



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8753rd meeting
 Tuesday, 28 July 2020, 10.40 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Heusgen/Mr. Sautter (Germany)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Dominican Republic	Mr. Bencosme Castaños
Estonia	Mr. Auväärt
France	Mr. De Rivière
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
Tunisia	Mr. Kabtani
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mrs. Craft
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

20-19706 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.40 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. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Wafa'a Alsaïdy, General Coordinator in Yemen of Médecins du Monde; and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi, Chairwoman of the Arab Human Rights Foundation.

Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock are joining the meeting via video-conference from Geneva and New York, respectively. Ms. Alsaïdy and Ms. Almasabi are joining the meeting via video-conference from Sana'a.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I welcome those joining us from Sana'a. I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council. I want to start by congratulating the Muslims in Yemen and around the world on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, which comes towards the end of this week. May this Eid bring to the people of Yemen calm, health and safety.

The last time I briefed the Council, a month or more ago, I outlined the substance of the United Nations-brokered negotiations between the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah. To recall: those negotiations seek to reach agreement on a joint declaration that will include a nationwide ceasefire, economic and humanitarian measures and the resumption of the political process aimed at comprehensively resolving and ending the conflict.

I warned then that we had reached a delicate moment with much at stake. Those negotiations have now been ongoing for four months. Both parties have

provided feedback on various drafts and proposals, but they have yet to reach agreement on a final text. The process, as we discussed the last time, has been long and challenging. It has experienced bursts of momentum as well as very significant hurdles. That is normal, I suppose, for any mediation process that addresses issues of great importance to the parties. But it is important that both parties continue to engage in the process. The negotiations must be concluded before the window of opportunity of these months of early summer closes.

As a mediator — not as a negotiator — I continue to attempt to bridge the divides between the parties' positions. I hope that they will make the necessary compromises to reach their agreement — not mine — one that meets the aspirations of the Yemeni people. Unfortunately, even as the negotiations continue — and as we will hear from all the briefers today much more cogently than from me — for Yemenis across the country, life has become even more unforgiving. I am sure that Mr. Mark Lowcock will tell us that Yemen is experiencing the worst of times.

The military situation has not improved over the past month. The continued military campaign against Ma'rib has had profound humanitarian and economic consequences, and it could easily undermine the prospects of reaching agreement on a ceasefire for the whole country and the ending of the shooting war. The strategic importance of Ma'rib should not be underestimated, and that is why we have frequently made reference to it. I call for immediate and urgent steps for de-escalation now more than ever, on the eve of Eid Al-Adha. Of course, my Office stands ready to support all efforts to that end.

I am concerned — and I am sure that Mr. Lowcock will be more so — about the missile attacks that have threatened and injured civilians in Ma'rib. I have been dismayed by civilian fatalities, including many children, caused by aerial attacks in Al-Jawf and Hajjah. Like Mr. Lowcock, I condemn all attacks against civilians and civilian objects. I call on all sides to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, in general, and children, in particular.

In Al-Hudaydah, the level of violence has not relented and there has been an increase in the number of ceasefire violations. The Redeployment Coordination Committee and the joint mechanisms to implement the Al-Hudaydah Agreement are still not functioning. I

am sure we will hear later on this from my colleague General Guha. His Mission, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, continues efforts to overcome the mistrust between the parties and to restore dialogue, at a minimum, between them.

In a further sign of how life is becoming even more difficult for Yemenis — and I apologize that this briefing is gloomy in many ways — the economic indicators are all pointing in the wrong direction. As Mr. Lowcock will explain, food prices are rising, the currency is depreciating and most Yemenis do not have enough money in their pockets to meet their basic needs. There are no quick fixes to Yemen's economic problems, but the parties need to agree on steps to keep the economy out of the conflict. It is the people of Yemen who suffer when the economy is weaponized and politicized. The joint declaration process seeks to reach agreement between the parties on key economic and humanitarian measures that can finally bring at least some tangible results to improve people's lives. We look to the parties to agree quickly on mechanisms to make that happen.

Last month, I informed the Council that we were engaging the parties to find a solution to allow for the continued and regular entrance of ships carrying oil derivatives into Al-Hudaydah port. Those efforts are ongoing. The humanitarian consequences of the impasse grow greater by the day, and this situation cannot continue. It is essential that all obstacles to imports and the domestic distribution of fuel and other goods vital for the civilian population be removed.

The Government of Yemen has taken the positive step of clearing a number of fuel ships in recent weeks, and we encourage them to continue to release more ships. I want to stress our position on this because it is frequently misunderstood. Of course, we need, want and would like to see those ships entering Al-Hudaydah port. Nevertheless, that can only provide temporary relief. We have shared ideas with the parties about how to move forward in the immediate term, prior to a joint declaration agreement, but a long-term solution is needed. Through the President of the Council and the Council itself, I urge the parties to engage constructively with the proposals that are in front of them so that the Yemeni people can get the fuel they desperately need.

In addition, as the parties know well, they also urgently need to agree on a mechanism to disburse revenues from Al-Hudaydah port — as was agreed

in Sweden 18 months ago, as a contribution towards civil servant salaries. My Office has consistently endeavoured to support the parties in reaching an agreement on paying civil servant salaries to all Yemenis, based on the 2014 payroll database. I repeat it here because there are some who publicly deny it. These civil servants have the right to receive their salaries in full and on time. We will continue to engage the parties on proposals to achieve this vitally important goal. It is a deserved entitlement of these people, but it is also of extraordinary importance in terms of the humanitarian requirements of Yemen.

It has been two weeks since the Security Council's meeting (see S/2020/721) under the German presidency on the *FSO SAFER*, the decaying oil tanker that is threatening to spill over 1 million barrels of oil into the Red Sea. At that meeting, Mr. Lowcock and others raised the alarm yet again about the immense environmental and humanitarian threat posed by the tanker. At the beginning of this month, Ansar Allah confirmed in writing to us that they would authorize a long-planned United Nations-supervised technical mission to the tanker. However, we are still awaiting the permissions necessary for the team to deploy. The United Nations has it made clear to Ansar Allah that the team's mission is to assess the condition of the tanker, undertake any initial possible repairs and formulate urgently needed recommendations on what further action is required.

I think we can all agree that an independent and expert-driven assessment is of critical importance to allowing us to fully understand the scope, size and threat of this issue and the possible solutions to it. With Mr. Lowcock, I will keep the Council informed of any developments in this regard in the coming days and weeks.

In the southern governorates, I am encouraged that there has been a reduction in the level of military activity in recent weeks, owing to the efforts of the parties, despite some limited casualties at the front lines in Abyan. Tensions over State institutions persist in Aden and other areas, which are particularly troubling given the humanitarian context that Mr. Lowcock will describe. As we know, the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council are engaged in daily efforts in Riyadh under the auspices of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to reach agreement on moving forward on the Riyadh agreement. We had hoped to have specific news on that before today's Council meeting; we are given to understand that there is some good

news. We hope so. It is of extremely vital importance for all of us, as well as for the joint declaration and its process.

The elements under negotiation in the joint declaration are important both for the parties and for the Yemeni people. We have seen intense debate among civil society and others around these issues. I am grateful for the advice and guidance that we have received from them. My Office is fully committed to an inclusive mediation process, as is required, as Council members very well know, by resolution 2216 (2015). I will continue to engage with civil society actors, including through digital means.

Gender inclusion is a high priority. I know it also a high priority of yours, Mr. President. My Office is systematically integrating gender perspectives into the joint declaration text and the planning to follow it in what we hope is its implementation.

Finally, I continue to hope that the joint declaration negotiations will turn the tide away from these maudlin views, but towards peace. But I do not want to sugar-coat things today. There is a real risk that these negotiations will slip away, and that Yemen will enter a new phase of prolonged escalation, of the uncontrolled spread of the coronavirus, and of severe and threatening economic decline. The United Nations and all its entities are committed to doing all they can to support the parties in reaching an agreement that puts Yemen on a path towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

Through you, Mr. President, I call on all Member States, including members of the Security Council, and others who have an interest in the stability and future of the region to lend their full support to us to persuade all involved to move forward with speed to a successful conclusion. But ultimately the responsibility lies with the parties to bring peace negotiations to a successful close. I have said it before, and I hope I will not have to say it too often again: the coming period will test the political will of the parties to bring forward a breakthrough. I hope I can bring you better news, Mr. President, when next we meet.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has never been worse. I want to be clear on that point. Famine is again on the horizon. Conflict is

again escalating. The economy is again in tatters. Humanitarian agencies are again nearly broke.

And then there are the new problems. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is spreading out of control. And we have the sorry saga of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. I promised when I briefed the Security Council the week before last that I would update Council members on the *FSO SAFER* today. There has been no progress. As I told the Council last time, the thing that worries me most about the *FSO SAFER* is that, if it explodes or leaks, the oil spilled could, the technical experts have told us, put the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef out of action for weeks — or even months.

Some Council members will remember that in late 2017, and again in late 2018, I warned that the coalition blockade and then their mooted attack on Al-Hudaydah were likely to plunge Yemen into famine. Those warnings were heeded. The worst was avoided. It would then be the unhappiest of ironies if the failure of Ansar Allah to allow us to deal with the tanker were to be the cause of the loss of the ports. The consequences would be just as I warned in 2017 and 2018. I hope wiser counsel will prevail. The rhetoric on Yemen is often reassuring, yet the actions are relentlessly ruinous.

I will brief the Security Council today on five issues: the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, funding, the economy and progress towards peace. With respect to the protection of civilians, hostilities are intensifying across the country. There are now 43 active front lines in Yemen — as compared to 33 in January. The number of conflict incidents causing civilian harm increased in the second quarter of the year — for the third quarter in a row. On 15 June, at least 12 civilians were killed in an attack on a vehicle in Sa'ada. On 12 July, an attack killed nine civilians in Hajjah. Three days later, another attack killed 11 civilians in Al-Jawf. Available information indicates that those attacks were all air strikes.

I am particularly concerned at escalating hostilities in Ma'rib, including recent shelling incidents. Mr. Griffiths has already talked about that. Nearly 1 million people are displaced and sheltering in and around Ma'rib. If there is an assault on the city, we will almost certainly see waves of already vulnerable people fleeing the area. I call on all the parties to do everything possible to de-escalate the violence now, both in Ma'rib and across the country. Yemenis need a nationwide ceasefire.

Secondly, with regard to humanitarian access, overall, efforts to improve the operating environment in the north, where we have most of the problems, are making progress. There is of course more to be done. In the coming weeks, we will work with everyone to build on the good practices we have seen recently on approving project agreements and other issues. We also want to see the long-planned World Food Programme pilot begin for biometric registration of food-aid recipients. After delaying for several weeks, the coalition has now agreed that the technical equipment can be shipped to Yemen, which is welcome. I urge the Ansar Allah authorities to move quickly to implement the pilot. Meanwhile, in the south, we continue to have serious concerns, with an uptick in violent incidents targeting humanitarian assets and local authorities adding new bureaucratic requirements for aid agencies.

My third point is funding for the aid operation, which is, frankly, on the verge of collapse. We have already seen severe cuts to many of our most essential activities. We used to provide food to 13 million hungry people every month in Yemen. Because of funding cuts, only 5 million of those people are still getting full rations. Eight million have had their rations cut in half. Similar cuts are affecting millions of people who rely on aid for water, health care and other needs. Aid organizations have so far received about 18 per cent of what we need for this year's humanitarian response plan. What had been, in recent years, one of the better-funded humanitarian operations around the world is now one of the most underfunded.

In August, that will mean a 50 per cent cut to water and sanitation programmes in 15 cities across the country. We will also have to stop hygiene activities for people who recently fled their homes. In September, nearly 400 health facilities, including 189 hospitals, will lose their supply of clean water and essential medicines. That could cut off health care for 9 million people. Also in September, we will run out of money to treat more than a quarter of a million children who are suffering from severe malnutrition. Without treatment, those children will die.

It is not difficult to predict the effects of less food, less water and less health care in Yemen. Without more funding, we should all expect large increases in hunger, malnutrition, cholera, COVID-19 and, above all, death. We should expect many more people to die.

And just as we are cutting programmes, demands for assistance are set to increase sharply. Last week, a new food security survey was released, covering 133 districts controlled by the Government of Yemen. About 40 per cent of people in those areas are now estimated to be highly food insecure — an increase from 25 per cent at the start of the year. Sixteen districts are now categorized as phase 4, which is one step away from famine conditions. At the beginning of the year, just two districts had been rated as phase 4. In the coming weeks, we will have results from a similar assessment in Ansar Allah-controlled areas, where funding cuts required significant reductions in food aid this year.

I therefore once again implore donors to pay their pledges immediately. I am grateful to the United States, Germany, Japan and the European Commission. They are the largest contributors, according to the tracking service my Office runs, of the money we have received so far. I urge those with undisbursed pledges to pay now. There is no time to lose. I also call on Yemen's neighbours in the Gulf to increase their support. The sharp drop in pledges and payments from Gulf countries this year is the main reason the resource gap remains so large.

My fourth point concerns Yemen's economy, which is in free fall. When the risk of famine was greatest in late 2018, the exchange rate had fallen to 800 Yemeni rial to the United States dollar. On its current trajectory, economists predict that the value of the rial will drop to 1,000 to the dollar in the coming months. Already in some areas, the rate has been well above 700 rial for weeks. The exchange rate is one of the major determinants of the price of food and other commodities, nearly all of which are imported. In other words, as the rial collapses, fewer people will eat.

One solution is for the Government to finance commercial imports, but the Government has run out of foreign exchange. A deposit by Saudi Arabia in the Central Bank of Yemen is nearly depleted, and oil revenue — a major source of Government income — has collapsed. Yemen needs regular foreign-exchange injections to help stabilize the rial, underwrite essential imports and pay salaries. When Saudi Arabia did that in the past, it was very effective.

Fuel is another key determinant of basic commodity prices. Fuel is needed to distribute goods around the country, to pump drinking water and to power basic services. In June, only 8,100 metric tons of commercial

fuel imports reached Al-Hudaydah — by far the lowest amount ever recorded. As a result, drinking water prices have increased, in some cases more than doubling within a few weeks. Aid agencies are increasingly affected, with some reporting that they can no longer travel to communities to deliver assistance because there is no fuel. As we know, famine is stalking the country again, and the fuel shortages are also behind sharply escalating food prices.

On top of those challenges, many Yemenis are losing any remaining income at an alarming rate. COVID-19 has cut into remittances — long the country's invisible life-line — by as much as 70 per cent. A recent survey found that about half of families have lost at least 50 per cent of their income since April.

My fifth point is about progress towards peace. The Council just heard from Mr. Griffiths on the political process. With adequate funding, humanitarian agencies can address the most immediate needs in Yemen and prevent a renewed slide towards famine. That would spare millions of people from needless suffering, which would in turn help to create more space for the political process.

The choice before the world is the same as last month — help Yemen now or watch the country fall into the abyss.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Alsaïdy.

Ms. Alsaïdy: I would like to thank in particular the German presidency for this invitation to brief the Council. I also thank Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock for their briefings, which accurately reflect what is happening in Yemen.

Based on my personal experience as a civilian who lives in Yemen, and based on my professional experience as head of Médecins du Monde in Yemen since 2017, which allows me to move through areas under the control of various parties, I will walk the Council through what is happening in the lives of ordinary Yemeni civilians. I want to tell the Council what we experience in Yemen, in addition to what Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock already mentioned.

We see mothers and children dying because of preventable complications during pregnancy or birth. We see a 22-year-old mother struggling to make her

way through clashes and roadblocks to reach a hospital in Aden to give birth. She ended up losing her baby and undergoing an emergency hysterectomy to save her life. We see fathers despairing because they cannot afford to get their malnourished children to treatment centres. We see patients dying from the inability to find or afford medicine to treat their chronic diseases. Families in Yemen must now choose between chronic disease medicines for their loved ones and food. We see children who have survived bombings in Al-Hudaydah and now have post-traumatic stress disorders and specific phobias that render them afraid of even the sound of rain. We see a 12-year-old girl shocked after stumbling upon the dead body of her classmate as she escaped the bombing of her school in Sana'a. We see families torn apart by the war. I know that two days from now, when we celebrate Eid Al-Adha, many families will not be reunited.

This already insufferable situation has been aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Although accurate data on COVID-19 cases and deaths are not available in Yemen, I can tell the Council that we see people dying in their homes and in health facilities not only from coronavirus-like symptoms but, above all, from the lack of timely access to basic health-care services. Of the national health systems in the world, Yemen's was the least ready for the pandemic. More than half of health facilities are not functioning well or at all because of the war. Destruction, lack of supplies, shortage of fuel and lack and irregularities of Government salaries are some of the many difficulties we encounter daily.

I would like to pay tribute to Yemeni health workers, who are just as dedicated to their patients as their counterparts in any other country. Health workers in Yemen have to choose between unpaid or inadequately paid work in health facilities or paid work outside health facilities. They basically have to choose between caring for their patients or feeding their children. It is not fair, and no health worker in the world should be put in that position.

Yet, health workers are not the only ones with their backs against the wall. The same is basically true for public servants and all Yemenis. Clashes, bombings, shellings and lack of security are killing men, women and children, as was the case in the most recent attack, in the Al-Hazm district of Al-Jawf, killing 11 civilians, including women and children. In addition, the current economic deterioration directly threatens the lives of

the survivors because food, drugs and safe drinking water are now unaffordable for most.

Let me tell the Council about our awareness campaign about the prevention of cholera. At the time, many men and women expressed their frustration and asked how they were expected to wash their hands with plenty of water if they struggled to secure enough water for cleaning and cooking. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of Yemenis lost their jobs, salaries, farms, fisheries and access to ports and markets because of the conflict. They lost all access to a decent income, and are now running out of options.

The Security Council can and should give options back to Yemen. To this end, I have four asks.

My first ask is to stop the war in Yemen. Stopping the war is the only solution for civilians to be self-reliant again instead of aid-dependent. All the aid in the world will not be enough to address the soaring needs. We are grateful to all Governments that have announced support for peace and for the unstinting efforts of Mr. Griffiths, but they can do more to stop this war.

Among the things that can be done are, first, the Security Council should push the parties to engage in good faith in peace talks. Secondly, Council members should put pressure on countries directly involved in the conflict to stop military operations in Yemen and to stop weaponizing different groups in Yemen. Thirdly, Council members should put pressure on the many countries, including the permanent members of the Security Council, to put an end to their direct and indirect logistical and military support to military operations in Yemen. On the level of the street, regular civilians like myself keep wondering if there truly is collective international willingness to end this war, because these and other countries continue selling weapons in the region and fuelling the war. This contradiction makes no sense to the Yemeni people, which is why we question and strongly demand the international community's honest and principled support for peace.

We are also concerned that the negative impact of COVID-19 on the global economy will boost weapons sales in the hopes that that will boost economies. We hope that we are mistaken, because any economic profits made from selling weapons that might be used in Yemen are literally made off the dead bodies of Yemeni men, women, boys and girls. I hope that decision makers

will keep that in mind before legitimizing any future weapons sales in Yemen. If members of the Security Council truly support peace in Yemen, then they should stop all contributions to the war.

My second ask relates to saving Yemen's economy. Depreciation of the Yemeni rial and the deterioration of the economy are both the direct result of this war and the direct underlying factors in the continuation of the cycle of violence. How can the Security Council save Yemen's economy?

First, it should put pressure on the countries directly involved in the conflict to step in and stop the depreciation of the Yemeni rial. I know that many economies around the world are struggling because of COVID-19, yet we should not forget that Yemen's plight is an entirely human-made suffering and that the countries directly involved in the conflict have obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law to protect economic and social rights. Saving the Yemeni economy must remain a priority.

Secondly, the Security Council should put pressure on the Yemeni parties to the conflict to pay all taxes and put all oil revenue in the Central Bank of Yemen. We too should stand by our economy.

Thirdly, the blockade and any other restrictions on importations and exportation of all commercial goods to and from Yemen should be lifted. Restoring functioning market dynamics in all areas of Yemen is essential to giving Yemenis opportunities to live in dignity. It is also the only way to restore the ability of families to afford basic needs without depending on humanitarian aid.

Repeated fuel crises in the north and the south threaten the ability of civilians to survive. The world is watching the long queues of cars in Yemeni gas stations and must be wondering why people do not walk instead. In Yemen, in reality, fuel is not just about cars. Fuel is equal to water because water pumps depend on fuel. It is equal to health because hospitals are working from generators. Fuel is equal to food because cultivation and transportation of basic goods come at a higher cost and become unaffordable for regular civilians.

My third ask is for ensuring safe and unfettered humanitarian access. I therefore ask the Security Council to push all warring parties to respect international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles and to

support safe, unhindered access of affected populations to relief. Front-line humanitarian workers demand to be unconditionally able to reach those in need. To this end, internal impediments and additional bureaucracies on movement of aid and personnel in both the north and south must be lifted immediately.

My fourth ask is for the maintenance of aid funding and that the world not abandon Yemen. Aid cannot and will not replace peace. However, even though the country is still torn apart by war, as it faces unprecedented economic collapse, recurrent floods and the global pandemic, the simultaneous decrease of funding to Yemen is absolutely unjust to affected populations in the country. We did not choose to be dependent on aid, but we are. This is not who we are.

Those who have visited or worked in Yemen know that Yemeni people in the north and the south are a peaceful, decent nation, full of dignity, pride, social solidarity and generosity. These are not the circumstances in which we want to see our children grow up. Growing up hopeless, powerless and condemned to wait for what the world will give them out of charity is not a future that any child in the world deserves. We want our lives back. We want an equal chance with other nations to work, invent and build our country.

Nelson Mandela said that overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right — the right to dignity and to a decent life.. For Yemen, this will never happen until the war stops. Yemen needs the Security Council to prevent the Yemeni economy from collapsing and to stop the war instead of stopping the aid.

The President: I thank Ms. Alsaïdy for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Almasabi.

Ms. Almasabi: First of all, I thank the German presidency for its invitation to participate in today's meeting and for this opportunity to address the Security Council on how the war in my country, Yemen, has affected people with disabilities.

My name is Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi, and I am the Chairwoman of the Arab Human Rights Foundation, the only local organization in Yemen that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities. As a woman with a disability myself, I speak from experience. I fight for our rights.

For years, the Security Council has been briefed on the suffering Yemenis have experienced from the ongoing war. The situation has been described by the United Nations as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Even now, bombs are falling and people are fleeing in the midst of the pandemic. This war has had an excessive impact on us persons with disabilities.

Before the war started in 2015, there were 2 million people with disabilities in Yemen. Today, that number is estimated to be between 3.5 to 4.5 million. There is no reliable data on people with disabilities in Yemen and, given the ongoing conflict, the actual number is certainly higher than that.

The majority of people who have acquired a disability during the war did so as a result of injuries sustained from air strikes, landmines or other explosive remnants of war. But, in addition, the denial of humanitarian access has also created such chronic health conditions as malnutrition, especially among children. This is one of the primary reasons why many children in Yemen have acquired a disability. Many people who had disabilities before the war have also acquired new, secondary conditions as a result of attacks and displacement. For example, before the war I had one disability, but because of the war I now have two: a physical disability and a hearing disability.

When the fighting breaks out, many people with disabilities find it difficult to flee the violence. Imagine having to run for your life without a wheelchair, crutches or an assistive device that you need to be able to move. Imagine having to completely depend on your loved ones, or whoever is willing, to help you move. Some people with disabilities end up being left behind by their families. Others choose not to flee so that they do not put their families at a higher risk by slowing them down. We saw that with families escaping fighting in Al-Hudaydah, Taiz, Sa'ada and many other places.

Life in displacement camps has been particularly difficult for people with disabilities. Most of the camps in Yemen were not designed for us. Basic rights, such as access to health, water and sanitation facilities for people with disabilities, are often ignored. Many people with disabilities face barriers to accessing health care. Some people need to travel up to between six and eight hours to reach emergency medical centres along destroyed roads with few financial resources.

With the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) now causing a catastrophic health crisis across Yemen,

people with disabilities are once again being left behind. There are no specific targeted actions to reach them, even though we know that they are at a higher risk if infected with the virus. There is no data on how many people with disabilities in Yemen have been infected with, or have died of, COVID-19.

The war has made us poorer. I myself have not had an income because I have now not received a salary for four years. Many people with disabilities struggle to find any source of income, while the price of everything has increased. Even more children with disabilities are now out of school as a result of the war. As a fighter for our rights in Yemen, I need the following from the Security Council.

The longer the war persists, the situation will continue to get worse for all civilians, including us, people with disabilities. We need the Security Council — all its member States — to do everything in its power to stop the war. I urge them to stop supporting and arming those fighting this war. People in Yemen, like those in their home countries, need peace and security.

Placing the rights and needs of people with disabilities in the minds and the budgets of the United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and members' Governments is what we need.

Any peace negotiations must include the participation of people with disabilities. Currently, there are more than 4 million persons with disabilities in Yemen, but none of us have been engaged in any of those processes. That means that until today, people with disabilities have had no voice at all in addressing the present and the future of Yemen.

It is one year since the Security Council adopted its first resolution on the protection of people with disabilities in wars (resolution 2475 (2019)). This was followed by commitments from the United Nations and Governments to do better in reaching people with disabilities in humanitarian responses. However, such commitments have still not led to any meaningful changes on the ground.

Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are struggling to survive. I call on the Security Council and Member States to allocate resources and targeted funding to support them in Yemen through financial and technical support.

I thank the Security Council for making my voice heard today. I leave members with a simple plea — they can do more. They can do better. We are not an afterthought. Persons with disabilities must be a part of every statement the Council issues and every resolution it considers. We must have a seat at the table.

The President: I thank Ms. Almasabi for her briefing, which I think has touched everybody.

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

May I remind colleagues that closed consultations will follow. We will also hear from Lieutenant General Guha, Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, so let us be brief and to the point, maybe ask questions and look at the time.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank all our briefers. I hear what you say, Mr. President, about interactivity, but this is an open meeting, and we have not had one for a couple of months, so please excuse me if I set out the United Kingdom's position. I promise that we will be interactive in consultations.

The United Kingdom is extremely concerned that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is compounding an already devastating humanitarian situation in Yemen. The officially reported cases do not represent the reality. Modelling shows that in a worst case scenario, 85,000 Yemenis could die. We are frustrated that the Houthis, in particular, are not reporting cases, have resisted implementing many mitigation measures and are preventing critical health activities from taking place, including vaccinations. We call on all Yemeni parties to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access, report cases transparently and facilitate the United Nations response.

I am extremely concerned that the recent food security assessment for southern Yemen projects the fact that an additional 1.2 million people will be facing food insecurity this year. I note that the Houthis have obstructed the assessment in the north. This situation is driven by economic contraction. Yemen's currency is continuing to depreciate to staggering new lows this year, with food prices rising by more than 10 per cent in June alone. Let us be frank with each other — famine is now a realistic prospect, as Mark Lowcock has made only too clear. As we heard, this will disproportionately affect those who are already marginalized, particularly persons with disabilities.

There are two key actions the international community can take to prevent a disastrous famine from being realized in Yemen this year. First is to urgently provide significant funding to the United Nations humanitarian appeal. The United Nations has received only \$800 million this year, compared with \$2.6 billion at this point last year. This gap is hindering, or crippling, the humanitarian response, with 12 of the 38 major United Nations programmes, including for food assistance, already forced to scale back. In response, the United Kingdom has already disbursed over 50 per cent of its £160 million, that is, \$200 million, of funding in Yemen this year. We urge all donors to now step up and provide significant humanitarian funding to the United Nations.

The second action is to provide financial assistance to the Central Bank of Yemen so that it has sufficient hard currency to sustain food imports. That will be decisive to preventing a further collapse of household incomes and to stabilizing prices. The Government of Yemen has a role to play in that regard. We call on it to develop a credible and transparent plan that reassures donors and includes the payment of public salaries.

The United Kingdom is responding through that \$200-million funding commitment to the United Nations this year. We expect to conduct more than 700,000 medical consultations for a range of health conditions, train 1,500 health-care workers to work safely in a COVID-19 environment and ensure a much-needed boost to nearly 600 health centres in order to continue delivering existing health services.

We are also extremely concerned about the developing threat from desert locusts. We understand that favourable breeding conditions have existed owing to the heavy rain. There needs to be access to evaluate the options, including spraying, in order to mitigate this problem. The impact will be severe, not only in Yemen but also, potentially, across Africa and in Asia. We would welcome any update that Mark Lowcock can provide in the closed consultations.

The risk of famine makes it all the more important that the Yemeni parties reach the necessary compromises to urgently agree a nationwide ceasefire and a comprehensive political process to end the war once and for all. While negotiations continue, the Houthis' offensive on Ma'rib and cross-border attacks in Saudi Arabia have provoked an escalation in the conflict. This behaviour has cast doubt over their

intentions, and the escalations have resulted in civilians dying in missile and air attacks. The Houthis must cease such provocations.

I welcome the close coordination of Security Council members, both here and in the region, in their support to Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. We must remain resolute and unified in our message to the Yemeni parties — to all Yemeni parties — that now is the time to cease hostilities and agree to the proposals on the table.

There was a welcome announcement this week that the Saudi mediation has led to renewed impetus to implement the Riyadh agreement. I must stress the importance of its swift implementation, including the formation of a joint delegation for the United Nations-led peace process.

This month in the Council, we also focused on the devastating impact of an oil leak from the *FSO SAFER* tanker (see S/2020/721), as set out earlier by Mark Lowcock. Although the Houthis have repeatedly agreed in principle to United Nations assistance, they have proved unwilling to take that forward in practice, instead imposing preconditions and linking it with other issues. After 14 days, the experts' visas have not been approved. The Houthis momentarily approved them, only to cancel them the same day, claiming that was done in error. I urge the Houthis to facilitate the experts in that work. Anything less is extremely reckless.

Let me conclude by echoing Martin Griffiths's warning over negotiations slipping away from us. It must be a clear expectation of all of us in the Council that we expect the Yemeni parties to resolve the outstanding issues swiftly and to agree a ceasefire and a political process. Let us all resolve to use all the tools at our disposal to achieve them.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like, through you, Mr. President, to thank all the briefers for their clear presentations, which not only painted a comprehensive picture of the situation in Yemen but also demonstrated the urgent need to act to save the situation in the country. I was particularly touched by the poignant and moving testimony of Ms. Wafa'a Alsaïdy regarding the difficulties in daily life in her country.

The latest information from Yemen indicates that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is spreading rapidly throughout the country. With the war-torn health

infrastructure, limited testing capacity and shortages of medical supplies and equipment, the escalation of COVID-19 will further exacerbate the humanitarian situation of the population. The underlying conditions of infectious diseases and malnutrition make it difficult for people infected with the virus to recover, leading to an increase in the number of virus-related deaths in recent days. We are particularly alarmed by the number of deaths among health workers, mainly in the Sana'a area. This will undoubtedly severely undermine the fight against the pandemic.

In order to successfully combat the virus in the country, the three centres of power should stop blaming each other but must unite to confront this deadly threat. Indeed, the absence of a central authority makes it difficult to implement precautionary measures with which people must comply in a coordinated and consistent manner.

Last month, we were somewhat optimistic when we heard Special Envoy Martin Griffiths announce that the parties to the conflict expressed great interest in his proposals for a joint declaration of a national ceasefire, which would pave the way for the resumption of dialogue to end the war in Yemen. Regrettably, this is not the case today given the latest developments on the ground, marked in particular by the intensification of fighting between coalition forces and the Houthis.

The Niger is of the view that no progress can be made either in the political process or in addressing the humanitarian situation without a genuine cessation of hostilities. We call on all parties to heed the calls of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for a comprehensive ceasefire to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the country and for the resumption of the political process.

In that regard, we call on regional actors and Council members with influence on the parties to exert the necessary pressure to advance the Special Envoy's efforts to achieve the declaration of a comprehensive ceasefire, which we earnestly desire.

We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement two weeks ago (see S/PV.8747). The Mission plays a crucial role in stabilizing the area and in ensuring the ongoing delivery of humanitarian assistance, which is channelled mainly through Al-Hudaydah.

The Niger welcomes and supports the tireless efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths to silence the weapons in Yemen and to lead the parties to peace in the country, devastated by this senseless and terrible war. As Ms. Alsaidy implored us, we must act in order to end the war in Yemen as soon as possible.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): We thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid for their chilling accounts of the Yemeni crisis. We also thank Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi for her moving testimony, as well as Ms. Wafa'a Alsaidy. Ms. Almasabi and Ms. Alsaidy took us, as the Council, to their houses and the streets of Yemen, where ordinary people live. We thank them for sharing their daily lives and challenges with us.

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

With regard to the humanitarian situation, South Africa remains deeply concerned about its devastating impact on the people of Yemen, in particular women, children, the elderly, internally displaced persons and those with disabilities, as we just heard. As Ms. Almasabi mentioned, it is a harrowing reality that persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in situations of risk and face multiple barriers to accessing protection and humanitarian assistance.

South Africa therefore calls on all authorities in the various governorates to agree to a unified set of measures to counter the spread of COVID-19 in Yemen and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. It is imperative to allow full access into the country, to accelerate customs clearance of personal protective equipment and medical supplies, and to facilitate air travel of humanitarian staff into the country for staff rotations, as well as to communities in need in both the north and the south of Yemen. This will enable health-care workers and the humanitarian community to slow the rate and spread of infection.

It is vital for all parties to abide by their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian and international human rights law, and to take all measures necessary to end and prevent violations against civilians. Investigations into alleged violations must be pursued to uphold the standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

On the political impasse, fighting continues in the region of Yemen's northern border with Saudi Arabia, on the edge of Mar'ib city, Al-Hudaydah and Taiz. The proposed ceasefire remains unimplemented and there has been no substantial progress on any of the political agreements. South Africa calls on all parties to cease hostilities, in line with the Secretary-General's global ceasefire call and resolution 2532 (2020). Furthermore, we call on the parties to agree on confidence-building measures, such as the payment of civil servants, the reopening of Sana'a airport and the lifting of commercial import restrictions to help the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to provide impetus to the overall political negotiations to end the war in Yemen, as we have been asked to do.

We reiterate our position that a military response is not a viable solution, and call on all parties to approach the resumption of the political negotiations in a spirit of compromise, placing the interests of Yemenis at the centre of a negotiated political settlement — that means all Yemenis, including, as has been requested this morning, those 4 million people with disabilities. We appeal to all parties to avoid approaches of seeking to gain absolute positions.

South Africa remains concerned regarding the lack of implementation of the Riyadh agreement. We reiterate our call for the implementation of that vital agreement between the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council. We also call for the full implementation of the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement.

South Africa urges all parties to conclude the issue of the *FSO Safer* oil tanker by allowing critical repairs to take place and thereby avoid a man-made disaster in the Red Sea. The need to allow technical experts to undertake an assessment and initial repairs cannot be stressed enough. It is our wish that this impending threat be dealt with on a purely technical basis, without politicization.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates that the only solution to the conflict in Yemen is an inclusive

Yemeni-led, Yemeni-owned political settlement that will deliver on the hopes of the Yemeni people for a strong economic and political future. In this context, we call for the full and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of an inclusive political process.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their overviews of the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen. We listened attentively to the striking, even heartbreaking stories delivered by Ms. Wafa'a Alsaïdy and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi about the lives of ordinary Yemeni civilians in the midst of conflict.

We support the mediation efforts undertaken by Mr. Griffiths to rekindle political dialogue and reach a settlement to the conflict. The international community is united in the understanding that Yemen's problems cannot be resolved militarily. It is important for the Yemeni parties themselves to promptly embrace this premise and to undertake to craft measures to build trust and establish a universal ceasefire. To that end, the interests of all Yemeni social groups must be taken into account and the settlement needs to be both a compromise and satisfactory to all.

The same approach can and should be applied to address the *SFO Safer* tanker issue with the assistance of the United Nations. We are firmly of the view that both Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock are well positioned to help the Yemenis reach the necessary arrangements.

Unfortunately, it behoves us to note that the implementation of the Stockholm and the Riyadh agreements is stalled. We welcome efforts aimed at reviving those agreements, which would help to facilitate to a comprehensive settlement. We call on the parties to the conflict to refrain from the use of force and to take measures to de-escalate tensions and to facilitate the efforts at the United Nations to reach ceasefire and revive the political dialogue process.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen is of growing concern. It is deteriorating not by the day but by the hour. The conflict has already inflicted irrevocable damage on the country's economy, the social sector and civilian infrastructure, which will take years to rebuild. Millions of Yemenis are starving and unable to access the critical medical services and treatment, and they require various forms of assistance. Before these problems could be solved, the country was engulfed by

the tidal wave of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), with the unfortunate statistical distinction of having the world's highest mortality rate. That is why the provision of humanitarian assistance to Yemen needs to be our priority, with a parallel pooling of efforts to settle the conflict. This is the only way to launch a full-fledged humanitarian response.

In this connection, we note the positive contribution of the international High-level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, which addressed ways to improve the dire humanitarian situation and to deliver assistance to the Yemeni population. At the same time, I recall that humanitarian assistance must be impartial in nature.

The Russian position on the Yemeni settlement remains unchanged. We shall continue to assist Mr. Griffiths and United Nations mediation efforts in Yemen, including through contacts with all the political forces in the country and other interested sides, both in our national capacity and in our capacity as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

We wish to emphasize that a settlement of the conflict is not helped by attempts to shift blame to other regional players. This is all the more true when these regional players are positioned to play a positive role in ending the conflict. The necessary basis for this already exists, namely, resolution 598 (1987), which called on the Secretary-General, in conjunction with regional States, to develop a security architecture and national initiatives, including the Russian blueprint for collective security and the Persian Gulf zone.

Mr. Kabtani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to thank the German presidency of the Security Council for having convened today's meeting at United Nations headquarters. I also wish to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for their valuable briefings about developments in the humanitarian crisis plaguing Yemen. I wish further to thank the representatives of civil society for their briefings, which touched us deeply.

Tunisia is gravely alarmed by the ongoing deterioration of the situation in Yemen at all levels, particularly the dire and unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The situation continues to deteriorate, imperilling thousands of residents of that fraternal country as a

consequence of the military escalation and internecine strife that have gone on unabated. This is liable to further escalate, leading to disastrous consequences in the light of the difficult circumstances stemming from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, insufficient access to health infrastructure and lack of resources in Yemen to combat the pandemic. Given this crisis, Tunisia calls on all parties in Yemen to eschew military options. The events of the past year have reflected the fact that military alternatives cannot lead to a solution to the crisis; quite to the contrary, they exacerbate and prolong the crisis and further worsen the suffering of ordinary civilians.

There is a need for a comprehensive and immediate ceasefire. This is now of pressing importance. It must be consolidated, with compliance by all parties, so as to lead to the lasting peace called for by the Secretary-General and in resolution 2532 (2020). We reiterate our appreciation for the efforts undertaken at the level of the United Nations and internationally. We appreciate the proposals of the Special Envoy, including for a comprehensive ceasefire throughout the country, the immediate revival of the political process and economic and humanitarian measures to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, build trust among the parties and step up efforts to counter the pandemic.

In our view, this is a pragmatic and comprehensive approach. It could be a good opportunity to leave violence behind and move towards a solution. We call on all parties in Yemen to embrace peaceful dialogue to reach a political settlement in line with the agreed terms of reference, specifically the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its Implementation Mechanism, the texts arising from national dialogue and resolution 2216 (2015). In the same vein, we reiterate the need to implement the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements, to continue to honour commitments with regard to Al-Hudaydah, to comply with the measures agreed with the Office of the Special Envoy and to increase the full and meaningful participation of women in the political process.

Tunisia supports the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and the Special Envoy. At the same time, we underscore the importance of pooling international efforts to help the legitimate Yemeni Government to fight the coronavirus disease pandemic, enact the necessary economic reforms and ensure unfettered humanitarian assistance to the people of Yemen in need. To end the crisis and rebuild stability, both in Yemen

and the region, military activity must cease and all parties must honour the overriding interests of Yemen so as to end the suffering of the people and guarantee their participation in the political process.

The *FSO Safer* oil tanker holds more than a million barrels of oil. It is in a state of grave deterioration and threatens an unprecedented ecological disaster. We reiterate the call for an immediate solution to end this crisis and for inspection and maintenance teams to be dispatched.

To conclude, we reiterate our steadfast position of principle in favour of a political solution, to which there is no alternative, through constructive dialogue and national reconciliation to end the crisis and to ensure respect for the sovereignty, unity and independence of Yemen.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We extend our sincere appreciation to our briefers for their valuable updates and insights into the situation on the ground, which is, frankly, heartbreaking.

The protracted conflict in Yemen continues to deteriorate, as the security situation remains volatile without a viable political solution. Coupled with this is the worsening of the humanitarian situation, which has been significantly compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic. To that end, we underscore the need for unhindered passage of humanitarian aid to those people who are most in need. Urgent as this is, however, it is not a solution, but merely a measure to assuage the abject consequences of the crisis. The only sustainable solution is a political one. We reaffirm our support for the work of the Special Envoy and all actors that have been facilitating dialogue between the parties. As Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi said, we need to do more; we need to do better.

We express concern over the shortfall in funding, which is impacting and hindering humanitarian operations. The disbursement of pledged funds is urgently needed to ensure the continued delivery of life-saving assistance. We need to do more; we need to do better.

The Council recently convened a meeting to discuss the issue of the *FSO Safer* oil tanker, which remains unaddressed. We underscore that the environment, economy and people of Yemen and the region will be gravely impacted by any explosion or leak that occurs. Consequently, in advancing this issue, these concerns

must remain a priority, ahead of political interests and political dynamics. To avoid a catastrophe, an assessment of the condition of the tanker must be carried out and appropriate steps to eliminate any threat taken. We need to do more; we need to do better.

In concluding, we reiterate our appeal to all parties to cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table. While we encourage constructive engagement with the Special Envoy, we recognize that an effective outcome can be achieved only through an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process. This is the only palpable path to the advancement of Yemen's people, institutions and political expressions. I close by echoing Mark's plea. We must help Yemen now or watch Yemen fall into the abyss.

Mr. Bencosme Castaños (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Martin Griffiths and Mark Lowcock for their briefings. We would also like to express our gratitude to Ms. Wafa'a Alsaïdy and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi for their very enlightening personal accounts.

We cannot fail to express our serious concern at the fragile situation in Yemen. First, hostilities have increased and the situation in Ma'rib has worsened considerably in recent weeks. Shelling in civilian areas with a large concentration of displaced persons is completely unacceptable. We emphatically condemn the air strikes that took place on 12 and 15 July, killing 17 civilians, including 10 children. On that point, we believe that the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict is a fundamental tool that should fully reflect all the evidence. None of the parties to the conflict must be prematurely delisted while serious violations against children continue. We cannot leave children exposed to danger.

Given the humanitarian situation, the coronavirus is blazing in Yemen like an uncontrollable forest fire. We have received reports that close to 100 health workers have died from the coronavirus — one of the highest numbers of deaths among health workers worldwide. The pandemic, compounded by the nearly paralysed economy and the potential closure of vital humanitarian and development projects, could trigger a famine by the end of the year, as Mr. Lowcock warns. That cannot be allowed to occur.

With regard to the environment, we regret to learn that the Houthis have not yet given the United Nations access to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. During

the extraordinary meeting held mid-July to discuss the situation (see S/2020/721), participants reiterated the grave environmental and humanitarian consequences that would ensue in the case of an oil spillage to the sea. We urge the Houthis to allow the United Nations access to the tanker without further delay.

The locust plague is another crisis that is affected by the current crisis. There are currently several control operations on land in Yemen, but aerial operations, which are the most effective way to curb the plague, are not possible. If large-scale action is not taken, it is probable that a growing locust population will lead to a new re-invasion in the Horn of Africa and, possibly, India and Pakistan. The crops and pastures of millions of vulnerable people are being destroyed.

The challenges and hardships facing the Yemeni people seem almost impossible to overcome. The country is reaching a limit. If the situation on the ground does not soon show signs of improving, the Council should evaluate more drastic measures to send a stronger message to resolve the conflict and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

In addition to the recent positive developments with regard to the implementation of the Riyadh agreement, we urge all parties to adopt, without delay, the joint declaration presented by the Special Envoy.

Before concluding, allow me to stress the importance of ensuring an inclusive peace process that fully takes into account the voices of all Yemeni people — whether in the country or in the diaspora — and those in vulnerable straits. In that regard, we wish to ask Ms. Alsaidy if the organizations that work with the disabled in Yemen have been given an opportunity to express their concerns directly to the parties to the conflict. If so, what has been the response?

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Mr. Mark Lowcock, Ms. Wafa'a Alsaidy and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi for their briefings.

It is essential that the humanitarian actors and non-governmental organizations on the ground can express their views of the situation before the Security Council. It is becoming increasingly urgent to find a political solution to definitively put an end to the Yemeni conflict. We once again reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy in that regard. We call on all parties,

especially the Yemeni parties, to endorse the draft agreement proposed by Mr. Griffiths.

We are encouraged by the observance of the ceasefire between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. We note that the Riyadh agreement must be fully implemented without delay. We commend Saudi Arabia on its role in that regard. Only through a nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2532 (2020) and the call by the Secretary-General, can we effectively fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Yemen.

We cannot overstate our concern about the increased attacks on civilians. All parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as civil infrastructure, must be an absolute priority. Likewise, all efforts should be made to ensure full humanitarian access. That is essential to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Yemen, which has the highest COVID-19 death rate in the world.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we regret the lack of progress since the mid-July meeting (see S/2020/721). We call on the Houthis to honour the commitments made at the beginning of the month and to authorize, without delay, United Nations access to the oil tanker. An oil spill would have catastrophic environmental, humanitarian and economic consequences for the entire region. Urgent action is needed.

France will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to find a political solution and bring peace and security to Yemen and, more broadly, to bring about de-escalation the region.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. Mark Lowcock for their briefings. I also thank in particular Ms. Wafa'a Alsaidy and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi for their work and for sharing their experiences and recommendations with the Security Council.

I would like to make five points.

First, I reaffirm our full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy to achieve a nationwide ceasefire, confidence-building measures and the resumption of an inclusive political process. We call on all parties to

engage constructively in such efforts and to muster the necessary political will to reach an agreement.

Secondly, we are alarmed by recent reports of civilian victims, including children, of air attacks. All parties must protect civilians and put an end to the grave violations committed against children. As we heard from Ms. Almasabi, disabled persons are disproportionately affected by the conflict. They need special protection and support.

Thirdly, the scourge of locusts creates yet further vulnerability. We are worried about their impact on food security, and we support the efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to lead ground monitoring and control operations. To that end, we call on the parties to provide FAO safe access to the breeding grounds and to implement days of calm.

Fourthly, the humanitarian situation remains of great concern. All international partners must show their solidarity with the Yemeni people by supporting the Organization's intervention plan. We therefore encourage all parties to make additional commitments and to honour them. I also reiterate the importance of humanitarian access. We remind all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. Authorities must accelerate customs clearances for medical supplies and protective equipment and facilitate the aerial transportation of humanitarian personnel.

Finally, I note the recent meeting on the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker (see S/2020/721), and I echo my colleagues in underscoring that action is more urgent now than ever. We therefore urge the Houthis to honour their commitments and allow the technical experts of the United Nations to access the oil tanker so as to prevent a catastrophe.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): I would like to start by paying tribute to our dear colleague Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, as I believe this is the last time he will be in the Chamber. I thank him for his excellent cooperation throughout his time here. I would also like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock, Ms. Wafa'a Alsaïdy and Ms. Raja Abdullah Ahmed Almasabi for their briefings.

The fast spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Yemen and its high mortality rate is indeed worrisome and demands the attention of the international

community. The briefers have confirmed that COVID-19 in Yemen is as deadly as the conflict itself. I want to reiterate Mr. Lowcock's warning that Yemen cannot afford to fight two battles at the same time. Mr. Griffiths also gave a gloomy picture of prolonged escalation and suffering. Listening to the briefers is, once again, like riding on a roller coaster — there was a glimmer of hope some time ago and then, suddenly, the opportunities to achieve peace are slipping away. In that regard, let me highlight three important points in connection with the briefings we just heard.

First, we cannot overemphasize that a political solution is urgently needed. We are hopeful that the joint declaration can be agreed upon soon. That will determine the future of Yemen, as the new agreement will reinvigorate the moment of peace that is currently fading away, as indicated by the increase in hostilities. The draft agreement will also include important confidence-building, humanitarian and economic measures, alongside the continuation of the peace process and a nationwide ceasefire. We are confident that this is what the Yemeni people need now. In that connection, Indonesia would like to reiterate its support for the Special Envoy's efforts, with the Council ready to back those efforts to facilitate an inclusive Yemeni-led and -owned peace process.

Secondly, we cannot underestimate the threat that COVID-19 poses to the overall humanitarian situation. Saving people's lives has consistently been our top priority in the Security Council. It is indeed frustrating that we continue to hear from Mr. Lowcock every month about the constant, or even worsening, humanitarian situation in Yemen. COVID-19 and its restrictions, reduced remittances, locusts and the flat and significant underfunding for the humanitarian response this year have all exacerbated an already dire situation. The COVID-19 pandemic is also displacing a great number of people. That will further complicate humanitarian assistance. With that in mind, pushing for a nationwide ceasefire for humanitarian purposes is not an excessive demand.

We would also like to reiterate our concern that there has been no progress on the matter of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We had great expectations in that regard following the 15 July meeting (see S/2020/721). We urge Ansar Allah to give access to the United Nations assessment team to enable the necessary assessment and repairs.

Thirdly, we must stay the course and follow through on previously agreed commitments, including the Stockholm Agreement and the Riyadh agreement, as well as all the relevant Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), which are legal documents that provide building blocks for a broader peace agreement. As we previously stated, just because some parts are complicated to implement does not mean that we should toss out the whole agreement.

We are also delighted to hear that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is continuing to facilitate the efforts of the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council to implement the Riyadh agreement. The Council has the obligation to monitor that, as its commitments remain valid and relevant. The adoption of resolution 2534 (2020), to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for an additional year, after the initial six months, is yet further testament that UNMHA continues to be important and relevant. The ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah is helping to calm the situation, which is crucial for the humanitarian lifeline.

In conclusion, month after month in the Council, we have been hopeful about progress on the Yemeni file. We started back in January 2019 with the Stockholm Agreement, when we were full of hope that peace would finally happen. And yet we are still facing a bleak situation. Time is running out. As we approach the holy celebration of Eid Al-Adha at the end of the week, symbolizing the need to make a sacrifice, or *Qurban*, we appeal to all parties to make the necessary sacrifices for the sake of peace, to be flexible in negotiations, to refrain from further violence and to strive for peace. That is the ultimate sacrifice for the people of Yemen.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): I thank our briefers for their updates and for their teams' continued and resolute efforts to help resolve these daunting crises. I want to publicly thank Mr. Griffiths, once again, for all of his efforts towards achieving a political solution. We stress our support for his work on the joint declaration. We commit to supporting him in his efforts on this complex endeavour. I also want to acknowledge that he, too, is on the front line. Without his efforts, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) would be even harder to contain.

I would like to echo what everybody has said today in their briefings and in their statements — that Yemen is still a country at war. Now they are fighting yet another

war — COVID-19. It is important that the parties de-escalate the tensions on the ground and recommit to a United Nations-mediated political settlement. Cross-border Houthi attacks undermine efforts towards a settlement. Those attacks can serve only to prolong the conflict and the suffering of the Yemeni people. As Mr. Lowcock stated today, that is leaving millions of Yemenis without proper health care, clean water or sanitation, which are crucial to preventing the spread of the virus.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, I want to stress that, despite some initial improvements, the Houthis' level of interference and hardened positions earlier this month remain unacceptable and, even more, unconscionable, with COVID-19 spreading throughout Yemen. Before COVID-19, the United Nations had declared Yemen the most needy place on Earth, with 24 million people who depend on aid to survive.

The Houthis can and must do better, especially on moving forward with biometric registration for the World Food Programme's operations, approving all pending sub-agreements, allowing independent needs assessments, respecting independent procurement and asset management in accordance with donor regulations and facilitating the freedom of movement and humanitarian assistance for aid workers.

We remain deeply concerned by the spread of COVID-19 in Yemen and by the fact that cases are vastly underreported, particularly in Houthi-controlled areas. The lack of transparency has resulted in fewer testing kit supplies, which has led to an inaccurate count of the spread of the virus. The virus has clearly shifted to widespread community transmission, and many Yemenis are dying as a result. Humanitarian and health-care workers are vulnerable, lacking personal protective equipment to protect them from the disease. It remains absolutely imperative that all parties facilitate their efforts and not target health-care workers.

On 15 July, Secretary Pompeo announced an additional \$208 million in new humanitarian and health assistance to bolster ongoing global COVID-19 response efforts, including more than \$2.6 million to help refugees, vulnerable migrants, internally displaced persons and host communities in Yemen. Over the past 20 years, the United States has provided nearly \$4 billion in total assistance for Yemen's long-term development, including nearly \$132 million for health programmes. In the light of the observations offered by

our briefers today, the United States expresses its full support for the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as those belonging to other marginalized groups and minority communities in Yemen.

We are especially grateful for today's briefings as an example of how we can implement resolution 2475 (2019) in a concrete way, including by inviting briefers to address the issues relating to persons with disabilities. We call on all parties to the conflict, particularly the Houthis, to respect the rights of all members of Yemeni society.

Finally, I want to draw the Council's attention to the events of 28 June, when United States and partner forces interdicted a vessel off the coast of Yemen containing Iranian arms bound for the Houthis. The vessel's illicit cargo included 200 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, more than 1,700 AK rifles, 21 surface-to-air and land-attack missiles, several antitank missiles and other advanced weapons and missiles. Yemen does not need more arms. Iran must stop its efforts to arm the Houthis, which only prolong this conflict.

Mr. Auväärt (Estonia): I would like to thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Wafa'a Alsaidy and Ms. Raja Almasabi for their briefings.

Estonia fully supports the efforts of Special Envoy Griffiths aimed at reaching an agreement on a nationwide ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures and the resumption of the political process. It is unacceptable to seek further territorial gains at the expense of the people of Yemen, who are suffering as a result of the increasingly grave humanitarian crisis, as we just heard from the briefings by Ms. Alsaidy and Ms. Almasabi. We urge all parties to heed the call of Yemeni civil society to cease hostilities and agree on measures to alleviate the suffering of Yemenis without further delay. This is necessary for the start of the next phase of the comprehensive political process, which is the only way to find sustainable peace. Despite the important progress made towards this agreement, it is deeply worrisome that fierce fighting continues, resulting in an ever-growing number of civilian casualties and the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis.

We strongly condemn the recent air strikes that caused multiple civilian casualties, including children, who are bearing an increasingly heavy burden from the hostilities. We remind all parties of their obligation to adhere to international humanitarian law and

to protect civilians, especially vulnerable groups, such as women and children. We also condemn the continuous the deployment of drones and the firing of ballistic missiles at civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. We are also deeply concerned about the alarming humanitarian situation in Yemen, which the coronavirus disease pandemic and the dire economic situation have exacerbated.

We remind all parties, especially those in northern Yemen, about the need to facilitate safe and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel. We also urge them to facilitate the air travel of humanitarian staff, lift commercial import restrictions and find a solution that will secure the regular importation of fuel.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we urge the Houthi authorities to take immediate concrete steps, without preconditions, to provide the United Nations mission access to the ship. There is not much time left for preventing a possible leakage or explosion, which would have catastrophic consequences for the environment as well as to the economy.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their updates. I also thank Ms. Alsaidy and Ms. Almasadi for their briefings and welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Yemen at our meeting today.

Viet Nam is very concerned about military escalation in different parts of Yemen and the recent reports about civilian casualties, including children and women. The continued military escalation across Yemen has caused the security situation to further deteriorate against the backdrop of the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The possibility of a severe food security crisis in Yemen is another concern for us. The recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme said that the number of people in acute food insecurity is projected to increase from 2 million to 3.2 million in the next six months. In addition, economic crisis, conflict, floods, desert locusts and now COVID-19 could deepen the dire humanitarian situation in the country. The shortage of funding could also put the humanitarian work being done at the risk of being stopped. Furthermore, we remain gravely concerned about the growing risk that the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker could rupture, causing an

environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophe for Yemen and the region.

Against this background, my delegation wishes to make the following points.

First, we urge all the parties concerned to reach an immediate and nationwide ceasefire in Yemen so that the humanitarian work and the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic could be facilitated.

Secondly, we reiterate our call for all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law with respect to the protection of civilians and civilian objects, especially women and children. We urge all parties, especially local ones, to further provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance. We call on all potential donors and other partners to continue funding humanitarian work and making contributions to overcome severe food insecurity and save the lives of people in Yemen.

Thirdly, we join other Member States in calling on all relevant parties to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement and the Riyadh agreement with United Nations mediation. We also stress the importance of ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the political process.

Fourthly, with regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we join other Member States and the United Nations in reiterating the call for the Houthis to provide access and the necessary support for the United Nations technical team to undertake their tasks to prevent environmental disaster in the region.

Last but not least, we reiterate our support for Martin Griffiths' three-pillar approach, and call on all parties concerned, inside and outside Yemen, to undertake all efforts to achieve an immediate nationwide ceasefire and restart a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned inclusive political process.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and the representatives of Yemeni civil society for their briefings.

China appreciates the efforts of the United Nations aimed at achieving a ceasefire, advancing the peace process and improving the humanitarian situation in the country. On 12 March, as President of the Security Council for that month, I presided over the last meeting held in the Council Chamber (see S/PV.8745), which

was a public meeting, and on subsequent consultations, both on the situation in Yemen. Today members of the Council have overcome difficulties and returned to United Nations Headquarters for today's in-person meeting, again on Yemen. This fully demonstrates the great importance the Council and its members attach to the Yemeni issue. I thank the Secretariat staff for its efforts in this respect.

We are still not optimistic about the current situation in Yemen, as it is fraught with war, the risk of famine and disasters, and people living in dire conditions. The international community must step up its efforts to push for an early breakthrough in a political settlement of the Yemeni issue. China supports the search for a solution to the Yemeni problem involving the following three aspects: a nationwide ceasefire, economic and humanitarian measures and comprehensive political negotiations. Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity should be fully respected and safeguarded. In this regard, I would like to stress the following three points.

First, the parties to the conflict should stop violence and improve the security situation on the ground. From April to May this year, a general ceasefire was achieved in northern Yemen. This shows that, as long as there is political will, it is not impossible to achieve a ceasefire and stop violence. However, the recent increase in hostilities among parties to the conflict in Yemen has destabilized the security situation in the north and the south of the country. China is deeply concerned about this.

Military means cannot solve any problem, but will only prolong the war and the suffering of the people. China urges all parties concerned to set store by the future of the country and interests of the people by actively heeding the call of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy and immediately ceasing all hostilities.

Secondly, we must remain committed to a political settlement and continue to promote good offices and mediation. Since last March, Special Envoy Griffiths has worked hard to broker a new peace initiative but, owing to various factors, progress has not been satisfactory.

With regard to the issue in the south, the relevant parties once made political and military arrangements for the implementation of the Riyadh agreement under the auspices of Saudi Arabia. The progress in the

implementation has been limited. Over the past few days, all parties have shown some positive movement in terms of the implementation of the agreement, which we hope can be translated into actual results. China calls on all parties to the conflict to strengthen cooperation with the Special Envoy, engage in in-depth consultations on the peace initiative, build consensus and narrow differences so as ensure the future of the agreement. At the same time, it is necessary to fully mobilize the countries of the region and urge them to play an active role, in synergy with the mediation efforts of the United Nations.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in Yemen should be improved and humanitarian access guaranteed. The people of Yemen are facing multiple threats, such as violent conflict, economic crisis, floods, locusts and other plagues, including COVID-19. It is urgent to remove barriers to humanitarian access and expand the scale of humanitarian operations. The international community should encourage concerted actions by all parties in Yemen to assist the United Nations and relevant agencies in carrying out humanitarian relief operations so as to ease the suffering of the Yemeni people. Special attention should also be given to the difficulties and needs of women, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The United Nations should also urge parties that have actual control in various regions to take effective measures to prevent and control the pandemic. On 15 July, China once again provided Yemen with a batch of supplies to fight the pandemic. We will continue to support and assist the Government and the people of Yemen, and we call on donor countries to fulfil their pledges as soon as possible.

The issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker should be given great attention. We hope that all parties concerned will maintain dialogue on this issue in order to ensure that the United Nations technical team can conduct safety assessments and repairs of the tanker as soon as possible. We have noticed that there has been no substantive progress on access to the tanker so far, and the Yemeni Government and relevant neighbouring countries are seriously concerned about this matter. The Council should urge relevant parties to take practical actions to prevent the tanker from causing an environmental, human and economic catastrophe.

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

When we were planning for the Yemen consultations this year, we chose, in our presidency, to have the Security Council take a look at the situation on the ground in the country. We wanted to have people from the ground brief the Council. Members may recall that last year, during the German presidency, we had another representative of civil society briefing the Council on the role of women in Yemen (see. S/PV. 8512).

We were witness today to two briefings that gave us an impression of the dire situation on the ground and what the impact of the war has been on civil society. I would like to thank both Ms. Alsaidy and Ms. Almasabi for their briefings. I think we were all deeply moved by these very strong female voices. Since we usually hear about situations in more abstract ways, I think it is good to be confronted with the dire reality on the ground, to hear the concrete example of the choice that a family has to make either to buy medicine for a chronically ill member of the family or to buy food, or the decision that has to be made when, in a situation where a family has to flee, a family member with a disability might have to stay behind instead of going with the family and slowing them down or otherwise endanger them.

There is also the concrete example we heard about the hundreds of thousands of suffering and traumatized children. But it is the image just presented of a child walking on the streets after a bombing and having to see the dead body of a classmate that is the essence of what we are discussing. I think I share with other members of the Council the view that it is deeply disappointing that an agreement among the parties on a ceasefire — the joint declaration — has not been reached.

We heard from Martin Griffiths, who is an optimist. He always embraces the slightest opening. When there is a glimpse of hope, he jumps on it and tries to make something of it. However, I have never heard him sound so pessimistic as he did today. We would like to encourage him not to give up. He has to try and work hard to come to a resolution. I find it deeply shocking to hear that in recent days there was a stark increase in the number of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and that there was an increase in coalition air strikes on Sana'a. In the past few weeks, when many children lost their lives, there have been also been more maimed and traumatized children.

Let me remind Council members what the Secretary-General said in his most recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2020/525). The Secretary-General

stated his intention to relist the coalition, should killings and mutilations of children not decrease this year. International humanitarian law is not negotiable.

The briefers told us about the humanitarian situation on the ground. There is no food or medicine. Millions of people do not know how they survive every day. Of course, they all need support. We heard that the United Nations humanitarian response plan is highly underfunded. We call on all actors to contribute. Germany is contributing, as in all crises. But we appeal in particular to the countries in the region to provide funding. We call on them not only to pledge funds but also disburse them as soon as possible.

I would like to conclude as others have done — as the Chinese representative did — in recalling the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker situation. I mean, how cynical can you be? When we were sitting and discussing the issue two weeks ago (see S/2020/721), the Houthis gave every confirmation that they would allow the United Nations inspection team to go see the vessel. Here we are two weeks later, and again the Houthis have not delivered.

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*): Allow me to address you, Mr. President, with our most sincere wishes for success during your country's presidency of the Security Council, and we wish everyone continued good health.

The Yemeni Government yearns for a sustainable peace that is based on the agreed-upon terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). The Government of Yemen is very keen on ensuring the success of the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths in Yemen in order to put an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people caused by the Houthi militias' coup, which resulted in one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world. In order to achieve that goal, last May the Yemeni Government accepted the proposals made by the Special Envoy aimed at establishing a ceasefire, launching confidence-building measures and resuming the political process. That included all the proposed humanitarian and economic arrangements.

Moreover, the Yemeni Government reiterates that it will continue to engage with the efforts by Mr. Griffiths and the United Nations-sponsored peace process — because we believe in the role of the United Nations and want lasting peace. We made that clear in previous commitments we abide by, including our position on matters such as the payment of salaries, opening up roads, releasing all detainees and prisoners and opening Sana'a airport to international flights through the national carrier, which would alleviate the suffering of Yemenis.

We reject the continued imposition of impossible conditions by the Houthi militias. They are impossible to implement and are aimed solely at hampering the efforts of the international community and the Special Envoy and at prolonging the Houthi's futile war against the Yemeni people and impeding their aspirations.

The Yemeni Government has implemented the Riyadh agreement, and stated so on more than one occasion, in line with the agreed upon timeline. In that regard, we would like to express our great appreciation for the efforts made by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to help resume the implementation of the agreement. We call upon the Southern Transitional Council to abide by the agreement, which is considered a road map to exit this crisis. We call upon the Council to retract its declaration of a so-called self-rule arrangement and everything that entails. We also call upon it to allow State institutions to perform their duties towards citizens in Aden governorate and halt its attempts to escalate matters on the ground. We also call upon the Council to consolidate efforts to put an end to the Iran-backed Houthi militias, which aim to destabilize Yemen and the region, as confirmed by the most recent United Nations reports.

We also call for coordinating efforts to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Government of Yemen underscores the need to return the situation in the Socotra archipelago to normal, which is renowned for its rich flora and biodiversity — making it one of the most important nature preserves in the world and a World Heritage Site. The continuing meddling on the island is unprecedented, rejected and condemned.

The Government of Yemen has cooperated with the Special Envoy to draw up a plan to cover the payment of what remains of the salaries of civil servants in the areas under the control of the Houthi militias. We have

done so by allocating the customs and tax revenues from oil products at the Al-Hudaydah port in order to pay the salaries through the Central Bank's branch in the city, under the supervision of the Special Envoy. We were surprised when the Houthis looted the deposited funds, which exceeded \$35 billion rials, using them to fund their war effort and for the purpose of personal gain. We continue to await a firm position to be taken against this clear violation of the understandings sponsored by the United Nations, including the disregard the militias show for the international community and the suffering of Yemeni citizens.

The Government has repeatedly issued public calls to the Houthi militias to consolidate efforts to confront the COVID-19 pandemic and adopt a unified health-care policy and devote all possible capacity to confront it. To that end, along with the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, we have declared a unilateral ceasefire.

However, all of those initiatives have been met by rejection on the part of the militias, which are denying the existence of the pandemic. They have also imposed a blackout on the health-care and medical situation in the areas under its control. The Houthis are intimidating medical teams and society at large, perpetrating inhumane acts against those suspected of infection and their families. The Houthi militias continue to politicize the pandemic and to reject all the initiatives being made. Moreover, they impose a lack of transparency on the ways to confront the spread of infection — that added to the shortages in testing and treatment, equipment and a health-care system near collapse. In our opinion, all of those actions are a mortal sin.

We call upon the United Nations, the international community, donor countries and all relevant bodies to extend urgent aid to the Yemeni Government and people in order to confront COVID-19. We also ask for support for health-care workers and for pressure to be brought to bear against the Houthi militias to engage with the call and initiatives by the Government to consolidate efforts to combat the pandemic, which augurs for an unprecedented disaster in Yemen.

The Security Council held a meeting (see S/2020/721) earlier this month to deal with the situation concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. The Council called upon the Houthis to take tangible steps — without delay or preconditions — to facilitate access by the United Nations team of technicians to

the tanker so they could evaluate it and carry out the necessary maintenance work, including extracting the oil. However, two weeks have passed since the meeting was held and the Houthis continue to drag their feet and impose obstacles and conditions on the team. It is blatantly clear that the Houthi militias are adopting the same way of addressing things that they have used over the years — to deflect international pressure before the Security Council holds a meeting on the topic of Yemen, after which they return to their obstinate procrastination and deceit of the international community, thereby blatantly disregarding everything the Council issues.

We renew our calls on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities and undertake the urgent measures needed, including pressing the militias to allow the United Nations technical team to assess and empty the tanker, as well as facilitating the team's work without delay or precondition, so that we can avert an environmental, economic and humanitarian disaster that will affect Yemen, the region and the world.

The President: I shall now again give the floor to our two civil society briefers.

I give the floor to Ms. Alsaidy.

Ms. Alsaidy: I am very grateful for all of the statements from the participants.

If I am not mistaken, the question was whether we addressed the asks I mentioned to the parties to the conflict inside Yemen — and if so, what was the response when we faced them. Of the four asks we addressed to the Security Council, we addressed to them ask number three, namely, unimpeded access to aid for all people in need. That is the daily ask on which we engage with the parties to the conflict in different areas. Whenever we want to access people in need, that is one part of our daily work. However, we do that jointly with other non-governmental organizations, with the United Nations and with all humanitarian agencies. And we also do it bilaterally for our specific projects and activities.

As to the rest of the asks — including discussions of war and peace — being a humanitarian worker and head of an international medical organization, we do not engage in such talks with parties to the conflict. We do not mix politics with aid efforts. However, whenever we have a chance to go out in public and speak about suffering in Yemen and what is needed to stop it, we

do not hesitate to say it. The message is received by all parties, and they keep referring to that.

I hope I have addressed the question. Perhaps my colleague Ms. Almasabi would like to add something.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Almasabi.

Ms. Almasabi: I would like to say two things. First of all, I am grateful to the speaker who said the Council could do more and do better. We are waiting for the Council. What is it going to do for us as people with disabilities? Actually, people with disabilities are waiting for me. Hundreds of messages are coming into my WhatsApp asking what is next for us. I am waiting

for the Council to tell me what is next. In real life, how can it support, assist and help people with disabilities and present their rights, needs and realities in its work and budget? I would like to answer them. I am waiting for the Council. What is it going to do for us?

The President: I thank Ms. Almasabi for her plea for a continuation of humanitarian aid.

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

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.