin to support his efforts. We are also pleased that on 29 August the Security Council issued a presidential statement on Yemen (S/PRST/2019/9). As we have heard from both Mark and Mr. Griffiths, now really is the time to make one last big effort in order to get some of these things over the line.

Staying with the humanitarian situation, I think Mark was absolutely right to remind us that despite the good news — and I agree that the news about the fuel ships is very good — we still have some underlying matters that could tip the situation back towards famine or some other risks. Thirteen people dying per day is clearly too many and that is degrading the whole situation on the ground. I understand what Mr. Lowcock said about the need for foreign exchange and also what all these factors, including the provision of fuel, mean in terms of their knock-on effect on the ability of the people of Yemen to have access to food. I think there is a vicious cycle here that we need to watch out for.

Turning to the political side, we have been very worried about the increased intensity of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia over recent months. But the announcement on 20 September that the Houthis would cease strikes on Saudi Arabia and the welcoming remarks issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been an important step towards de-escalation and we hope that further positive action can now happen on the ground.

With respect to what Martin has been saying about signs of hope, I think we all want those to crystallize and develop. Again, it is clear that we are close to an agreement, though not quite there. I believe that, from the Security Council, we should appeal to all parties to give this one last push to get it across the line. I think that is really important, and we can talk more about that.

When it comes to the south, I believe that inclusivity is the key to stability. We want a deal that brings southern representatives into the Yemeni Government and that, in turn, would hopefully be a self-sustaining, virtuous cycle. We commend the Saudis and others for the talks that have taken place and the Yemeni Government for all its work with the Southern Transitional Council. What Martin said about the unilateral release of detainees on 30 September by the Houthis was, obviously, positive, and I am very pleased to see that the International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is taking part in that. We hope that there will be more such measures as we work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen.

I want to draw attention to two specific points.

The first is about the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. As Mark has made very clear several times in this Chamber, a rupture or explosion would mean over a million barrels of oil leaking into the Red Sea. It is

critical to do something about this in order to protect the fisheries and livelihoods of ordinary Yemenis, as well as to prevent environmental impacts.

We need more efforts on humanitarian access, which is deteriorating across the country, as Mark said. We call on all parties to immediately comply with resolution 2451 (2018).

Secondly, the issue of funding and disbursements has been raised. Developments during the high-level week on this front were most welcome. We commend the Governments of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait for their very generous disbursements, which in total came to around at \$800 million, which is very significant and demonstrates real international leadership. We therefore express our gratitude to those countries. However, we note that the response remains underfunded by \$1.5 billion, and therefore encourage all donors to consider providing further funding to the United Nations appeal. The United Kingdom has brought forward funding from our nearly \$300-million pledge and provided 87 per cent of the funding we pledged to United Nations this year.

In conclusion, I wanted to raise the case of the Baha'i. The Baha'i are being persecuted for their religious beliefs in areas under Houthi control. We condemn such mistreatment and believe that the continued persecution of the Baha'i is a matter to which the Council should devote continued attention.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock for their briefings. I want to focus on two main issues: political and security developments, and humanitarian developments.

With regard to the political and security developments, Mr. Griffiths' briefing earlier gave indications of a positive atmosphere that could move the Yemeni peace process forward, and of limited progress in implementing the Stockholm Agreement, even though 10 months have passed since its entry into force. During most of that period there was a total impasse. The Yemeni issue clearly drew the attention of the international community throughout the month of September, especially during the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, where there was a need to uphold the political solution as the only framework for resolving the Yemeni crisis.

The most important international interactions took place during the ministerial meeting that Kuwait chaired along with the United Kingdom and Sweden. Its outcome was a declaration that contained many aspects, including the affirmation that the Stockholm Agreement is the cornerstone of the Yemeni peace process and that the Al-Hudaydah Agreement is to be implemented through the constructive participation of the Yemeni parties, in accordance with United Nations proposals concerning security arrangements authorizing the redeployment of forces, and the establishment of the tripartite monitoring mechanism; the importance of implementing the agreement on the exchange of hostages and prisoners; condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by the Houthis against civilian installations and civilians in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and the need to cease such attacks without preconditions. It also urged the Yemeni parties to participate in the dialogue facilitated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for maintaining the territorial integrity of Yemen, and supported the plan of the Special Envoy to hold informal consultations with Yemeni parties in preparation for resuming the negotiations.

Kuwait has expressed its readiness once again to host those negotiations, in cooperation with the United Nations, in order to reach a comprehensive and definitive agreement on resolving the crisis based on the three terms of reference: the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we welcome Mr. Lowcock's reference to the resumption of the activities of humanitarian agencies in several Yemeni regions, due to an increase in the funding of the 2019 humanitarian response plan. The pledges of the State of Kuwait in support of the United Nations activities since the beginning of the crisis in Yemen amount to approximately \$600 million, of which we have disbursed \$350 million to international agencies and organizations and relief agencies. We will disburse the balance before the end of this year. In this context, we stress the need to not impede humanitarian aid and to cooperate with the humanitarian agencies, foremost of which is the World Food Programme.

We commend the positive role of the Yemeni Government in continuing to pay the salaries of civil servants and retirees, in addition to the ongoing efforts

of its Economic Committee to ensure the delivery of fuel into the country. We hope that its 11 October initiative to expedite the delivery of oil products to Al-Hudaydah port will be dealt with positively.

We would like also to express our deep regret for the inability of United Nations experts to inspect and evaluate *FSO SAFER* floating oil tanker in Ras Isa. That could foreshadow a serious environmental disaster in the Red Sea.

In conclusion, we emphasize our firm position that there is no military solution to this crisis. We once again call on the Yemeni parties to implement in full the Stockholm Agreement and its three pillars, thereby supporting the efforts of the Special Envoy to achieve a political solution based on the three agreed terms of reference in order to end the crisis and preserve the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen, as well as non-interference in its internal affairs.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

The United States remains committed to the people of Yemen as they continue to endure one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. We are concerned by recent reports of widespread and acute food insecurity in the country. It is unacceptable that 17 million people, more than the combined populations of three members of the Security Council, are in need of immediate food assistance. Of course, the situation would be much worse without international assistance. Significant portions of that assistance have come from the World Food Programme (WFP), to which the United States is the largest donor. We are thankful that WFP has extended its beneficiary reach from roughly 7 million to more than 12 million individuals per month in 2019. Those efforts have saved millions of lives.

We also know that sustenance is not enough, which is why the United States continues to support the health and economic welfare of the Yemeni population. We recently announced an award of more than \$14 million to strengthen health systems in Yemen, which will reduce maternal, neonatal and child mortality over the next three years. Additionally, we made a \$25-million contribution to support UNICEF's emergency cash transfer programme, helping millions access goods and services in the local economy. Those contributions are just two smaller pieces of the more than \$2.2 billion

in United States humanitarian assistance to Yemen since 2015.

While we are proud to be one of the largest humanitarian donors to Yemen, the needs are too vast for any one country to meet. We are grateful to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and others that have recently dispersed critical funds towards humanitarian programming in Yemen. The United Nations must be able to conduct its work helping suffering Yemenis. Those much-needed funds will allow it to do so more effectively.

As Under-Secretary-General Lowcock said, the only way to end the suffering in Yemen is to stop the war. In that regard, it is critical that we not lose sight of the goal of reaching a political solution in Yemen. We continue to support the work of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and we are committed to the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, but that cannot come at the expense of progress on a broader political solution. The time has come to pursue both concurrently.

We understand that the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council have made important progress towards reaching an agreement, and we appreciate Saudi Arabia's efforts to facilitate that dialogue. We also welcome the announcement made by the Houthis on 20 September that they will suspend missile attacks against Saudi Arabia. It is our hope that this will serve as a stepping stone to United Nations-led efforts towards a comprehensive political settlement.

We continue to call on all parties to exercise restraint, respect Government institutions underpinning economic stability, refrain from imposing bureaucratic impediments to the humanitarian response and allow humanitarian aid workers unhindered access to the civilians affected by the unrest. We hope that those concrete actions will lead to further de-escalation in Yemen and that they will help Special Envoy Griffiths and his team galvanize the political process. Too many people have suffered from that conflict for far too long; now is the time for concrete action.

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



The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains catastrophic, and our collective response must rise to that challenge. The civilian population continues to pay the highest price of the clashes; September was the deadliest month of the year. Respect for international humanitarian law is non-negotiable; it is binding on all. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as civilian infrastructure, must be an absolute priority.

Every effort must also be made to ensure immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. The increasing restrictions imposed by the Houthis on humanitarian actors prevent millions of people from receiving humanitarian assistance. That is unacceptable. It is further essential that contributions to the humanitarian response plan be made without delay. In that regard, we welcome the announcements made by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates at the General Assembly's ministerial week.

Only a political solution will make it possible to put a lasting end to the suffering of the Yemeni population. We therefore call on the parties to seek such a solution with the assistance of the United Nations, as quickly as possible and without preconditions. We must waste no more time and work without delay to that end, even as we regret that the Al-Hudaydah Agreement is not fully implemented. In that regard, we reiterate our full and complete support for the Special Envoy. Progress towards a cessation of hostilities could contribute to that objective.

We have taken note of the announcement made by the Houthis on 20 September that they would cease their strikes on Saudi territory. That announcement is positive and has been followed by a relative decline in gunfire exchanges. It must be followed by tangible progress on the ground and in the long term. The recent release of prisoners was encouraging. We note the positive signals sent by Riyadh regarding the Houthi proposal. We hope to see an expedited easing of tensions.

The United Nations has an essential role to play in supporting those efforts and in helping to restore trust between the parties. Moreover, there is a great risk that clashes in the south will create an additional front. We also welcome the progress made possible by the Jeddah talks, initiated by Saudi Arabia. An agreement appears to be imminent, and we hope that it will be concluded as soon as possible. The engagement of various factions

of Yemeni society is crucial to resolving the conflict. The fight against terrorism remains a priority issue in southern Yemen.

France remains fully mobilized and committed to the search for a political solution, the only possible solution to that conflict. The French authorities will continue to act to that end, including at the highest level, in the context of the efforts led by the President of the Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, to ease tensions in the region.

**Ms. Morrison González** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

We listened carefully to the information concerning the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and the detailed briefing on the humanitarian situation. We take note of the progress presented by Mr. Griffiths on the political front towards advancing the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, while we also commend all the efforts being made by countries of the region to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in Yemen.

We also welcome the work being done by the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement under the current leadership of Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha and the resumption of the joint working sessions of the Redeployment Coordination Committee. We are encouraged by the agreements reached, in particular with respect to the mutual redeployment of forces and the activation of the tripartite ceasefire and the de-escalation mechanism. We encourage the talks on the opening of humanitarian corridors to take place as soon as possible so as to alleviate human suffering, particularly that of children and women, thereby ensuring timely, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

We are encouraged that the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah is still in place and that its violations have decreased. However, we are concerned that the work to mark the landmines in Al-Hudaydah has not yet been completed. We urge further work on that regard, as it is a critical step in ensuring effective humanitarian action and openness to economic activities, especially in the port of Al-Hudaydah.

We are concerned about the rapid rise in fuel prices in Sana'a and other northern areas, which is affecting the functioning of hospitals and clinics and the operation

of key water and sanitation infrastructure. That is particularly critical given that cases of cholera continue to be reported, as Mr. Mark Lowcock mentioned this morning. We note how the rise in fuel prices also affect the cost of food for people by leading to greater food insecurity.

The ongoing conflict has led to a severe economic downturn and the collapse of essential services, which has greatly affected the population and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. The expansion of the conflict has also led to the large-scale displacement of millions of people and high rates of malnutrition, disproportionately affecting women and children. In addition to the conflict, underdevelopment and poverty have deprived millions of Yemeni children of their right to education and of their hope for a better future. The educational authorities must work together to find an urgent solution to the issue of the payment of salaries to all teachers and educational personnel, so that children can return to school.

In view of the continued crisis affecting the people of Yemen, the promised financial resources necessary to meet the urgent needs there must be made available speedily, predictably and with flexibility. In that regard, we want to acknowledge the significant contribution made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait to the Yemen humanitarian response plan this year, which will no doubt help to save millions of lives affected by this conflict.

Lastly, the Council remains united in the face of the situation afflicting the Yemeni people. It is only through political will that we will be able to put an end to this scourge, and that is the hope of the international community.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mark Lowcock and Martin Griffiths for their detailed briefings on the military, political and humanitarian situation in the Republic of Yemen.

As we heard today, the situation in the country, especially on the humanitarian front, remains dire. In spite of the fact that the cessation of hostilities in Al-Hudaydah has continued, the outbreak of military action in southern Yemen in September has jeopardized the efforts to promote a peaceful settlement. In that context, we welcome the initiatives, including the launch of a dialogue in Jeddah, aimed at achieving a compromise between the parties. We also welcome the

announcements by various parties about their intention to cease armed attacks and refrain from the use of force in resolving problems both in and around Yemen. We hope that this positive trend will be consolidated in the interests of de-escalation.

We are encouraged by the fact that momentum for a peace agreement appears to be gathering, as reflected in the fact that the initiatives put forward by Ansar Allah have been positively received by the Government of Yemen and Saudi Arabia's leaders, as Mr. Griffiths and a number of speakers in this Chamber today have discussed. We support Mr. Griffiths' mediation efforts aimed at convincing the parties of the futility of a military solution and of the importance of achieving a universal ceasefire and formulating confidence-building measures. In that regard, we welcomed the meeting held on 8 and 9 September in the framework of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and hope that the agreements reached at the meeting will enable the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement to move forward.

The redeployment of military forces from the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa will not only contribute to de-escalation throughout the country but will also make it possible to eliminate obstacles to other aspects of the Stockholm Agreement, including the exchange of prisoners and de-escalation in Taiz, as well as to move onto discussion of the framework for and parameters of a peace settlement.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate and is increasingly resembling a full-blown disaster. We talk about at every meeting on Yemen. Providing humanitarian assistance to Yemen must be one of our top priorities, but the best guarantee of success in tackling the humanitarian problems is achieving a peace settlement that will enable us to provide that assistance unhindered and make it possible to start to rebuild Yemen's war-ravaged economy.

We believe firmly that the resolution of the Yemen conflict could create a future window of opportunity for tackling other acute problems in the region as well. In this context, the well-known Russian concept of collective security in the Persian Gulf is becoming ever more relevant, aimed as it is at resolving conflict situations and developing confidence-building and control measures. It is also in line with resolution 598 (1987), which we have continually reminded the Council of and which instructed the Secretary-General,

in cooperation with the States of the region, to develop a security and confidence-building architecture in the region.

**Mr. Duclos** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock for their important briefings, which shed light on a situation that calls for the urgent attention of the Council. We believe that the information they provide us, together with that from representatives of civil society and bodies of the United Nations system, makes it possible for us to achieve a more in-depth, balanced and objective understanding of the specifics underlying any conflict, and this should therefore be promoted at Council meetings.

Peru is monitoring with concern the developments in Yemen. The facts show that violence persists in various areas of the country, taking a high toll in human lives. It is clear that the implementation of the important agreements reached in Sweden is an extremely complex undertaking, as the marked lack of confidence between the parties represents a major obstacle in that respect. The violations of the ceasefire and delays in the process can largely be attributed to that factor.

However, Mr. Griffiths has reported some positive signs. If we act quickly and resolutely, these could lead to tangible progress towards achieving sustainable peace in Yemen. Here we refer specifically to the unilateral release by Ansar Allah of detainees and its offer to stop its attacks on Saudi territory. We expect a similar willingness by all parties, in keeping with the expectations of the international community. We urge them not to miss this window of opportunity, which is based on the guarantee that the Council will see to it that there is strict compliance with the commitments undertaken.

We also expect that these necessary understandings, if they are reached, will translate into a new round of consultations, which will make it possible to progress towards an inclusive political solution promoted by the United Nations. We believe that, in parallel, efforts should be made speedily so as to reduce tensions in the south of the country. In that regard, we welcome the good offices of Saudi Arabia and hope that they will lead to an early agreement that will consolidate Yemeni institutions and safeguard the country's territorial integrity.

All of these efforts at the political level are more than ever necessary given that, as Mr. Lowcock

has recalled, the humanitarian crisis seems to be intensifying on the ground. There is an imminent threat of widespread famine, and it has been reported that the number of cases of cholera has increased this year.

We believe that the Council must fulfil its responsibilities and ensure strict compliance with the presidential statement adopted in August (S/PRST/2019/9). This includes, *inter alia*, facilitating the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance as well as the unrestricted flow of commercial goods, especially food, medicine and fuel, as speakers have emphasized this morning.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment to achieving a sustainable peace in Yemen that would put an end to the humanitarian disaster, promote regional stability and ensure accountability for the crimes committed.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. China supports Special Envoy Griffiths in his efforts to continue to promote the political process in Yemen and commends the United Nations and the relevant agencies on their unremitting efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in that country.

The conflict in Yemen has been raging for several years, bringing profound suffering to its people. The frequent clashes in the Middle East have added complex dimensions to the quest for a political settlement of the issue of Yemen and to the situation in the region. China believes that at the next stage, attention should be focused on the following issues.

First, it is necessary to strengthen dialogue, enhance mutual trust and create the conditions necessary to resolve differences. The situation in Yemen has undergone complex changes recently, and attacks targeting civilians and civilian installations during the conflict in southern Yemen, among other things, pose obstacles to the peace process on the ground. China calls on all the parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from any action that could lead to an escalation of the situation.

Through the mediation of Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni Government and the southern groups are engaged in a constructive dialogue, and we hope to see a positive outcome as soon as possible. China expects the countries of the region to continue working to create

conditions conducive to enabling the parties in Yemen to ease tensions. We call on all parties to be guided first and foremost by the interests of the country and its people, to resolve differences through peace talks and other political means and work to jointly safeguard the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Secondly, it is essential that the parties work diligently and in good faith to fulfil existing commitments and fully implement the agreements already reached. The Stockholm Agreement, an important achievement arrived at through the good offices of the United Nations, has contributed to the overall ceasefire situation in the Al-Hudaydah area. On 14 October, in accordance with resolution 2481 (2019), the Secretary-General submitted a review of the performance of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, in which he concludes that the efforts of the Redeployment Coordination Committee have made an effective contribution to the reduction of violence, an acknowledgement that we appreciate. The Mission has been assisting the United Nations humanitarian agencies and cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme on issues such as port revenue management and mine action. We appreciate its work and that of the Committee. We hope that the Yemeni parties will continue consultations on issues such as prisoner exchanges and the statement of understanding on Taiz, using the good offices of the United Nations, and make progress as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we must continue to advance a comprehensive political settlement of the issue of Yemen. The parties should seek a comprehensive political settlement based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference. The United Nations should continue to play its role as the chief channel of good offices. The Security Council should stay united and provide strong political support. China supports Special Envoy Griffiths in preparing for a resumption of comprehensive political negotiations. We hope that he will maintain close communications with all the parties, enhance their mutual understanding and urge all to implement the commitments they have already made in order to lay a solid foundation for the next stage of political negotiations.

Fourthly, we must continue to give more attention and support to the humanitarian issue in Yemen. The humanitarian situation in the country continues to worsen, with the Yemeni people bearing the brunt of the suffering due to famine, cholera, oil shortages and soaring prices. China encourages the countries of the region to continue helping to ease the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We hope donor countries will strengthen their coordination with the United Nations, honour their pledging commitments and ensure that humanitarian supplies reach all the people and regions in need of them. China has provided a large amount of support to Yemen in the areas of economy, education, health care and food through bilateral and multilateral channels and will continue to do so to the best of its ability.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

With regard to Al-Hudaydah, we welcome the smooth operation of the de-escalation mechanism and the joint operations centre. We once again call on all the parties to implement the withdrawal agreement, fully respect the ceasefire and resolve outstanding points of disagreement. We welcome the release of prisoners by the Houthis and urge all the parties to take additional steps to implement the prisoner-exchange agreement and the statement of understanding on Taiz. The implementation of the Stockholm Agreement in its entirety is paramount.

At the same time, Belgium continues to encourage the Special Envoy to continue preparing for the next steps in the political process. The process must be inclusive, with the meaningful participation of women and young people, and it should reflect the ethnic, geographic and political diversity of the people of Yemen. As the presidential statement of 29 August (S/PRST/2019/9) underscored, a political agreement negotiated following an inclusive dialogue is the only way forward to resolve disputes and address the legitimate concerns of all Yemenis, including those in the south of the country. In that context, we welcome the talks organized by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah to try to find a solution to the situation there and call on all parties to engage constructively in those talks.

However, it will be crucial to expand efforts to improve the humanitarian situation, which remains



disastrous, as we have heard. We commend the humanitarian agencies for their outstanding work despite the difficult circumstances. It is essential that all parties facilitate access to humanitarian aid and respect international humanitarian law. We are particularly concerned about the fuel shortages' impact on the situation, including the risk of rising food prices and the repercussions for the operation of pump systems, hospitals and clinics. We urge the parties to the conflict to work with the Special Envoy to address these economic challenges in a constructive manner. We note with interest the announcement made by Mr. Lowcock that several ships transporting fuel are currently en route to Yemen.

We would like to draw the Council's attention to the excellent report on human rights violations by the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (A/HRC/42/17), and we welcome the Human Rights Council's renewal of its mandate in September. We call on all parties to respect their obligations and commitments under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The violence throughout the rest of the country continues, as we heard again this morning, and is exacerbating the lack of trust between the parties. In addition, it is affecting access to humanitarian aid. We therefore call on all the parties to cease hostilities throughout the country. Belgium remains very concerned about the large number of children who are victims of air strikes and the fighting on the ground, and demands that all parties take immediate measures to protect children. Lastly, Belgium shares Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock's disappointment with the obstacles encountered by the United Nations team of experts sent to assess the *FSO SAFER* tanker's situation, which forced them to abandon the mission.

**Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes this meeting on the situation in Yemen and commends 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, for their detailed briefings.

Côte d'Ivoire notes with deep concern the extent of the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which raises fears of widespread famine. According to United Nations specialized agencies, 80 per cent of the population, that is, 24 million

people, are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. On top of that, approximately 17.8 million of them lack drinking water and 19.7 million have no access to adequate health care. This bleak picture is further magnified by the 2 million Yemeni children who are not being educated due to the closure or destruction of their schools. Worse, 2,500 of them have been forcibly recruited to participate in factional fighting.

My country also continues to be concerned about the equally disastrous economic situation. In its report *Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen*, published on 9 October, the United Nations Development Programme underlines the continuing rise in the poverty rate, which increased from 47 per cent in 2014 to 75 per cent in 2019. The report also notes that a protracted conflict would make Yemen the poorest country in the world in a few years, with 79 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, including 65 per cent living in extreme poverty.

Given the aforementioned, my delegation reiterates its urgent call for the support of the international community, including bilateral and multilateral partners, to rapidly reverse that vicious cycle and for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

With regard to the political process, Côte d'Ivoire believes that only an inclusive dialogue, with the support of regional and international actors, will make it possible to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the Yemeni crisis. We therefore once again welcome the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2019/9, of 29 August, which supports the actions of Mr. Griffiths towards resuming comprehensive negotiations. We also urge the various actors to continue the steps taken during September with a view to relaunching the political process.

My country also welcomes the joint initiative of Kuwait, Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom, which led to a meeting on 26 September between the Yemeni parties, the permanent members of the Security Council and the Special Envoy to discuss ways and means of advancing the political process, taking into account those in the south, in order to ensure the success of the talks in Jeddah.

On the security front, my delegation strongly urges the warring parties to fully implement the Stockholm

Agreement, signed in December 2018, including the Agreement on the City of Hudaydah and the Ports of Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa on the redeployment of forces. It therefore urges the various parties to continue the redeployment of forces from the ports, under the aegis of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, and to cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement in order to ensure the unhindered and rapid deployment of its personnel and equipment required for humanitarian assistance.

In addition, my delegation would like to reiterate its call to all stakeholders to take further action so that the warring factions expedite the process relating to the exchange of 15,000 prisoners and the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on the city of Taiz, which would facilitate the opening of humanitarian corridors. Those two initiatives are undeniably important components of the peace process needed to build trust between the parties. In that regard, we welcome the declaration of a ceasefire by the Houthis on 21 September, as well as the release of 290 prisoners on 30 September, affirmed by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its conviction that, despite its complexity and gravity, the Yemeni crisis can be sustainably resolved through bold compromises between the parties to the conflict within a constructive and inclusive dialogue, in particular with the participation of those in the south, women and civil society.

**Mr. Lewicki (Poland):** Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for their briefings. Under-Secretary-General Lowcock painted a very bleak picture of the situation in Yemen, with an appalling number of civilian casualties in September and continuing restrictions on humanitarian access. However, as Mr. Griffiths pointed out, there are signs of hope. We hope that such signs of hope will sooner or later make a difference on the ground for the Yemeni population, which is suffering so much.

Despite the united position of the Council that the conflict in Yemen cannot be resolved militarily, as a number of colleagues have already said, the violence continues unabated throughout numerous Yemeni governorates. Poland is deeply concerned about the unrelenting impact of such violence on the civilian population, which continues to bear the brunt of the

ongoing hostilities. We are appalled by the continued violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by the parties to the conflict, including through bombardments in densely populated areas, attacks on civilian infrastructure, the denial and diversion of humanitarian aid, arbitrary detentions and the use of torture. We are particularly concerned about the recruitment and use of children as soldiers and the widespread gender-based violence.

We urge all the parties involved in the conflict in Yemen to prioritize the protection of civilians, immediately cease violence and introduce a nation-wide ceasefire in order to prevent further displacement, casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. As humanitarian aid remains critically important to millions of Yemenis, all restrictions on the flow of humanitarian and commercial imports, including shipments of fuel, must be urgently lifted. Guaranteeing free, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance and personnel to all parts of the country is not a matter of choice but an obligation that the parties must meet and respect at all times.

We take note of the positive developments that have taken place since the Council's last meeting on Yemen (see S/PV.8619), including the unilateral release of detainees by Ansar Allah. We hope that the parties will build on that development to achieve meaningful progress on the implementation of a prisoner exchange agreement. We are also encouraged by the disbursement of the financial pledge made by Saudi Arabia, which will enable the United Nations agencies to continue providing critical humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

Nonetheless, much still remains to be done to set Yemen on the path to peace and stability. One means to achieve that is to guarantee the successful implementation of the Agreement on the City of Hudaydah and the Ports of Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa and the remaining provisions of the Stockholm Agreement, which can contribute to building trust between the parties. However, the only way to restore long-standing peace and stability in Yemen is to urgently resume an inclusive, United Nations-led and Yemeni-owned political process, which should be conducted in parallel with other political and security initiatives. We urge the parties to reject preconditions and to engage constructively with the Special Envoy in order to create conditions conducive to the resumption of formal consultations.

**Mrs. Mele Colifa** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their insightful briefings.

Having carefully followed the briefing by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, with a comprehensive overview of the conflict, allow me to express our deep concern at not seeing the progress envisaged under the Stockholm Agreement, signed between the Government of Yemen and the Houthi movement last December. I would also like to express our concern over all the apparent complexities of the trajectory of the conflict in recent months.

Despite that situation, on the one hand, the delegation of Equatorial Guinea acknowledges the ongoing joint efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), the Redeployment Coordination Committee and all United Nations partners currently in Yemen. On the other hand, we also recognize the level of cooperation of the Yemeni parties to the Stockholm Agreement, which has enabled the progress to this stage.

We welcome the successful results achieved by the Redeployment Coordination Committee at the July and September meetings, including the final agreement on the technical modalities for a redeployment of forces from the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Isa in two redeployment phases, as well as the implementation of the tripartite ceasefire and de-escalation mechanism, comprising liaison officers from both sides and UNMHA.

We echo the Special Envoy's praise for the parties' openness to new measures, including periodic meetings in areas along the front line of the city of Al-Hudaydah and the opening of key humanitarian corridors. But we also agree that it is important for this openness to translate into concrete actions on the ground, as this would improve access to the greatly needed humanitarian and commercial imports for Yemeni population.

On 26 August, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates issued a joint statement in which they expressed their willingness to promote the ceasefire agreement and facilitate constructive dialogue among the Yemeni parties. As they are two countries from the region, we hope that the initiative will contribute

to the efforts of the United Nations by facilitating an environment conducive to reconciling all parties to the conflict.

The suffering of the Yemeni population to this day is intolerable. A recent report by a group of United Nations human rights experts (A/HRC/42/17) denounces a number of possible war crimes, including indiscriminate bombing, arbitrary killing and detention, torture, the use of landmines, and sexual and gender-based violence. In this regard, my delegation calls on all parties to take all necessary measures to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

I cannot conclude without calling on the Yemeni Government, the Houthi movement, armed groups in the south and all stakeholders in Yemen to seek to free children, women and the population in general from this five-year-long terror. Accordingly, we hope that Security Council members will continue to support the Special Envoy's mediation efforts and that the international community, and the States with an interest and influence in Yemen, will put the necessary pressure on all the parties to the conflict to find a sustainable political solution.

**Mr. Schulz** (Germany): First of all, let me thank our briefers, Martin Griffiths and Mark Lowcock, for their comprehensive briefings.

We very much welcome the encouraging signs of hope for the political process referred to by Martin Griffiths, while we recognize that these signs are still extremely fragile. We welcome the fact that concrete steps have been taken in the last days and weeks that have led to a positive change. We welcome the announcement by the Houthis to suspend missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, which has been followed by a reduction in the number of attacks and by the release of several hundred prisoners. These are steps in the right direction, and we hope that they will contribute to building confidence among the parties and open the door for re-engagement in the political process.

We would also like to commend the ongoing talks in Jeddah facilitated by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. We welcome the significant progress achieved so far and hope for the swift and successful conclusion of the talks. This dialogue is an important contribution to the political process and underlines the importance of an inclusive approach to a broader political framework agreement. The preservation of the territorial integrity of Yemen should be an

underlying principle of the talks. In addition, we support the Special Envoy's continued efforts to build confidence among the parties, in particular with regard to the port of Al-Hudaydah, the use of revenues and the Sana'a airport.

With regard to the broader consultations, the process must be inclusive, as many speakers have mentioned before me, and involve women, youth, civil society and different regional groups. The failure to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement — a failure that we deplore — must not prevent the parties from participating in the Special Envoy's process towards a broader political settlement to finally end the conflict without any further delay. We call on all actors to engage constructively with the proposals presented by the Special Envoy. Let me also mention that Germany remains committed to playing its part in supporting the political process wherever we can, for example, by facilitating meetings at different levels.

Turning to the humanitarian and human rights situation, which is obviously still extremely dire, I would like to begin by referring to the report of the Independent Group in Geneva, which shows that basic human rights are constantly being violated by all parties involved in the conflict. There is no excuse for killing, torturing or abusing innocent people, and all parties need to comply with their responsibilities under human rights law. The perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes. In that context, we would also find it useful to hear from the Group of Eminent Experts directly.

As for the humanitarian situation, Mr. Lowcock's briefing was very clear, and we urge the parties to the conflict to facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian assistance in compliance with resolution 2451 (2018) and to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law. Commenting very briefly on the first three priorities outlined by Mr. Lowcock, let me start by saying that, first and foremost, we have to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, for it is the most vulnerable, in particular women and children, who feel the impact of war the most. I do not want to go into further detail, but the 30 active front lines Mr. Lowcock mentioned speak for themselves. It is good that the situation in October was slightly better than in previous months, but, of course, the overall picture remains extremely grim.

Secondly, on the issue of access, we are seeing an increasingly restrictive environment, especially in the north, to the extent that humanitarian actors are not able to provide principled humanitarian assistance to people in dire need. Over 5 million people cannot be reached as a result of restrictions on access. For that reason, we urge all parties to facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian assistance and reduce bureaucratic impediments. We call upon all parties to refrain from interfering with humanitarian assistance in a way that goes against the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Thirdly, on the funding of humanitarian operations, we very much welcome the recent disbursements by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait of the funding pledged in Geneva. With these generous contributions, further pipeline breaks have been averted, and funding for the majority of humanitarian programmes was secured at the very last minute. In order to ensure reliable assistance, we call upon all donors to provide funding that is as flexible as possible, in a timely manner and without conditions.

Let me also touch upon our concern that the United Nations has still not been granted access to the abandoned floating storage and offloading facility, the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, in Al-Hudaydah. We must not allow a potential oil spill that would lead to an unprecedented environmental disaster in the Red Sea to happen, and we call on all actors, especially the Houthis, to allow the United Nations assessment team to access the tanker. On a more general note, Germany calls on all parties involved in the conflict to ensure the freedom of movement of all United Nations personnel so that they can carry out their task.

**Mr. Soemirat** (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. We commend their efforts and attempts to ease the conflict and deliver humanitarian assistance on the ground.

In responding to the briefings, Indonesia would like to underscore three points. First, improving the security situation and promoting de-escalation must be the priority at this time. We welcome the positive signals by all sides indicating their interest in de-escalation and call upon them to transform these signals into further positive, concrete actions. In that regard, we are encouraged by the releasing of detainees, as stated by Special Envoy Griffiths. It is our fervent hope that the



reduction of violence, particularly cross-border attacks, will lead to the de-escalation of violence in other parts of Yemen. In that regard, we are hopeful that we will be able to reduce the number of casualties. Saving human lives has always been Indonesia's biggest interest, and it remains so.

We also welcome the positive developments in Aden, as they extend the reduction of violence to the southern part of Yemen. In that regard, we commend the ongoing good offices being conducted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We believe that such a de-escalation would create space for the parties to enhance their confidence and trust, which would be beneficial for the prospects of resuming the second dialogue.

That brings me to my second point, which is that the resumption of peace talks by the end of the year should be made a priority. It is almost a year since the first dialogue resulted in the Stockholm Agreement. The Government of Yemen and the Houthis, as well as other relevant parties, should resume dialogue with the aim of committing to a wider ceasefire and to ending the conflict. Inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations, women and youth, could chart the path to a comprehensive political solution for the future of Yemen. Key regional players should also support the process.

Indonesia once again reiterates its support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen in pursuing the resumption of the political process to end the conflict in Yemen. We share the view expressed by the briefers and some members of the Council who have spoken before us that ending the conflict and improving the country's economic conditions are the only means of stopping the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen.

Thirdly, the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement should continue, in particular through the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. As has been repeated several times, Al-Hudaydah is the centre of gravity of the crisis and progress in Al-Hudaydah remains crucial to efforts to address the conflict in Yemen. It is also the location of the corridor for humanitarian assistance and, through its port, a source of revenue for the Yemeni people. We call for the implementation of both phases of the Agreement, in accordance with the technical modalities of the Agreement itself. We also welcome the activation of

the tripartite ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism in order to prevent incidents in Al-Hudaydah governorate and as a direct channel of communication among the parties, under the auspices of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). The works in progress in Al-Hudaydah demonstrate the continued commitment of the parties to the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement and are a positive sign for extending the broader Agreement beyond Al-Hudaydah.

Finally, we take note of the Secretary-General's positive assessment of UNMHA. Indonesia remains committed to supporting the work of the United Nations in Yemen, including by being part of UNMHA.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of South Africa.

We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for their briefings. South Africa wishes to express its support for Special Envoy Griffiths and congratulates him on the efforts he is undertaking to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Yemen.

We also welcome Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha and wish him well in his role as Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA).

My delegation would like to address the following two issues: the political situation in Yemen and the dire humanitarian situation.

First, on the political situation in Yemen, we continue to call on all parties involved in the conflict in Yemen to de-escalate tensions and fully commit to the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. We reiterate our support for a negotiated political settlement that engages all parties in an inclusive Yemeni-led dialogue in order to resolve differences and address the legitimate concerns of all Yemenis, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. We also call on the parties to engage in good faith with Special Envoy Griffiths in order to resume an inclusive political process with a view to reaching a comprehensive, negotiated settlement to end the conflict, including with the meaningful participation of women and youth, in parallel with continued efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement.

South Africa urges those who have influence over the protagonists in the Yemeni conflict to apply maximum pressure so that the parties may sustain ongoing peace processes, make necessary compromises, release political prisoners, maintain the ceasefire and relaunch meaningful and sustained all-party talks, as contained in the Stockholm Agreement. Special Envoy Griffiths has just briefed the Council, and we join others in thanking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for urging the current promising Yemeni negotiations.

On the humanitarian situation, South Africa remains extremely concerned about the dire crisis in Yemen, which has caused immeasurable suffering for millions of civilians. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. Nearly four years of conflict and severe economic decline are driving the country to the brink of famine and exacerbating needs in all sectors. An estimated 80 per cent of the population — 24 million people — require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, including 14.3 million who are in acute need. The severity of their needs is deepening, with the number of people in acute need a staggering 27 per cent higher than last year. Two-thirds of all districts in the country are already suffering pre-famine, and one-third face the convergence of multiple acute vulnerabilities. An estimated 85,000 Yemeni children under the age of five may have died of starvation.

About 2 million Yemeni children have stopped attending school since the start of the war and, according to UNICEF, many schools are damaged, not in use or have become shelters for displaced persons. Furthermore, about 2,500 boys have joined the fighting, and more than half of all Yemeni girls are now married before they reach the age of 15. The armed conflict in Yemen has killed and injured thousands of Yemeni civilians since it began. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, about 7,000 civilians have been killed and more than 10,000 wounded. The actual number of civilian casualties is likely to be much higher. Thousands more have been displaced by the fighting and millions suffer from shortages of food and medical care. In that regard, we urge donors to disburse the pledges they made to the United Nations humanitarian response plan as a matter of urgency in order to help address the dire humanitarian situation. South Africa thanks all those donors who have generously disbursed their funds as

pledged, including Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, and we are grateful for the many other donations, such as that announced by China today.

We further call on the parties to the conflict to allow for the free, regular and undisputed passage of food and other humanitarian relief and not to take actions that could deprive civilians of their rights to food and health care. We also call on all parties to facilitate access to the humanitarian relief that the people of Yemen so desperately need. In that regard, we remind parties to the conflict that all necessary measures should be taken to respect the Geneva Conventions. We further call on all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law, including human rights law. This unprecedented humanitarian crisis is a strong indicator of the human toll of continued military action and conflict in Yemen, which necessitates an urgent commitment to a ceasefire and the pursuit of a negotiated, peaceful and inclusive solution to the crisis.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the only sustainable solution to this conflict will be through a negotiated, Yemeni-led political settlement that is inclusive and fair and puts the interests of all citizens of Yemen first. South Africa appreciates the initiatives of all players that have brought about the current improved security environment and increased the prospects for 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, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to wish you and the delegation of your friendly country every success. I would also like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock and Mr. Martin Griffiths for their briefings.

The Yemeni Government has, by various ways and means, tried to achieve sustainable peace and to put an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people as a result of the unjust war waged by the armed Houthi militias. We have shown maximum flexibility in the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and accepted all proposals offered by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, to reach an inclusive political solution to the conflict in Yemen based on the three

agreed benchmarks: the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015).

However, the Houthi militias thrive on war and instability, adopting the same approach as Iran, which supports them and is the main driver of instability in Yemen and the region.

The Yemeni Government emphasizes the importance of the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which is a positive step towards comprehensive and sustainable peace and ending the suffering of our Yemeni people. The Government has expressed its full commitment to the implementation of the agreement and underscored the importance of the issues of security and local authority, which are key to making progress in the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement.

At the same time, we appreciate the tireless efforts of Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha, Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), to establish ceasefire and calm in Al-Hudaydah governorate and to deploy observers on the front lines and checkpoints, in accordance with the agreement reached at the sixth joint meeting of the RCC. The Governmental panel has reported to him that it is ready to deploy observers starting the week following that meeting, given its importance in ensuring continued de-escalation and preventing violations, as well as in facilitating redeployment and humanitarian assistance.

The Yemeni Government reiterates that all political consultations on the comprehensive dispute settlement hinge on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. The Council and the international community should work towards that end, as those who failed to observe previous agreements will never comply with them this time.

The Yemeni Government commends and highly values the efforts made by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to ensure the success of the Jeddah talks, which should eventually restore the presence of the State and all of its institutions to the temporary capital, Aden, and to promote the unification of security and military systems, ultimately preserving the security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen and leading to joint efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of putting an

end to the coup of Houthi armed militias, countering Iran's influence in Yemen and the region and restoring and bolstering the kidnapped State institutions.

Exploiting the Yemeni people as a means of achieving political gains is unacceptable and totally rejected. The Houthi militias continue to reject the proposal to reopen the Sana'a airport for domestic flights and to facilitate the travel of citizens who must suffer and struggle through long hours of journeying by land. The Yemeni Government, on the direction of the President of the Republic of Yemen, His Excellency Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi, during the Stockholm consultations round and thereafter, has proposed an initiative to reopen the Sana'a airport. The Government has made concessions in order to mitigate the suffering of Yemeni citizens by resuming domestic flights, and taken all necessary measures to also address any potential security threats, since international flights cannot be resumed as long as the airport is controlled by Houthi militias.

The Yemeni Government renews its commitment to implementing the agreement on the exchange of prisoners, detainees, abductees and those forcibly disappeared in the prisons of the militias, in accordance with the all-for-all principle agreed in Stockholm and upon the instructions of the President of the Republic. The Houthis have released a number of civilians, but that is not sufficient. That is why we reiterate that the release of prisoners and detainees pursuant to the all-for-all principle is a purely humanitarian issue that should not be subject to considerations of political advantage. In the same vein, we stress the importance of lifting the unfair blockade imposed by the Houthi militias on Taiz and of putting an end to the suffering of its people.

The Yemeni Government continues to take the necessary economic measures to support the national currency and ensure economic stability, as humanitarian relief alone cannot resolve the humanitarian crisis, despite the great concern shown by the international community regarding Decree 75, on fuel imports. Today, after almost a year, we recognize the effectiveness of that Decree, as it has relaunched the financial cycle through the control of monitored Yemeni and international banks. That has led to the improvement and stabilization of the national currency without creating any fuel shortages in local markets.

Similarly, Decree 49 is aimed at enhancing State functions and responsibilities to increase revenues and respond to the needs of the Yemeni citizens in all governorates. Since it started to implement the Decree on 8 August, the Government has increased revenues in the liberated areas without any significant increase in fuel prices or causing crises. In fact, private businesses have expressed their readiness to comply with the provisions of the Decree were it not for the pressure of Houthi militias exerted against them. The Government has expressed its readiness to transfer all types of fuel to all areas, including those under the control of the Houthi militias, as necessary and for lower prices than those imposed by the militias. The United Nations would be responsible for controlling the customs and tax revenues due on those oil derivatives. Owners of oil tankers will be obliged to deposit oil revenues at the Al-Hudaydah branch of the Central Bank while ensuring that they will not be withdrawn or used by the militias. They will be used only to pay the salaries of civil servants. Militias may not impose taxes on traders or collect other fees, in order to ensure that they do not affect market fuel prices. As Mr. Lowcock mentioned earlier, the Yemeni Government has allowed 10 ships access to Al-Hudaydah port in order to unload their oil contents, in accordance with Decree 75.

Since November 2018 the Yemeni Government has succeeded in paying 63 per cent of its civil servants, nearly 82,000 of whom live in Houthi-controlled areas, as well as more than 123,000 retirees who also reside in those areas. The Government emphasizes that customs and tax revenues on fuel will help to continue funding those salaries, as well as those of civil servants in other sectors. Despite the stability of the national currency and its positive impact at the economic and humanitarian levels, further measures must be taken in cooperation with the international community to increase the foreign currency reserves at the Central Bank and fill the funding gap in order to pay salaries. The Yemeni Government looks forward to cooperating with our brothers, donor friends and development partners to overcome our economic, humanitarian and development challenges and begin the preparations for reconstruction and the economic recovery phase, while charting a brighter future for Yemen and Yemenis in which peace prevails.

We would like to express our gratitude to the brotherly and friendly countries and the international donor organizations that have supported us in funding

the 2019 humanitarian response plan for Yemen. We particularly want to thank the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Union and China.

The Yemeni Government condemns the obstruction of the work of the international organizations in Yemen by the Houthi militias, who recently expelled the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, confiscated his travel permit and ultimately forced him to leave Sana'a. Such practices and actions demonstrate to the world the role that these militias play in undermining the work of such organizations. We also call on the international community and the United Nations to condemn in the strongest terms all such practices and violations, whose sole aim is to hinder access to humanitarian aid and intimidate humanitarian workers in areas that continue to languish under the control of the terrorist militias. We also call for taking strict measures to ensure the inviolability, neutrality and safety of the personnel of international organizations and agencies in Yemen.

In that regard, we would be remiss if we did not bring up the situation concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and the risk that we run should its current technical status continue without an evaluation. We reiterate our call to the international community and the Security Council to continue to exert pressure on the Houthi militias without delay in order to prevent a potentially devastating environmental disaster that according to United Nations reports would represent four times the amount of oil released from the *Exxon Valdez* tanker in 1989.

In conclusion, the Yemeni State will eventually return, and every manifestation of the coup, the insurgency and the chaos will disappear from every square inch of our beloved land. The Yemeni people will enjoy a safe, stable and cherished homeland in a just federal State, representing their aspirations, safeguarding their rights to partnership, development and a decent life while glorifying the present and future of Yemen, founded on the civilization of a proud and dignified people and a great human history.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*