



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8732nd meeting

Tuesday, 25 February 2020, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium)

Members:

China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
Estonia	Mr. Auväärt
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Licharz
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Gonsalves
South Africa	Ms. Tayob
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Hunter
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 27 January 2020 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2020/70)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 27 January 2020 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2020/70)

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

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2020/146, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2020/70, which contains the text of a letter dated 27 January 2020 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

Against:

None

Abstaining:

China, Russian Federation

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2511 (2020).

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

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I am very pleased that resolution 2511 (2020) has been adopted, but disappointed that two members of the Council wanted to abstain when we have previously been able to have united agreement on Yemen. I am particularly disappointed that this took place after extensive negotiations this morning, reopening the blue draft. However, I want to pay tribute to you, Sir, and to our French colleagues for their help in getting us to a text that we had thought everybody could accept.

I would like to put down a marker about a wider issue. There is a risk that the veto will become simply a negotiating tactic. If countries are going to engage in negotiations with us in detail and then not support the text, that in my mind is sharp practice. There is a risk to the Security Council in that sort of behaviour. There is a risk that it will not be able to step up to its responsibilities. I say again, for the record, texts cannot always be consensual unless we are prepared to accept the blandest, lowest-common-denominator text possible. If we do that then, again, we are not discharging our responsibility.

Other colleagues around the table have compromised. We compromise on our ideal text when we engage in these negotiations in the interests of having the Security Council speak authoritatively. I therefore hope that this does not herald a shift in the way the Security Council does business. Again, for the record, even though two members did not vote for the resolution, it has been adopted and it therefore comes into force.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): I too want to thank the United Kingdom for preparing this timely and important resolution in such an inclusive and a transparent manner.

The United States voted today in favour of resolution 2511 (2020), extending the Council's sanctions against the Houthis and others responsible for the conflict in Yemen. These sanctions support the United Nations efforts to find a political solution to this war and they help us hold spoilers accountable. All Member States have an obligation to implement these sanctions in full.

However, the reality is that one Member State continues to blatantly defy its obligations under the sanctions regime. In its recent annual report, the Panel of Experts on Yemen concludes that the Houthis continue to receive weapons that have "characteristics similar to arms manufactured in the Islamic Republic

of Iran" (S/2020/70, p.2). That is not a new finding. For years, Yemen Panel, together with the United Nations team monitoring resolution 2231 (2015), has reported on the Houthis launching ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that are Iranian designed. The Houthis did not just conjure up the ability to launch advanced weapons hundreds of kilometres into Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring States. Iran has smuggled these weapons to the Houthis and in the process violated the Council's targeted arms embargo on the Houthis as well as the Council's arms embargo on Iran.

Moreover, Iran's violations continue. Last week, we discussed how the United States Navy interdicted an additional 358 Iranian-made missiles and other weapons components likely on their way to the Houthis. The shipment was yet another example of attempts to smuggle a new Iranian surface-to-air missile system that the Panel of Experts reports on for the first time in its final report in January. Not only does Iran continue supplying weapons to the Houthis, but it is also increasing the sophistication of these weapons. Iranian weapons are deeply undermining the process for peace and we must call them out for it.

This resolution also requests that the Panel of Experts prepare information on commercially available goods that find their way into ballistic missiles, UAVs, explosive boats and other weapons. We hope that this information will help Member States and private companies exercise greater vigilance over the transfer of these items to Yemen. We also call on all Member States to help the Panel in collecting this information, which could ultimately bolster sanctions implementation.

The resolution also rightly calls out abuses by the Houthis against the Yemeni people. The Panel of Experts has reported on a horrific campaign of sexual violence against women orchestrated by the Houthis. Today's resolution condemns these crimes. The Council also once again demands that the Houthis stop interfering with the work of the United Nations and other aid organizations, whose work is vital to keeping Yemenis alive. By mixing their own interests with humanitarian aid, the Houthis are putting the lives of the Yemeni people at risk.

For the first time, the Council has mentioned the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker in one of its resolution. This addition reflects the international community's deep concern about the chance that the tanker could rupture,

causing an environmental catastrophe in the Red Sea. The United Nations has teams ready to inspect the tanker and help repair it, but the Houthis have not provided access to the vessel. Today's resolution makes clear that the United Nations needs access and needs it now.

Finally, the United States stands by the United Nations efforts to provide assistance in Yemen. We encourage relevant entities to utilize the sanctions exemption in the provision as appropriate to ensure that their important work is carried out in compliance with the Security Council's efforts to promote an end to this conflict. The United States therefore once again reiterates our strong support for the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in helping to reach a political solution to the conflict. We call on the parties to exercise restraint and work to de-escalate tensions so we can maintain prospects for peace.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I welcome the adoption of resolution 2511 (2020). After a final push, we were able to reach a compromise solution that allowed the Council to remain united. It is therefore all the more regrettable that this unity was abandoned at the time of the vote, since the resolution just adopted contains no problematic elements and we discussed it exhaustively in order to iron out areas of disagreement. I wish to recall that Security Council resolutions are produced by compromise. Each one of us must make concessions and no one can expect to get everything they hope for when entering a negotiation. This is the very foundation of the practice of diplomacy and multilateralism, which we support and defend. What kind of signal are we sending today to the people of Yemen, when they should be at the very heart of the Council's actions?

I thank the United Kingdom for its efforts to ensure the resolution was adopted. I call on all members of the Council to negotiate in good faith and to act responsibly in order to maintain the unity of the Council, which should be the rule and not the exception.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia is pleased that the Security Council has adopted resolution 2511 (2020). We would like to thank the penholder, the United Kingdom, for its work and diligence, and other Council members for their flexibility and commitment.

Through the adoption of this resolution, we recognize the situation on the ground and the need to do

something about it. We have shown our dissatisfaction at the mistrust between the parties, which is blocking progress towards dialogue. By this resolution we have demonstrated that the escalation of violence in Yemen, the indefensible deaths of and hunger experienced by children and women, the complicated challenges confronting humanitarian operations and the sexual violence in armed conflict are all unacceptable.

The Council is charged with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. This means that the challenge of saving lives falls to us, as does the monitoring of any violation of international humanitarian law during conflict. My delegation is fully convinced that under the current circumstances, sanctions are necessary to support the peace process and the efforts of the Special Envoy to advance the political process. For Indonesia, the sanctions are justified by the violence and the military operations. Furthermore, those who hinder the peace process or violate international humanitarian law must be held accountable.

Finally, Indonesia is pleased that members of the Council, in the best interests of the people of Yemen, were able to adopt the resolution. This was never for any of us; this was for the people of Yemen. They need to know that the Security Council is on their side and to trust that we are trying our best to put an end to their suffering.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation was not in a position to support resolution 2511 (2020), penned by the United Kingdom, which renews the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, because not all of our concerns were taken into account. During the consultations, we clearly and explicitly presented our principled and duly justified position. We made clear our objections to a host of the provisions contained in the British draft. A number of our remarks were taken into account only today, when yet another contrived crisis was already in the works in the Security Council. This all could have been agreed to calmly, without any drama or haste.

I emphasize also that there was no unity in sight during the discussions of the report of the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014). However, any contentious issues were incorporated into the initial draft resolution, and many delegations did not have an

opportunity to participate on equal footing in efforts to achieve a balanced text. Tell us, why does division have to be sown in the Security Council at a time when the situation in Yemen requires our concerted and collective efforts to help facilitate a settlement that would help to bring the conflict back onto a political track and ensure a comprehensive ceasefire and the delivery of aid to the Yemeni people?

It is fortunate that, at least today, such division was able to be averted. If a crisis were to occur, that would only complicate the efforts of both the Special Envoy, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the United Nations. The Russian Federation fully support Mr. Griffiths' efforts. We once again emphasize the need for the international community to work jointly to achieve overall stabilization in the region. We should not focus on isolation and pressure or seek to pin the blame on parties but, rather, meaningfully seek ways to resolve the crisis.

The goal of the resolution was to extend the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts, not compete with the putting forward of approaches that go beyond the objectives of the resolution. Unfortunately, what has transpired today yet again attests to the non-constructive working methods of the sponsors of the draft, which should have been geared towards the adoption of a consensus-based document and have allowed all voices, not just ours, to have been heard.

Again, we would stress that the penholdership mechanism requires meaningful reconsideration. The fact that our concerns are not heeded during work on the draft resolutions of the Security Council and are often simply disregarded ultimately puts the sponsors, and not us, in a difficult position. If there is a wish not to listen to us during consultations or to hear our concerns, that will impact our position on the vote, as was the case today.

We certainly do not wish to achieve everything just for our own sake, contrary to what some may claim. What we want is for the resolution to have a balanced text. However, the take-it-or-leave-it approach does not allow for compromise; we cannot agree to that kind of an approach.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The situation on the ground in Yemen has worsened recently. The achievement of a political settlement faces challenges and the humanitarian situation remains dire. Given that extending the Security Council's

targeted sanctions against Yemen and the renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen are conducive to advancing the political settlement of the Yemeni issue, China is, in principle, in favour of this and hopes that the Council will adopt a related technical rollover resolution.

Over the past few days, China took an active part of the consultations on resolution 2511 (2020) and proposed many amendments to the text, in the hopes that it would reflect the broadest possible consensus of the members of the Council, avoid introducing complex factors and maintain the unity of the Council. Regrettably, the resolution just voted on failed to address China's concerns. As such, China could not but abstain in the voting, for the following reasons.

First, the draft requires the Panel of Experts to study and develop a list of commercially available components used to assemble unmanned aerial vehicles. This mandate is excessively broad. The latest text has placed some limitations on the mandate but clearly states that this request should not have an adverse impact on legitimate commercial activities. The Panel of Experts should strictly abide by its mandate and ensure that its work is aimed at effectively limiting the activities of the sanctioned entities and individuals and avoiding any abuses. All parties should, first of all, engage in adequate discussions at the level of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

Secondly, the draft made some unnecessary amendments to the designation criteria. China agrees with the concern expressed over the recruitment of child soldiers and conflict-related sexual violence in the light of the actual situation. But the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence in conflict are already included in the existing resolution under the criteria of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The separate listing of these two acts has not been fully discussed by the Sanctions Committee and is not in accordance with the practice of the Committee. China has concerns as to the rushed amendment of the designation criteria at the level of the Security Council.

Lastly, China would like to emphasize that most of the members of the Council, including China, would like to see an early launch of the political process in Yemen. We would not like to see Yemen entangled in the complex situation of the region. The sanctions measures

and the work of the Sanctions Committee should serve the overall objective of reaching a political settlement, be more constructive and prevent any further escalation of tensions.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): If we had been forced to make the decision this morning, we would certainly have missed the opportunity to show the people of Yemen that we stood by them at this difficult time in their history. The abstention of two important members of the Council could have — and should have — been avoided because the ideal would have been to have a consensus adoption of resolution 2511 (2020).

I would like to commend the wisdom of the President in opening with consultations, the result of which is reflected in the vote on resolution 2511 (2020). Whatever one may say, the postponement of a few short hours has enabled the Council to transcend itself and focus on what matters most — moving forward together to find solutions for those in need. The violence and serious human rights violations in Yemen must stop without further delay.

May Belgium, a country of consensus, continue to use its presidency to inspire our work and our reflections in future.

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

Belgium welcomes the adoption of resolution 2511 (2020), renewing the sanctions regime in Yemen. This sanctions regime is one of the tools available to the Security Council to contribute to a solution to the conflict in Yemen and to restore peace, security and stability. We welcome the efforts of the United Kingdom and all the actors around this table to find a compromise on the text. It is important that the Council be united on the issue of Yemen. We had also hoped for a unanimous adoption.

Although Belgium agrees with the reference to the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict as a punishable violation of international law, we had hoped that the Council would be able to agree on an independent standard for sanctioning such recruitment or use. The Council has already done so in other United Nations sanctions regimes, in addition to the general designation criteria set forth under international humanitarian and human rights

law. Indeed, the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2019/509) contains much verified information on why the situation of children in the Yemeni conflict is dire and requires our continued attention.

Finally, with regard to the humanitarian exemption on a case-by-case basis in paragraph 3 of the resolution, we support the objective of protecting humanitarian assistance from the unintended consequences of sanctions regimes. However, Belgium favours a general humanitarian exemption tailored to each sanctions regime. The wording of the text in resolution 2511 (2020) therefore does not constitute for us a precedent for other sanctions regimes.

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*): I would like at the outset to thank the United Kingdom, the penholder on Yemen, and all members of the Security Council for the efforts they made to adopt resolution 2511 (2020), which we welcome, on the renewal of the sanctions regime in Yemen.

The conclusions reached by the Panel of Experts on Yemen reflect the important role that the Council should play in putting an end to the humanitarian tragedy and the disastrous effects of the war that the armed Houthi militias have been waging against the people of Yemen, with Iran's support, for more than five years now. Indeed, the violations committed by the Houthi militias are not new. They contravene the endeavours and efforts made by the Security Council and the United Nations to achieve peace. The militias even try to flout their obligations under the Stockholm Agreement. They continue to welcome Iranian experts and receive military support and weapons from Iran, which constitute flagrant violations by those militias and the Iranian regime of Security Council resolutions on the arms embargo. We would have liked resolution

2511 (2020) to include clear wording and a firm position of the Council on these violations.

The Yemeni Government condemns all Houthi practices and violations that contravene international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including aggressions against Yemeni women such as arrest, arbitrary detention, looting, sexual assault, beating, torture and rape in secret Houthi prisons. The Yemeni Government calls for those responsible for the violations to be held accountable and for the militias to be condemned and held to account for abducting children from schools and sending them to the front lines of combat without the consent or even knowledge of their parents. We thank the Panel of Experts for the facts cited in its report (see S/2020/70) on this issue.

We have often — indeed, time and again — drawn the Council's attention to the practices of the armed Houthi militias against humanitarian organizations and personnel, including theft, looting, the blocking of humanitarian assistance, giving benefits to people who are not entitled to them and the exploitation of human suffering in order to achieve political gains. Addressing those practices requires a firm response so as to put an end to them and punish the perpetrators. We stress the importance of the Panel of Experts being able to reach areas under the control of the Houthi militias so as to carry out its mandate, as provided for under the resolution just adopted.

The Yemeni Government holds the Houthi militias responsible for the serious threat of an oil spill from the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We emphasize that access must be given to the United Nations technical team to assess the situation of the oil tanker as quickly as possible. We call on the Council to take a firm stance in order to prevent an environmental catastrophe from taking place. I reaffirm once again the importance of letting the United Nations technical team reach the oil tanker before a potential environmental disaster occurs.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.