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Seventy-seventh year

8946th meeting

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New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Juul	(Norway)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Ms. Opong-Ntiri
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary, co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Sheba Youth Foundation for Development and a local mediator in the city of Taiz.

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

Before we begin with our speakers list today — recalling the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507) on its working methods — I wish to encourage all speakers, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and focus on key issues. In that spirit, briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to seven to 10 minutes. Everyone is also encouraged to wear a mask at all times, including while delivering remarks.

I now give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: Let me first welcome the newly elected members of the Security Council. I look forward to close cooperation with them, as with all other members of the Council.

The year 2022 is starting on a challenging note. The military escalation I described here in the Council last month (see S/PV.8929) has accelerated as the parties double-down on military options. Seven years down the road of war, the prevailing belief of all warring sides seems to be that inflicting sufficient harm on the other will force them into submission. However, there is no sustainable long-term solution to be found on the

battlefield. I will therefore continue to stress that the warring parties can, should and, indeed, must talk, even if they are not ready to put down their arms.

Before I turn to my core task of finding a way for political talks to sustainably end the conflict, I am compelled to highlight some of the military escalations in recent weeks, which have been among the worst we have seen in Yemen for years and which are taking an increasing toll on civilian lives.

Ansar Allah remains determined to continue its assault of Ma'rib, and there is renewed fighting in Shabwah, where three districts have been captured from Ansar Allah. We have seen an increase in air strikes, not only around front lines but also in Sana'a, including in residential areas. Air strikes and shelling in Taiz have increased, and fighting continues in southern Al-Hudaydah. Similarly, attacks on Saudi Arabia have also increased. All those events have led to civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

Beyond my repeated calls for de-escalation and restraint, I also reiterate my appeal to the warring parties to respect and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, which include the protection of civilians and protected objects. I also call on all sides to preserve the civilian character of public infrastructure.

We appear to once more be entering an escalatory cycle, with predictable devastating implications for civilians and for the immediate prospects of peace. I am worried that battles could intensify along other fronts. The recent seizure by Ansar Allah of an Emirati-flagged ship is another matter of concern. In addition, I regret to express yet again my concern over the continued detention of United Nations staff members in Sana'a and Ma'rib. The United Nations should have immediate access to those staff members and be provided with official information pertaining to the arrests.

As the tempo of the war increases, the already severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and within the country could worsen. The accusations of a militarization of the ports of Al-Hudaydah are worrisome, and the threats of attacking them are equally disturbing, given that those ports are a lifeline for many Yemenis. The United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) is closely monitoring the situation in the ports and has requested, as part of its mandate, to undertake an inspection. Following the withdrawal of the joint forces on 12 November,

the Mission continues to engage the parties and other interlocutors on the way forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Major General Michael Beary as the new Head of UNMHA. His appointment offers an opportunity to build on those efforts, to address the parties' concerns and to advance the Hodeidah Agreement in this shifted context.

Let me reiterate that restrictions on the movement of goods and people are a challenge throughout Yemen. The continued imposition of road closures and checkpoints across the country, as well as the impediments to imports and the domestic distribution of goods essential for civilians, including fuel, is harming the population in unjustifiable ways. In that regard, I am concerned that the last fuel ship clearance was issued on 20 November 2021. As always, it will be Yemeni civilians who will be most affected by fuel shortages.

I am glad that Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary is briefing the Council today. As I previously reported to the Council, I was in Ms. Al-Aghbary home city of Taiz in November. There I experienced first-hand the severe impact of road closures and checkpoints on the population. Similarly, the fact that the closure of Sana'a airport has prevented Yemenis in the north from travelling, including to seek life-saving medical care abroad for almost six years, is unsustainable.

As Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham will elaborate on, the multilayered challenges surrounding the operations of Sana'a airport also have critical implications for United Nations operations. Yemeni, regional and international leaders all have a responsibility to address those matters for the sake of the entire Yemeni population. They have suffered enough from those restrictions.

One part of the population that suffers particularly from such restrictions are Yemeni women. Moreover, despite their tireless efforts, women broadly continue to be excluded from decision-making in war and peace. My Office will continue to convene consultations with women leaders from political parties, civil society and the private sector. Those diverse women are all actively involved in sustaining and improving life in Yemen in different ways, from supporting their families and communities to working for peace or providing valuable services and goods. Unfortunately, many are harassed and targeted for their work, and I therefore

urge all actors to respect the rights and work of women peace actors and women human rights defenders. I welcome the focus of the Council's presidency on the crucial women and peace and security agenda, but we all need to do more.

While developments on the ground pose significant challenges to peace efforts, my work continues along the path that I have set out before in the Council. I have explored tangible ways to address the parties' stated priorities and to unlock a nationwide ceasefire to end the fighting. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the efforts have faced the same obstacles that hindered similar efforts in the past, that is, the parties' disagreements over sequencing, competing priorities and a lack of trust.

I remain convinced that part of the challenge is that the parties' preconditions are linked to broader political and governance questions. As such, a comprehensive political solution is necessary to achieve sustainable results. That will require difficult discussions with and among the warring parties and those who have been left out during the war. I will nevertheless continue to explore options for fast-tracking de-escalation, if and when the parties are ready to pursue those options.

I have been focusing on developing a comprehensive, inclusive multitrack approach that covers political security and economic issues. The framework will be aimed at facilitating incremental progress in those different areas in parallel. The overall process will be geared towards reaching a durable political settlement. In the coming period, I plan to deepen consultations, both with the conflict parties and with a wider range of Yemeni stakeholders, to identify and develop the short-, medium- and long-term priorities that need to be addressed in each of the three areas. As the country is increasingly politically, economically and militarily fractured, Yemenis must be supported in reversing the trajectory through a serious, sustained and structured process backed by the international community.

We have been far too long without a political process that can produce options for improving immediate conditions and that can prepare the ground for a realistic and durable settlement. Consultations with me and my Office are a start, but they will not be enough to settle the conflict. Eventually, Yemenis of opposing views will need to meet to discuss solutions and determine their shared future.

I am keenly aware of the political and military context in which my Office is attempting to initiate a political process. Yemen's war, like many others, is littered with missed opportunities driven in part by combatants oscillating between feeling too weak to accept or too strong to settle for compromise. Genuine political will, responsible leadership and adherence to the interests of the entire population are needed to sustainably put Yemen on a different trajectory. In addition, I am convinced that, in order to have a chance of breaking the cycle, we need to establish an inclusive, internationally backed political process that can provide a viable foundation for peace.

As I convene and consult with Yemenis on the way forward, clear and consistent support from the Council, Member States and, especially, regional States will continue to be vital.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Rajasingham.

Mr. Rajasingham: I had hoped to deliver some good news at the start of the new year. Unfortunately, recent developments do not give us, or the people of Yemen, much cause for optimism.

Today I want to focus on three main points: first, the civilian toll of the crisis, especially on women and girls; secondly, the constraints limiting the humanitarian operation; and, thirdly, how we can deliver a more effective and inclusive response, including by strengthening the economy to reduce people's needs.

Let us start with the impact of the crisis on civilians. Since our previous briefing (see S/PV.8929), fierce fighting has continued along dozens of front lines. Clashes in Al-Jawf, Ma'rib and Shabwah displaced more than 15,000 people over the past month. Hostilities have also resurged in Al-Bayda, while air strikes have escalated in Sana'a and other parts of the country. Civilian casualties continue to be reported at alarming rates. In December 2021, 358 civilians were reportedly killed or injured as a direct result of hostilities — a statistic that is tied for the highest in three years. I once again urge all parties to take constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects, as required by international humanitarian law.

As we have reported many times, the war is also causing hunger, displacement, economic collapse and the deterioration of basic services. As in many crises,

women and girls are bearing the brunt. Even before the conflict, Yemen consistently ranked at or near the bottom of global gender equality indices, but the war has made the situation far worse for women and girls. That manifests itself in myriad ways, including restrictions on basic rights, such as the freedom of movement, reduced access to education and higher rates of illiteracy and poverty.

Access to health care is more limited owing, in part, to a lack of female health-care workers in conflict areas and long distances to health facilities. Access to reproductive health care is particularly precarious, with one woman dying every two hours during childbirth from almost entirely preventable causes. Risks of exposure to sexual and gender-based violence have also increased, with some groups particularly vulnerable, including those who are displaced, impoverished, have disabilities or are part of the Muhamasheen community.

As people struggle to survive, the humanitarian community is doing everything it can to help. In 2021, aid agencies assisted more than 11 million people every month, but that work is being continuously hampered for entirely avoidable reasons.

That brings me to my second point. The humanitarian response in Yemen faces far too many constraints. The biggest constraint right now is funding. Last year's response plan was 58 per cent funded, making it the lowest-funded appeal for Yemen since 2015. In December 2021, the World Food Programme announced cuts in food assistance for 8 million people, owing to funding shortages. Other vital programmes, including water, protection and reproductive health services, have also been forced to scale back or close in recent weeks for lack of funds.

We expect this year's aid operation to need roughly as much money as last year — about \$3.9 billion — to help 16 million people. Nationwide assessments are under way now to provide evidence for the 2022 response plan. I call on all donors to sustain and, if possible, increase their support this year.

But funding is far from the only constraint. Humanitarian access and security also remain challenges. Bureaucratic impediments persist and include significant delays in approving aid projects, issuing staff visas and facilitating movement. Importing necessary equipment is also harder than it should be.

Attempts at interference are also rife — mostly by local authorities in Ansar Allah areas — and include efforts to change beneficiary lists, determine geographic locations or influence the selection of partners. Many of those constraints can disproportionately affect women and girls. Protection programmes, for example, face especially difficult challenges. Female humanitarian workers also face restrictions that limit their movement and impact their participation in the response. Security challenges have also persisted.

Despite assurances to the contrary, Ansar Allah authorities have not provided access to the two United Nations staff detained in Sana'a in November. Access to a third detained United Nations worker who was arrested in Ma'rib in December is currently being arranged with Government officials. We will keep the Council informed as those situations develop, and we renew our call for full respect for United Nations privileges and immunities.

I also want to reiterate the central importance of safe, predictable passage into and out of Yemen, both for humanitarian workers and supplies, as well as for commercial imports that Yemenis need to survive. On 19 December, Ansar Allah authorities suspended humanitarian flights through Sana'a airport, citing technical issues with airport communications equipment. Flights resumed on 27 December. Those kinds of disruptions risk undermining the aid operation and staff safety. I call on Ansar Allah authorities to avoid unilateral flight cancellations in the future. I also request the Government to authorize the import of equipment to repair the faulty communications infrastructure at Sana'a airport.

On a related note, I wish to recall that the continued functioning of all points of entry for humanitarian cargo and commercial imports, including Al-Hudaydah port, remains crucial to prevent further suffering and a worsening of humanitarian needs.

Regarding the *FSO SAFER* tanker, I wish to note that the United Nations continues to engage all stakeholders to find a pragmatic, workable solution. Everyone is aware of the grave danger posed by the tanker, and we appreciate the recent constructive engagement of the parties, Member States and other stakeholders on that important issue.

My last point focuses on what we can do, beyond increasing funding and improving access, to strengthen the aid operation and reduce people's suffering.

Improving the way aid agencies work is one place to start. An inter-agency evaluation of the humanitarian response in Yemen is now under way. The evaluation is an important opportunity, and initial findings are being integrated into the 2022 response plan. Final results should be available in March.

One area where we are already seeking to improve is in creating a more inclusive response. That means, among other things, a more enabling environment for women and girls, promoting gender parity among our staff and supporting more investments in gender-sensitive programming. It also means amplifying women's voices at all levels. Today's meeting is a good example of that approach, so I am very pleased to be briefing alongside Ms. Al-Aghbary.

But humanitarian aid — no matter how effective or inclusive — cannot solve the crisis in Yemen by itself. As I have said before, economic collapse, accelerated by the conflict, is the biggest driver of people's needs. The United Nations economic framework lays out a way to strengthen the economy and deliver lasting improvements to people's lives right now. That requires a mix of financial and political commitments that, together, could quickly reduce the scale of humanitarian needs.

Those commitments include resuming foreign-exchange injections through the Central Bank. Foreign-exchange injections worked in the past and are especially urgent now to protect a recent and fragile partial recovery in the Yemeni rial exchange rate. As members know, the exchange rate is key to people's ability to afford food and other essential goods, nearly all of which must be imported.

Those commitments also include policy decisions to lift import restrictions and use import revenues to pay for basic services delivered by public institutions. That, too, will help bring down prices and improve people's lives. We must also do more to strengthen livelihoods, skills development and financial services. Ensuring access for women to those kinds of programmes is especially important to boost household incomes, improve food security and reduce needs.

But the most transformative change will come only with an end to the fighting that is supported by a lasting and just peace agreement. That is what Yemenis want above all else, and I strongly support everything the Special Envoy is doing to help them achieve that.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Al-Aghbary.

Ms. Al-Aghbary (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by thanking the Norwegian presidency of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to deliver this briefing on behalf of the Sheba Youth Foundation for Development — a local youth-led foundation where I work with many young people and women to restore peace and security to my country, Yemen, which has been devastated by war for over seven years.

My name is Ola Al-Aghbary, and I am a young woman from Yemen. Like thousands of Yemeni young people and women on the ground, my life is threatened by missiles and air strikes. Nevertheless, we remain determined to persevere in our daily work to promote community coexistence and establish security and peace in Yemen. I am here to brief the Council on behalf of the women and young people who are working in favour of Yemen's peacebuilding process, about the situation in my city, Taiz. Our mediation efforts there have made a real difference to the lives of local citizens, whose suffering only worsens as they remain without any support.

Our Foundation believes in the role of young people and women in resolving community conflicts. Because local authorities are in a weak situation due to the war, we have established community councils to solve daily disputes among the population. Those councils, in which young people are participants, became important in resolving disputes and ease tensions.

The role of young people is not limited to local action, but also extends to the national level. Young people participate in peace negotiations among various armed parties. That is why we have recently created, in cooperation with a large number of youth organizations, the first youth support group that attempts to raise young voices at the national level and exert pressure to establish youth consultative council, which is in contact with the office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. The aim is to ensure the participation of young people in the peace negotiations as we believe that peace negotiations must not be limited to armed warring parties but must include unarmed groups such as young people, women and civil society.

If the daily work carried out by women and young people on the ground were to cease, then the problems

we face would be exacerbated, and we would lose even more friends and loved ones to the war. Our efforts do not enjoy the attention of the media, which is interested only in the war and the destruction it causes. Nonetheless, our efforts prove that young people, women and civil society in Yemen are capable of contributing to the peacebuilding process. In that connection, we need the support of the Council and the international community so that our efforts will be more effective and in the right direction with a view to implement Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1325 (2000) and resolution 2250 (2015).

I am from the city of Taiz. I travelled 120 kilometres south, a trip that took eight hours, so that I could brief the Council today. It would have taken far less time had the main roadways not been closed. I was forced to take narrow mountain routes and passes that are dangerous and often blocked due to accidents involving vehicles and trucks or due to floods and landslides during the rainy season. Such road accidents usually leave behind civilian casualties.

Another road to the east of the city, which used to take 10 minutes and was used by many residents of Taiz before the war, is now blocked. We must undertake a trip of at least six hours to go from one side of city to the other. The alternative roads are truly perilous, but must be taken by trade caravans, humanitarian workers, travellers, patients seeking care, students, workers and all those who live on one side of the city in order to get to the other side. This casts an even darker shadow to an already bleak existence.

Taiz has become a place that lacks those who have medical expertise, those with big capital, even local and international organizations, which relocated to Sana'a and Aden, leaving this city to die for the past seven years.

Taiz still faces roadblocks with no services. This is the worst phase that we have experienced, and yet more than 3 million people suffer on a daily basis. Taiz is not in the spotlight. Politicians ignore it, as does the world's conscience, although the Security Council adopted memorandum of understanding on Taiz through Stockholm Agreement, pursuant to resolution 2451 (2018).

Women, young people and civil society in Taiz are sparing no efforts to reopen the main roads. Since 2015, we have launched numerous campaigns for their reopening, but none has been successful. Women and

children continue to live for a seventh year in a besieged and uninhabitable city.

With regard to basic services, in particular the supply of water, we as local mediators, with the assistance of various local stakeholders, have reclaimed a number of wells that had been under military control. We have therefore now enabled inhabitants to supply themselves with water, which had been interrupted for seven years. We are continuing those mediation efforts, and other parties have responded to our call. That cooperation must continue to find solutions to ensure water supply to our citizens. If successful, it will be one of the most important successes by civil society since the beginning of war.

Once again, as a young person working on the ground, I am grateful to the Security Council for this invitation. I reiterate to the Council that we will not stop making efforts to achieve our objectives. In that context, I would like to share with the Council and international actors a number of recommendations.

First, it is important to ensure the active participation of youth, women and civil society, by helping to establish a consultative council for youth to cooperate and coordinate with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

Secondly, there must be greater support for civil society organizations led by young people and women by letting them participate effectively in the peacebuilding process.

Thirdly, there should be a focus on young women — a category that does not appear clearly or tangibly in the various classifications and categories of people receiving international support at the moment.

Fourthly, support must be provided for the holding of meetings by the committee on the memorandum of understanding on Taiz.

Fifthly, a focal point between the various local mediators and the Office of the Special Envoy must be created.

Finally, I hope that Taiz and its humanitarian and political dimensions will be on the international agenda in the future, because it can help to resolve the crisis in Yemen. I also emphasize the importance of supporting our role as young people, women and civil society in the process of achieving security and stability in Yemen.

The President: I thank Ms. Al-Aghbary for her briefing.

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Allow me to start by thanking Mr. Hans Grundberg and Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham for their briefings. In addition, I would like to thank Mr. Grundberg for his visit to London earlier this week. We reiterate our full support for his efforts towards a sustainable, long-term solution to the conflict, with short-term and medium-term priorities along the way. We share his realism about the challenge ahead and see great value in his inclusive approach, which engages with a broad range of Yemenis. And we wholeheartedly agree with both him and Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary about the importance and value of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and peacebuilding.

But as they have depicted in their briefings today, in the past few weeks the conflict has escalated, particularly around Ma'rib, Shabwah, Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a. Houthi drone attacks have also increased. And as Mr. Rajasingham notes, the consequence is that December saw a significant uptick in civilian casualties.

At a time when de-escalation is critical, therefore, the United Kingdom would like to extend its welcome to Major General Michael Beary, who takes on the leadership of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). We look to his vast experience and leadership at this critical time.

As Mr. Rajasingham highlighted, the conflict continues to drive deterioration in the humanitarian situation. The World Food Programme has issued a new warning of worsening food insecurity, and Ms. Al-Aghbary's comments about her drive to get to the briefing point today underline that. In that context, aid workers must be able to operate without the threat of detention, and access must be granted for humanitarian flights to Sana'a airport. The international community must do all it can to prevent needless suffering and death.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation, as Mr. Grundberg said and Ms. Al-Aghbary underlined, has a disproportionate impact on women. All parties to the conflict and the international community must work towards a long-term solution that supports equality between women and men. In the immediate term,

there is an urgent need to protect women from gender-based violence and tackle insufficient protections in many camps. Women will never be safe unless there is adequate provision of sex-separated facilities for women, including toilets. And peace will not be sustainable without the full inclusion of women.

Finally, the Houthi seizure earlier this month of an Emirati-flagged vessel brings about worrisome escalation at a time when ordinary Yemenis desperately need the parties to focus on the path to peace. The United Kingdom calls on all parties to resolve the issue quickly and for passage rights and freedom of navigation at sea to be respected.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Grundberg, Mr. Rajasingham and Ms. Al-Aghbary for their briefings. France fully shares their concerns.

The deteriorating situation on the ground poses a risk of regional destabilization. Yemen continues to be ravaged by war. The parties to the conflict are clashing on several fronts, and each side is convinced that it can defeat its opponent. But we all know that the military option is a dead end. We call once again for a nationwide ceasefire without delay. The discussions within the Redeployment Coordination Committee, provided for in the Stockholm Agreement, must also be resumed. I welcome the appointment of Major General Beary.

Tensions on the ground are fuelling instability in Yemen and in the region. I am thinking of the Houthi attacks on Saudi territory and the capture by the Houthis of an Emirati ship off the west coast of Yemen. This interception is worrying, and we condemn it. France calls on all parties involved to reach a solution that will allow the release of the vessel and its crew and recalls its commitment to freedom of navigation, as well as to regional security and stability.

The Yemeni population continues to pay a high price for this conflict. The number of civilian casualties last month was one of the highest in recent years. The protection of civilians is an obligation for all parties. Humanitarian needs continue to grow. The risk of famine is increasing. It is therefore essential to allow United Nations and humanitarian personnel to move around without fear of being targeted or arrested.

In this regard, we strongly condemn the arbitrary arrest of three United Nations personnel. We call for their immediate and unconditional release. It is essential

to remove all bureaucratic obstacles and speed up the issuance of visas for United Nations and humanitarian personnel so that the delivery of aid can be carried out.

At a time when the economic situation is the subject of growing concern, we welcome the Government's recent decisions to take over the Central Bank for the benefit of the population.

France supports the efforts of the Special Envoy to relaunch the political process. It calls on all stakeholders to engage constructively and without delay. The international parameters, including the resolutions adopted by this Council, are well known. It is also essential that women be involved in the decision-making process concerning the future of their country.

Finally, the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker continues to be an environmental time bomb. It is crucial that the Houthis stop their blackmailing and authorize immediate access to the vessel without preconditions. France and its partners remain committed to the Special Envoy and will continue to support his efforts to end this conflict.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, for their valuable briefings. We also thank the civil society representative, Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary, for highlighting critical issues.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate my country's support for all efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive political solution in Yemen under the auspices of the United Nations that can bring an end to the Yemeni crisis, meet the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people and achieve security and stability in Yemen and the region. Accordingly, I would like to focus today on four points.

First, achieving progress towards ending the Yemeni crisis will not be possible until Houthi militias cease their hostilities and repeated violations against the Yemeni people. The Houthis must understand that the only solution is a political one agreed upon by the Yemeni people and free from any regional hegemonic aspirations.

We therefore condemn the Houthi militias' continued escalation and repeated attempts to capture Yemeni territory by force, as well as their continued disregard for the calls made by the Security Council and civil society to stop their attacks on the Ma'rib

governorate. We call on them to stop their escalation and end their siege on the governorate.

The Houthis also continue to violate the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah governorate on a daily basis and hinder the movements of the staff of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). We also take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Major General Michael Beary as head of UNMHA and acknowledge the efforts of his predecessor, Lieutenant General Guha.

We took note of the statement issued by UNMHA yesterday, which expressed great concern over reports of the militarization of Al-Hodeidah ports. We welcome the Mission's request to undertake an inspection, and we call on the Houthis to respond to this request immediately and without conditions, in accordance with the Stockholm Agreement.

The Houthis have repeatedly used explosives-laden speedboats and sea mines to threaten the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab strait. In this context, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the Houthi act of piracy against the civilian cargo vessel *RWABEE* off the port of Al-Hudaydah. This is a dangerous escalation against the safety of international navigation in the Red Sea. It requires the adoption of a firm position by the Security Council. We thank all countries that have issued statements condemning this act of piracy.

Secondly, my country expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of the attempt by the Iranian-backed Houthi militias to target the territory of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by using drones and ballistic missiles, in flagrant violation of international law. Furthermore, the transfer and supply of these weapons to the Houthis, as well as the provision of training to them, constitute a clear and repeated violation of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 2216 (2015). Accordingly, my country reiterates its solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against every threat to its security and stability, as it is also a threat to the security and stability of the region. We support the measures taken by the Kingdom to preserve its security and protect the safety of its residents.

Thirdly, we stress the importance for Yemenis to reach consensus and come together in line with the Riyadh agreement. They must also prioritize the best national interests of their country and make tangible progress in political process in line with the aspirations

of the Yemeni people. We also urge all parties to practically work to ensure the meaningful and active participation of women in United Nations-facilitated political processes and in any future dialogues.

We believe that there is still a window of opportunity to end the crisis, thanks to such genuine initiatives as the peace initiative put forward by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the proposals on which Special Envoy Grundberg is currently working. In this regard, we stress the need to implement both the Riyadh agreement and the Hodeidah Agreement.

Fourthly, international efforts need to be intensified to respond to the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people in the light of the worsening humanitarian situation. The Yemeni people, especially women and children, are suffering greatly. More than 24 million Yemenis need relief aid because of the deterioration of the economy. For its part, since 2015, the United Arab Emirates has provided Yemen with humanitarian and development aid exceeding \$6 billion. Moreover, my country has also been one of the largest international contributors to supporting Yemen in its fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic.

We welcome the recent efforts of the Yemeni Government to improve the economy, and we look forward to solutions that contribute to its revival. On the other hand, we express our deep concern with regard to the failure to find a solution for the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker issue, owing to the Houthis' continued obstruction of any maintenance work. We call for the United Nations technical team to be expeditiously granted access to the tanker in order to prevent an environmental disaster.

In conclusion, we hope that the Security Council will find unity to send a clear message to the Houthis and those who support them: they must end their destabilizing terrorist acts in the region and engage seriously and positively in the political track. That is the only way out of the crisis in Yemen.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): At the outset, let me thank our briefers.

Today I would like to discuss three broad topics: the worrisome increase in hostilities, the clear pattern of Houthi escalation and obstruction and the concerning humanitarian fuel and *FSO SAFER* oil tanker situation.

First, the United States remains alarmed by the continued military escalation in Yemen, particularly in Sana'a, Ma'rib and the Red Sea, as described by

our briefers. This increase in hostilities threatens the prospect for a peaceful and inclusive political solution and exacerbates the already dire humanitarian situation. This escalation demonstrates the serious need for an inclusive peace process — one that integrates the voices of women, marginalized groups and diverse civil society leaders such as Ms. Al-Aghbary, who we heard speak so powerfully today. To that end, we are encouraged by Special Envoy Grundberg's efforts to develop a framework for an inclusive peace process to help end this conflict. We look forward to hearing more about his proposal as soon as it is finalized. All parties must engage with the Special Envoy and with each other in good faith and without preconditions in order to advance an inclusive political solution. The members of the Security Council should encourage such a constructive working relationship between the Special Envoy and the parties to the conflict. While we encourage peace, we must not be afraid to call out actions that obstruct it.

Secondly, we condemn the Houthi escalation in violence, which undermines the cause of peace. Despite Council condemnation, the Houthis continue to detain and harass the United States Yemeni local staff as well as United Nations staff. They also control our former Embassy compound. The Houthis must immediately release all of our Yemeni employees unharmed, vacate the former United States Embassy compound, return seized United States property and cease their threats against our employees and their families. We similarly condemn the Houthi seizure of an Emirati-flagged merchant vessel last week, and we call on the Houthis to immediately release the ship and crew unharmed.

Another part of this pattern is the ongoing Houthi military offensive in Ma'rib, which has led to thousands of additional internally displaced people, now living in precarious conditions. This offensive is fuelled by the illegal flow of weapons to the Houthis. Just last month, the United States Navy seized upwards of 1,408 rifles and 226,000 rounds of ammunition from a vessel originating from Iran. That ship was on a route historically used to illegally smuggle weapons to the Houthis. The smuggling of arms from Iran to the Houthis represents a flagrant violation of the Organization's targeted arms embargo and is yet another example of how Iran's destabilizing activities are prolonging the war in Yemen. The Houthis' pattern is punctuated by their continued engagement in violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary detentions and

obstructions, as well as targeted killings, including of female politicians and professionals. That is unconscionable. We unequivocally condemn all human rights abuses and violations by all parties. We remain strongly committed to promoting accountability for human rights violations and abuses in Yemen.

Finally, we remain concerned about the humanitarian situation, the fuel situation and the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. The United States is relieved that United Nations humanitarian flights have resumed at Sana'a airport after a week-long closure in December, prompted by Houthi claims of communications equipment failure. But we are concerned about Houthi threats to obstruct future flights, despite United Nations inspections deeming the airport equipment operational. We call on all parties to facilitate the free flow of humanitarian assistance and remove unnecessary administrative requirements that impede humanitarian operations, and we call for the release of detained United Nations personnel in both Sana'a and Ma'rib. There are now six fuel ships awaiting Yemeni Government clearance. Simultaneously, the Houthis continue to stockpile and manipulate the price of fuel, keeping it out of the reach of Yemenis in need of it. All parties must focus on reaching a durable solution for regularizing fuel imports that ensures Yemenis can access essential goods and services.

Disappointingly, the issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker remains an economic, environmental and humanitarian time bomb, threatening not only the Yemeni people but also fragile ecosystems and global supply chains. The Houthis are responsible for this unacceptable impasse. We call on them to help ensure a safe, viable and prompt solution.

This year has the potential to bring progress for peace in Yemen. We must reverse the current trajectory, end the violence and help facilitate the kind of intra-Yemeni dialogue that will resolve this conflict once and for all.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Hans Grundberg and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for their very informative briefings. I also wish to thank Ms. Al-Aghbary for her insightful contribution to our discussion. I also take this opportunity to welcome to the Security Council our colleague Ambassador Al-Saadi.

The briefings today have once more revealed the scale of the Yemeni tragedy and the daily threats to Yemenis' lives, livelihoods and dignity. While urgent action is needed on a number of issues, from de-escalation to economic and humanitarian support, those measures will not be sustainable without a countrywide ceasefire and, ultimately, a comprehensive and inclusive political solution.

Let me reiterate Brazil's full support to Special Envoy Grundberg in the pursuit of that goal. We are encouraged by his efforts to reach out to Yemenis from different regions and diverse social groups, including journalists, youth and women in particular. Brazil also appreciates the renewed emphasis on the economic aspects of the crisis. We have taken note of his outline for a Yemeni-owned political process that would seek to avoid preconditions and to promote progress on different tracks and look forward to seeing it in further detail.

Today we are witnessing a worrisome trend towards escalation and instability. The months-long Houthi offensive in Ma'rib and adjoining governorates has had disastrous humanitarian consequences, especially for internally displaced persons, a situation that may be further aggravated in the near future. In Al-Hudaydah, November's sudden repositioning of forces was conducted without coordination with the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, thus undermining the Stockholm Agreement. The seizure by the Houthis of an Emirati-flagged vessel last week is also deeply concerning and risks further escalating the conflict. Brazil calls on the parties to exercise restraint and to take measures to defuse tensions, including the release of the vessel and its crew. That is yet another example of the threats posed by the war to maritime transportation in the region, which include the deployment of sea mines, the use of water-borne improvised explosive devices and the ongoing issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which could cause vast environmental devastation.

Our briefers addressed the increasingly dire economic situation in Yemen. Ongoing economic warfare between the parties has generated massive inflation, increased humanitarian needs and established increasingly divergent economic zones within the country. Immediate measures that could alleviate the crisis include the lifting of restrictions on the imports of essential goods and foreign exchange injections through the Central Bank.

Brazil commends the Norwegian presidency's focus on women and peace and security and would like to highlight the importance of mechanisms capable of amplifying women's voices, such as the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group, represented here today by Ms. Al-Aghbary. Without their participation, there will be no lasting peace. That is yet another reason that systematic and violent repression by Houthi authorities of politically and professionally active women is unacceptable and must be halted immediately.

Brazil is also concerned about the issue of children and armed conflict in Yemen, especially with the increase in the use of child soldiers by Houthis and other actors.

As underlined by Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham, the humanitarian situation continues deteriorating despite the best efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and others. Reports by the World Food Programme (WFP) recently being forced to reduce rations are a distressing illustration of the growing funding gap. Brazil has sought to do its part, including by making donations to the WFP at pledging events in March and September 2021. We hope that donor countries from all regions can come together to meet the basic humanitarian needs of Yemenis in 2022.

Finally, it is also imperative that all parties guarantee full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Movement restrictions, attempts to interfere with beneficiary lists, visa denials and constraints on female humanitarian workers have been costly and harmful, especially in Houthi-controlled areas. Lifting the restrictions on Yemeni Red Sea ports and the Sana'a airport would also be crucial steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, especially with regard to food insecurity.

Ms. Opong-Ntiri (Ghana): I wish to begin my remarks by welcoming the particular focus of today's briefing on the women and peace and security agenda in Yemen and by thanking the Special Envoy and the Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for sharing with the Security Council their efforts in bringing the voices of Yemeni women to the peacemaking process. Similarly, I thank Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary for her briefing. I would also like to welcome the representative of Yemen to this briefing of the Security Council.

As this is the first time our delegation speaks on this agenda item, let me affirm Ghana's commitment to supporting a comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable peace process that would end the war in Yemen, foster economic stabilization and reform and alleviate the grave humanitarian crisis faced by some 21 million Yemenis.

Against that background, I wish to emphasize the following points in my statement.

First, Ghana joins the international consensus that military options will not end the war in Yemen and calls for an immediate nationwide ceasefire. The military escalations witnessed in Ma'rib governorate and across several front lines since September 2021 have only succeeded in deepening the fault lines and left in their wake increased civilian casualties and the displacement of more than 35,000 people. We condemn all hostilities against civilians and civilian infrastructure and impress upon the conflicting parties their obligation to abide by international humanitarian law, including on the protection of women and children.

Secondly, the resumption of a comprehensive and inclusive political process that would forge a consensus of diverse interests and political leanings is both urgent and necessary for a sustainable peace process in Yemen. In that regard and in the light of resolution 1325 (2000), let me affirm Ghana's support for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of the political and decision-making processes. The contribution of women to lasting peace is one that is well-established in the Council. Moreover, the women of Yemen have an equal right in determining how the conflict should be resolved. We recall the involvement of women in the 2013 National Dialogue Conference and advocate for structures that would facilitate an inclusive and gender-responsive political process.

Thirdly, gender mainstreaming in humanitarian responses must be prioritized. The women of Yemen must be empowered as actors in the peace process and nation-building, rather than remain a predominantly humanitarian dividend. Greater funding and support are needed to secure the delivery of maternal and reproductive health-care services, keep adolescent girls in school and out of marriage and provide protection from sexual and gender-based violence.

Fourthly, we are pleased to note, and express our support for, the measures being undertaken to curb the economic decline and improve the delivery of

essential services to the people. The opening of the Sana'a airport and the port of Al-Hudaydah to enable the increased entry of fuel and commodities should be pursued as part of economic stabilization measures. Furthermore, immediate and unconditional access must be negotiated for the assessment and repair of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker to avert a looming environmental and humanitarian catastrophe.

In conclusion, I call on the international community and regional actors to support all tracks of the peace process and, at this stage, to foster dialogue and consensus-building among the parties.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham and Ms. Al-Aghbary for their briefings.

We have once again heard about the grave humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Far from ending, the violence is increasing, especially in Ma'rib, Shabwah, Taiz and Al-Hudaydah. The civilian population, particularly women and girls, are paying the highest price.

We condemn the continued violations of international humanitarian law. We note with concern the harassment of workers and the persistent difficulties faced by humanitarian operations. In that regard, we demand the release of the three detained United Nations workers in Sana'a and Ma'rib. We also condemn the disruption of humanitarian flights from Sana'a airport and obstacles to port operations. We simply find no justification for those acts and emphasize that it is imperative that all parties facilitate humanitarian work.

Mexico condemns the detention of the Emirati-flagged vessel *RWABEE* and reiterates that any attack against a civilian vessel violates international law. We call for the immediate release of the vessel and its crew. Regrettably, that is not the first incident of its kind, and we call on all actors in the region to ensure the freedom of navigation in accordance with the law of the sea, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We are deeply concerned about the persistent violations of the arms embargo and demand compliance with obligations under international law. Accordingly, we recall that, in accordance with resolution 2616 (2021), adopted last year, the Security Council encouraged regional cooperation by land, sea and air to detect and

prevent arms embargo violations. It is imperative to prevent additional weapons from reaching Yemen and prolonging the conflict.

Lastly, we welcome the Special Envoy's consultations, particularly the meeting with Yemeni women entrepreneurs in December 2021.

An inclusive political process, led by the Yemenis and supported by the international community, is indeed the road map required for the resolution of the conflict. We reiterate our call on the parties to cooperate constructively with the Special Envoy in his efforts and to observe a nationwide ceasefire.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham and the civil society representative, Ms. Al-Aghbary, for their briefings.

The situation in Yemen has remained turbulent in the recent past and hostilities among the parties to the conflict have escalated, prompting widespread concern in the international community. According to a report released by the United Nations Development Programme, as of the end of 2021 the conflict had killed 377,000 Yemenis, most of them children. An early end to the conflict would mean saving more lives. All parties to the conflict should immediately uphold a ceasefire, put an end to the violence, exercise maximum restraint and refrain from taking any actions that could lead to a complicated escalation of the situation.

In that regard, China takes note of the letters from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia and the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the President of the Security Council, dated 28 December and 9 January, respectively. Saudi Arabia condemned the Houthi attack on a store in Jizan, which resulted in civilian casualties. The United Arab Emirates reported on the hijacking of an Emirati-flagged cargo ship by the Houthis on the high seas, in the Red Sea. China is deeply concerned about those reports and notes that many countries in the region, as well as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, have expressed concern about the ship's hijacking by Houthis.

China supports the Security Council in issuing a statement on those developments and condemning all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. We hope that the relevant issues will be properly resolved as soon as possible, that the ship and its crew will be

released and that maritime safety on the Red Sea and international navigation channels will be maintained.

The Yemeni issue must ultimately be resolved through political means. Special Envoy Grundberg has actively engaged with all parties in Yemen. He has visited several countries in the region and has proposed a comprehensive and inclusive political process, supported and coordinated by the international community. China supports that approach.

As a new year has just begun, the Yemeni people urgently need to gain confidence and hope for the future. We hope that all parties in Yemen will demonstrate good political will, engage with the Special Envoy without conditions, exchange views candidly and reach a realistic and feasible political solution at an early date. In that process, attention must be paid to the views of women, young people and other groups.

The Yemeni issue concerns peace and stability in the Gulf region, while the situation in the region also affects the situation in Yemen. China calls on the countries of the region to play an active role in promoting peace talks on the Yemeni issue, as doing so serves the common interests of all parties.

Yemen's humanitarian needs continue to increase, with 15.6 million Yemeni people having fallen into extreme poverty. It is imperative to act urgently to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and improve the country's economy. China supports the United Nations in advancing its economic framework for Yemen and implementing short-, medium- and long-term relief measures in phases.

The international community should continue to provide financial and material assistance to Yemen and maintain the United Nations humanitarian relief programme in the country. All parties in Yemen should abide by international humanitarian law, ensure humanitarian access and protect civilians, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children. We support the Yemeni Government in taking active measures on the economy and livelihoods, regulating the oil and fuel market and strengthening the management of public finance.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to start by thanking our briefers for their contributions today. It is always good to see and hear from Special Envoy Grundberg, whom I thank for his update. I have to say that Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham's

message was deeply worrisome. We needed to hear it, but it is very discouraging and concerning.

I wanted to give a special thanks to Ms. Al-Aghbary, who joined us this morning, for her impactful words. Her clear message to us and her daily courage, as illustrated in her remarks, shows exactly why the Council needs to not only hear but listen to and heed her words.

I would like to echo the welcome that others have expressed for the appointment of the new Head of the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement and Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, Major General Michael Beary. I have the utmost confidence that, when we meet him next month, we will see him assume his role with decades of deep experience behind him as a distinguished Irish peacekeeper and Force Commander. We look forward to seeing him here with us for the relevant Council discussions.

We are very grateful to the Norwegian presidency for placing such an important theme as women and peace and security at the heart of our discussion today, thereby building on our shared commitment to translate that agenda into action at the Council. I will focus my remarks today on women and peace and security in relation to Yemen.

The persistent exclusion of Yemeni women from the political landscape and peace talks is, in our view, unjustifiable. We believe that it has proven detrimental to the realization of peace of Yemen. The women of Yemen have more than demonstrated the crucial role they can play in fostering peace, including in negotiating local ceasefires and prisoner releases, opening up humanitarian access and mediating conflicts over water and land resources. The women of Yemen can be — and are — critical actors in building peace in their own country. Yet, as Ms. Al-Aghbary pointed out to us this morning, they remain the unsung heroines of the day-to-day struggles on the ground in really challenging circumstances.

Despite all of that, not a single woman was included in any delegation in the five rounds of negotiations on prisoner exchange facilitated by the United Nations over the past years. That is a rather telling observation, to put it mildly. In a dedicated Arria Formula meeting that Ireland and Mexico co-hosted in March last year, which was co-sponsored by 12 Council members and in which 50 delegations non-members of the Council participated, we called on the United Nations to step

up and insist on the participation of women in United Nations-facilitated talks. It is now past time to deliver; in the case of Yemen, the cost of not delivering is clear.

We very much welcome Special Envoy Grundberg's commitment to consult with a diverse range of women's groups. We have heard from women before in this Chamber that consultation should not be a substitute for meaningful participation. Yemeni women peacebuilders have rightly made clear that their vital local contribution must be translated into places at the negotiating table. We strongly encourage the Special Envoy and all parties to work to that end.

That goal will remain elusive as long as significant barriers to women's participation remain entrenched. As we know, civil society plays a crucial role in training women mediators in Yemen, and their efforts need ongoing support. Ireland reiterates that an immediate nationwide ceasefire is urgently needed to protect civilians, particularly those in vulnerable situations, including women and girls and internally displaced persons.

We deplore all incidents of violence in Yemen, including conflict-related sexual violence and violence against politically active women, women peacebuilders, journalists and human rights defenders. We call on parties to commit to ending this violence, lift restrictions on women's safe and unhindered freedom of movement and implement measures to protect women.

Ireland welcomed the designation by the Security Council last February of an individual responsible for the violent repression of women, including through sexual violence and rape. We should stand ready to list additional individuals responsible for such heinous acts. Regrettably, there remains a dearth of accountability, which we fear will be exacerbated by the non-renewal of the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts.

As we heard today in very stark terms from Mr. Rajasingham, the grim reality is that Yemeni women and girls are often the last to eat, the last to see a doctor and the last to get out the door to go to school. The dire humanitarian situation in Yemen not only presents a further obstacle to women's full participation in political and public life but also jeopardizes women's ability to access essential medical care and exercise their fundamental rights as active members of their own communities.

The destruction of the Yemeni public health system and economy, as well as the shifting front lines of conflict, mean that pregnant Yemeni women, mothers and their children are often unable to access life-saving health care when they need it most. I have to say that it was one of the most shocking things to hear today from Mr. Rajasingham — the maternal deaths in childbirth reaching such devastating levels. That is a shameful realization for everyone in this Chamber.

We reiterate our call for the removal of all restrictions on the import of fuel and food and support the United Nations proposals to tackle the economic collapse in Yemen. We also strongly condemn any harassment of humanitarian actors and obstruction of their essential, life-saving work. We call for the immediate release of the three detained United Nations workers.

The women of Yemen, such as Ms. Al-Aghbary, who is with us today, have shown inspiring courage and perseverance in their pursuit of sustainable peace. They deserve the clear commitment of the parties and the solidarity and support of the international community, including the Security Council. Their full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels in the political process — a process that will shape the future of their country — is the minimum they should expect. Such a commitment to inclusion could offer new hope that this might just be the year when the long nightmare of conflict finally ends for the Yemeni people and Yemeni women and young people will find their place in that longed for transformation of their country.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, Acting Under-Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham and Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary, co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Sheba Youth Foundation, for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in this meeting.

Kenya remains deeply concerned over the deteriorating situation in Yemen and its impact on millions of lives, not only in Yemen but also in the surrounding region. The regrettable military escalations are undermining efforts to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict, not to mention the inevitable loss of lives and livelihoods and destruction of civilian infrastructure that they cause. We call on all parties to rethink their military interventions and recognize and perform their obligations under international humanitarian law, noting that the violence has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population, with

disproportionate impacts on women, children and other vulnerable members of the community.

A United Nations Development Programme report indicates that every nine minutes a child under the age of five dies as a result of the conflict. That is unacceptable, and the Security Council must take decisions to ensure that all those involved are held to account.

Given the gravity of the humanitarian situation, we cannot overstate the need for effective, sufficient and sustainable humanitarian operations. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. We note, for instance, that in 2020 and 2021 Yemen's humanitarian response plans were funded at just over 50 per cent, as compared to 2018 and 2019, when approximately 80 per cent of the plans were funded. We call on the Security Council to give deeper consideration to how the United Nations can better mobilize and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid that reaches all those in need in sufficient measure.

As we heard today, women in Yemen are increasingly being subjected to discrimination, forced marriage, sexual violence and torture. Last year the Council sanctioned one individual over his involvement in conflict-related sexual violence. That was a positive step, but more needs to be done for the consolidation of a Yemeni women and peace and security national action plan. The continued exclusion of women from the political and negotiation processes is also a matter of concern. We cannot overemphasize the short-term and long-term value of a truly inclusive Yemeni peacebuilding and peace agreement process, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

Kenya remains concerned over the maritime incidents driven by the increasing manifestation of regional rivalries and brinkmanship in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which represent a threat to regional and global security. More attention needs to be paid to the potential effects that can result from the escalation of threats to commercial traffic, including tankers carrying oil and gas, as well as the impact on peace and humanitarian concerns of the smuggling of weapons and supplies to the terrorist groups that threaten the security and stability of regional countries. The international community can, and should, strengthen joint efforts in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and adjoining water bodies to combat piracy, smuggling, illegal dumping and other threats to stability.

I reiterate our deep concern over the status of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and the significant threat it poses to the livelihoods of millions in the region. We call on the parties to resolve the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker issue as a stand-alone issue without any preconditions at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm Kenya's solidarity with the people of Yemen in their quest for lasting peace, security and prosperity.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Ramesh Rajasingham for their comprehensive reports. We listened attentively to Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary.

The new year did not bring with it prospects for a normalization of the situation in the country for Yemenis. There has been an increase in armed hostilities, in particular in Ma'rib and Shabwah governorates. Those clashes are fierce, and the number of victims has grown. Civilians, including in different Yemeni towns and cities, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons, remain especially vulnerable.

The humanitarian situation has been on the brink of disaster for a long time. That is true throughout the territory of Yemen, both in areas under the Government's control and areas under the control of Ansar Allah. We note the efforts of United Nations humanitarian agencies, especially OCHA, and the progress, albeit modest, made in organizing humanitarian access.

No region of the country can be called stable or safe, including in terms of the availability of food or medical supplies. In this regard, we would remind all parties to the conflict of the need to provide humanitarian access to those in need and remove restrictions on access to food, medicine and other basic necessities in all regions of the country.

Also of serious concern are the ongoing attacks on civilian facilities in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. We call for unswerving compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law and a swift and comprehensive rejection of those hostilities that destroy non-military infrastructure and cause civilian victims.

This depiction of the situation, which Security Council members agree on, confirms the need for the speedy launch of a fully-fledged peace process in

Yemen. A central role in this should be played by the United Nations. We support Hans Grundberg and trust that he will soon come up with specific proposals and a road map for settlement.

For our part, we are convinced that success in a peace initiative will only be achieved if it takes into consideration the opinions of all segments of Yemeni society, from all faiths and political parties and forces in all regions of the country. In this regard, marginalizing people will only push us further away from the aim of establishing peace.

We hope that the Special Envoy will heed this advice and approach the issue in terms of updating the basis for settlement, keeping in mind the need to tweak the approach in the light of the objective realities on the ground. Of course, there is a need for constructive contributions from States of the region. Given the impact of the Yemeni conflict on the region-wide situation, including on the safety of navigation in the light of the recent maritime incident, and given the ongoing mistrust between the leading players, we would recall resolution 598 (1987) and other initiatives, including the Russian concept for collective security, all of which are initiatives aimed at fostering regional stability.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the presence among us of Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy, Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Emergency Relief Coordinator of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary. I also thank them for the excellence of their respective briefings. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Yemen in today's meeting.

Yemen is in the midst of one of the worst crises in the world, a multidimensional crisis, with political, security, economic, and humanitarian components, all of which are interconnected. The briefings we received from the three briefers confirm the extent of the escalating violence and the opacity of the horizon in the search for peace. Peace in Yemen undeniably requires a comprehensive political solution, the prerequisite of which is a ceasefire, followed by an inclusive dialogue in which all the scattered fragments of the country would take part in good faith.

It is clear that the Yemeni people aspire to the restoration of the authority of the State over the whole of the country's territory and to regaining stability and its major role at the heart of the subregion. The reopening of the Sana'a airport on 27 December is an act that

leads in the right direction, in that it will undoubtedly allow for better access for delivery of humanitarian aid.

Speaking of acts, many more are needed to get the Yemeni people out of their vicious cycle of violence. In this regard, there must be more committed action by the international community in order to meet the needs of the civilian population, including the tens of millions of people in distress, particularly children and displaced persons.

Women are paying a particularly heavy price in the crisis ravaging Yemen. They face abuse and violence and multiple violations of their rights. We find the abuse and violence against women unacceptable and call on the international community to show solidarity with Yemeni women.

We condemn the seizure of a United Arab Emirates-flagged vessel in the Red Sea and call for its immediate release and respect for the freedom of navigation. Furthermore, we are concerned about the ongoing situation around the vessel *FSO SAFER* and fear the possible consequences for the environment.

We urge the international community to be more engaged in responding to the humanitarian challenges in Yemen, including through funding that is commensurate with the needs and distress of the people. We note that the 2021 humanitarian response plan was funded at 58 per cent, a shortfall of \$1.6 billion.

In conclusion, we express our support for the approach undertaken by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and call for respect for the protection of humanitarian personnel, while urging the parties to remove all impediments to humanitarian assistance in order to preserve hope for the Yemeni people. Of course, we salute the courage and bravery of all those who, at the risk of their lives and often in very difficult conditions, are engaged in humanitarian operations.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grunberg and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Ramesh Rajasingham for their detailed briefings. I also thank Ms. Ola Al-Aghbary for her briefing. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to today's meeting.

We are extremely concerned by the continued intensification of military operations in Yemen. The fierce clashes in Sana'a, Ma'rib and Shabwah in the last few weeks are jeopardizing the prospects of peace. The seizure and detention of the United Arab Emirates-

flagged vessel *RWABEE* off the coast of Hudaydah earlier this month has further exacerbated the ongoing tensions. We express our grave concern at this act, which has the potential to deeply compromise the maritime security in the region. Seven Indian nationals are among the crew members on board the ship, and we are deeply concerned about their safety and well-being. We urge the Houthis to immediately release the crew members and the vessel. The Houthis also bear the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the crew members until their release.

I call upon all parties to the conflict to immediately cease fighting, de-escalate the situation and engage unconditionally with Special Envoy Hans Grundberg in his efforts to commence discussions towards comprehensively ending the conflict in Yemen.

The conflict continues to have a devastating impact on the people of Yemen, especially on women and children, and extends well beyond the tragic loss of human life. It has pushed millions into poverty, led to hunger and disease, disrupted education, deprived basic health and sanitation and brought about malnutrition among Yemeni children. The dire situation in the country has been further aggravated by the economic decline and the coronavirus disease pandemic. Sustained international donor assistance and concrete short-term and long-term economic measures as identified in the United Nations economic framework for Yemen are therefore necessary to overcome the economic and humanitarian crisis in the country.

The brief suspension of humanitarian flights into and out of Sana'a airport in December is a matter of concern. The operation of these flights is critical, not only for the movement of aid workers and the delivery of humanitarian supplies into Yemen, but also for emergency medical transfers. We call on the parties to the conflict not to impose any impediments or restrictions on the movement of humanitarian aid and humanitarian personnel. We also urge them to maintain the civilian character of Sana'a airport and other critical public infrastructure in Yemen.

We condemn the continued cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia, targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. All parties must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law by ensuring that civilians and civilian infrastructure are not targeted during military operations.

We take note of the developments surrounding the *FSO SAFER*, whose current condition poses a potential environmental, economic, maritime and humanitarian threat. We hope for an early conclusion of the required agreements and arrangements.

Let me conclude by reiterating India's call for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire across Yemen, followed by a robust and inclusive political process, with the involvement of Yemeni women.

Such a process should also fully respect Yemen's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We believe that, with effective Yemeni, regional, international and United Nations leadership, a lasting and inclusive political settlement in Yemen is achievable. We encourage the Special Envoy to continue his engagement with all Yemeni parties and his coordination with the countries of the region to reach a durable solution to the conflict.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank the briefers for their valuable information. We fully support the efforts of Special Envoy Grundberg and are anxious to see concrete and tangible results. War has ravaged Yemen for seven long years, causing massive casualties and destruction, still with no end in sight. Civilians have suffered the most, especially women and children. The economy has collapsed and, as we heard from Mr. Rajasingham, the humanitarian situation is simply disastrous. This must stop. The road to peace in Yemen is not — and cannot be — a bloody, protracted war. Conflict only prolongs pain and suffering, borne mostly by civilians.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of women and girls in Yemen. Women human rights defenders, advocates for gender equality, journalists and other civil society representatives are facing increased threats and risks, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and even targeted killings. This must not be tolerated.

I thank you, Madam President, for placing special focus on women and peace and security in today's meeting, as per our joint commitment. And I thank the Special Envoy for providing due attention to women's inclusion and participation in his work. We encourage him to continue to do so.

What Yemen and the Yemeni people desperately need is an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire. Violence and destruction will lead nowhere. The

Council has the authority and the power to be loud and clear on this. We call on all parties to end hostilities, in line with resolution 2532 (2020), return to negotiations and resume meaningful peace talks with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, youth and civil society.

Albania supports the Special Envoy in his mission to reach out to the different parties in conflict and other stakeholders in order to find a path towards a meaningful and inclusive road map and, as he qualified it, a "a serious, sustained and structured process". His efforts to regularly and transparently consult with civil society, especially women's groups, are highly appreciated, and we are heartened by Ms. Al-Aghbary's words today.

Albania condemns all actions that prevent the Special Envoy from moving this vital political process forward. Detention of United Nations personnel is unacceptable, and we demand their immediate release. We demand the same for the Yemeni citizens who have worked for the United States Embassy in Sana'a. We condemn all restrictions on humanitarian workers and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

We strongly condemn cross-border attacks on civilian infrastructure into Saudi Arabia, which have increased, as the Special Envoy highlighted, and we demand strict observance of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure at all times.

As we speak, an Emirati-flagged civilian cargo vessel, intercepted while in international waters, is being illegally detained by Houthi militias, which is an act of piracy and a total breach of international law and the freedom of navigation. We call for the immediate release of the vessel and its crew.

Albania supports all efforts leading towards national reconciliation, reunification and reconstruction. We believe that, for peace to prevail and be lasting, it must reflect the will and aspirations of all Yemeni people. It requires a democratic setting and institutions that uphold the rule of law and human rights, especially the rights of women and children.

Finally, Albania urges all parties to support a political process that leads to the full realization of all rights for all Yemeni people, without regard for religion, gender or ethnicity. We hope that soon we will create the necessary conditions so that everyone in

Yemen starts thinking about life, rather than continuing to deplore catastrophe.

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

I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Assistant Secretary-General Rajasingham for their briefings.

As President, we designated today's meeting to focus on the women and peace and security agenda and to draw attention to the urgency of strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding as part of our strong commitment. In that regard, I wish to thank my fellow Council members and the briefers for highlighting today that the women and peace and security agenda is a priority in Yemen.

Yemeni women mediate humanitarian access, services and local conflicts every day. And they have made significant contributions to track-two and -three peacemaking efforts. However, seven years of conflict has diminished the space for women. In the global Women, Peace and Security Index, Yemen ranks third-to-last with regard to women's inclusion. Women have a right to participate on issues that are fundamental to their security and the future of Yemen. And we know that inclusive peace processes where women participate in outcomes produce more sustainable solutions. Women's voices, in all their diversity, must be included.

As we heard from the briefers, much work has gone into ensuring an inclusive political dialogue in Yemen, and we commend those efforts. However, ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women, including young women, in all aspects of peace and security needs to be an ongoing priority. In that respect, I also want to sincerely thank Ms. Al-Aghbary for sharing her invaluable insights and recommendations today. Let me highlight four recommendations of our own.

First, we encourage the Government of Yemen to operationalize its strategy on women and peace and security and to meaningfully include women in decision-making and leadership positions.

Secondly, as Ms. Al-Aghbary highlighted, grassroots women's organizations remain fundamental to building peace in Yemen, yet funding for their work is scarce. We encourage the international community to provide more flexible support.

Thirdly, we call for accountability to end the cycle of impunity and for immediate steps to ensure women are safe to speak up and contribute.

Fourthly, we want to encourage the Special Envoy to seek out new opportunities for the direct participation of diverse Yemeni women of all political backgrounds, and from all regions of Yemen, including those from the grassroots. We also emphasize the importance of the Special Envoy continuing efforts to advance women's participation in the peace process.

Turning now to recent events, we are deeply concerned about the recent military escalation by all parties and appreciate Mr. Grundberg's update on the situation. We continue to be alarmed by the continued cross-border attacks. De-escalation of military activities, a nationwide ceasefire and a turn towards a political solution is the only path forward to end the cycle of violence. We remind parties of their obligations to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to protect civilian lives and infrastructure.

We also underline the importance of free and secure navigation at sea and echo others urging the parties to ensure the safe use of Sana'a airport for humanitarian flights. It is of great concern that humanitarian partners in Yemen have had to cut critical humanitarian programmes as a result of insufficient funding. That means that daily rations for 8 million Yemenis are now reduced, at a time when one Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes from preventable causes. Inaction in the face of that kind of suffering is incomprehensible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish again to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success in your task. I welcome the new non-permanent members of the Security Council and wish them every success in their efforts, along with the other members of the Council, to establish peace and security in the world, resolve conflicts and promote stability. I thank Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham and Mr. Hans Grundberg for

their briefings. I also thank my sister Ola Al-Aghbary for her briefing.

We reiterate the importance of the effective role that Yemeni women and young people play in building Yemen's present and future and establishing peace. We note that the Yemeni Government has not excluded women from the United Nations-led consultations on peace. Women have always been included in the Government's delegation. Rather, the Houthi militias are the ones who have excluded and ignored Yemeni women and prevented them from participating in any political negotiations.

We thank Norway for supporting the Yemeni Government in implementing the women, peace and security agenda in Yemen.

The war in Yemen has entered its eighth year without any positive sign that the end of the conflict is in sight, thanks to the recalcitrance of the armed Houthi militias. The war has exacerbated the economic situation in Yemen and led to the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, rolling back economic development and leading to dire consequences for the Government and the people of Yemen.

Despite all those challenges, the Government has stepped up its efforts on many levels to restore State institutions and promote their role. We have implemented reform measures to support the national economy and make progress in financial and monetary areas, including by appointing new management at the Central Bank, which has had a positive impact on economic stability and the national currency exchange rate.

In addition, funding the humanitarian response plan in Yemen is of the utmost priority for millions of people in need. In that regard, we once again call on all our brothers, friends and international donor organizations to help and support the Yemeni Government to implement our programmes and plans in order to overcome economic hardship and address current challenges with a view to bolstering sustainable development programmes and creating an environment conducive to achieving sustainable peace in Yemen.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Yemen to facilitating the role of the United Nations, international organizations and emergency humanitarian personnel in Yemen, while strengthening coordination and partnership

and removing all obstacles so that we can achieve our shared goal of relieving humanitarian suffering.

Our priority today is to end the war and put pressure on the Houthi militias to choose peace and renounce destruction and violence, with the goal of achieving the peace that the Yemeni Government and all people yearn for, which would alleviate human suffering and transform Yemen into a safe and stable country in which justice, stability, equality, prosperity and development may prevail after long years of suffering and pain due to the unjust war against our people.

Nevertheless, all proposed peace initiatives have been rejected by the Houthi militias supported by Iran. The Houthi militias refuse every opportunity for peace. However, we are convinced that peace is within our reach and that 2022 will be the year of peace in Yemen. Under the auspices of His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, the Yemeni Government is determined to reach a political solution and ensure the success of United Nations and regional efforts and to engage positively with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General with a view to achieving comprehensive and lasting peace based on a political solution and the terms of reference of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

The brutal attack against Ma'rib by the Houthi militias continues unabated. The city has become the last resort for millions of refugees, with catastrophic consequences for civilians and displaced persons, while the already dire humanitarian situation has been exacerbated. As a result, last month 26,000 families — or 157,000 people — were displaced, 80 per cent of them women and children.

It is clear that the Houthi militias will not stop the killing and destruction, while the humanitarian crisis deteriorates further, and the international community remains suspiciously silent. International human rights organizations have not provided support and protection to civilians and have not taken measures to condemn and bring to an end the violations and crimes against humanity. The Houthi militias have chosen war and targeted infrastructure and civilians in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which demonstrates that they do not want to be part of the political solution and peacebuilding process. They are

supported by the Iranian regime and have no serious desire to engage in a political process and dialogue. Peace is not an option for them. They receive their orders from Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah militants.

The Houthi militias have dug in their heels and continue to kill Yemenis to advance the Iranian expansionist agenda in the region. Independent investigation teams have provided evidence that the Houthi militias have used civilian infrastructure, including the Sana'a airport, for military purposes, stockpiling arms and launching ballistic missiles and drones as well as trafficking in arms.

Two vessels were recently intercepted that were transporting weapons from Iran to the Houthis, thereby demonstrating that the Iranian regime has violated Security Council resolutions, in particular paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015). That is why the international community needs to exert additional pressure on the Houthi militias in order to end the conflict in Yemen, oblige them to come to the negotiation table and end the blatant Iranian interference and violations being inflicted on Yemen.

Over the past three years since the signing of the Stockholm Agreement, the Houthi militias have undermined the Agreement, hindered the activities of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and obstructed its mission pursuant to resolution 2452 (2019). The Agreement is at an impasse. The Houthi militias have continued to violate the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah. They have bypassed the Agreement to seize the city and its ports in order to mobilize their forces and target other governorates, including Ma'rib.

The Houthi militias have transformed Al-Hudaydah and its ports into a militarized zone — a centre for contraband weapons and an area for stockpiling Iranian ballistic missiles and drones — blowing up boats, laying sea mines and looting oil derivatives and humanitarian aid.

We have repeatedly warned the Security Council of the dangers posed by Houthi militias to international maritime navigation in the Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandeb Strait. We have seen them perpetrate acts of piracy, most recently the seizure of the Emirati-flagged civilian

vessel *RWABEE*. That is a serious development, which constitutes a threat to maritime navigation and world trade and a stark violation of international law and the law of the sea. We urge the Houthi militias to release the ship and its crew unconditionally.

We also call on the international community and the Security Council to take decisive measures against the aggressive and terrorist practices of those militias, which every day engage in acts of aggression to destabilize security and stability in that vital region of the world, threatening regional security and the world economy as well as international trade corridors.

Once again, we recall the *SFO SAFER* oil tanker, which is a ticking time bomb that poses a threat to the Red Sea and international navigation and denies millions of people in Yemen and the region of their livelihoods and fishing rights. The Security Council has held several meetings on the matter, issued statements and placed responsibility on the Houthis for the potential explosion of the tanker and for impeding the United Nations technical team from accessing it to evaluate its condition and repair the damage. We are today facing an imminent disaster, and the Security Council should take all the measures necessary to stop the Houthi intransigence and start taking important steps and measures to assess the situation of the tanker and prevent an oil leak or explosion before it is too late, otherwise we face an environmental, economic and humanitarian disaster.

In conclusion, the Yemeni Government appreciates the efforts of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility in providing vaccines and preventing the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, despite the generosity of international donors, most Yemenis still have not received a first dose because vaccine quantities are limited. We would therefore urge the United Nations, our partners and supporters to provide additional vaccines, not only to protect the Yemeni people but also to stop the spread of the pandemic around the world. None of us is safe until everyone is safe.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at noon.