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Provisional

President: Mr. Ishikane (Japan)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mrs. Neves Moreira
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Issahaku
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Saudi Arabia and 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; and Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: Allow me to start by welcoming the newly elected members to the Security Council. I look forward to working closely with them towards a peaceful, durable and inclusive settlement of the conflict in Yemen.

I am pleased to deliver the first briefing of the year from Yemen. Today I held positive and constructive discussions with the leadership here in Sana'a, as represented by Mahdi Al-Mashat. I look forward to continuing those conversations. In recent weeks, I also had fruitful discussions with the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, as well as with regional stakeholders in Riyadh and Muscat. I am hopeful that we can build on those discussions to ensure that 2023 delivers a more peaceful and prosperous future for Yemeni men and women.

Before discussing the current state of play and the way forward, let me turn to the situation on the ground.

The overall military situation in Yemen has remained stable. There has been no major escalation or changes to the disposition of front lines. I would like to acknowledge that the parties are continuing their military restraint. However, we continue to see some limited military activity along front lines, in particular in Ma'rib, Taiz, Dhale, Al-Hudaydah and Lahij

governorates, as well as along the Saudi-Yemeni border area. Regrettably, those military activities have also resulted in civilian casualties. I call on the parties to respect international law and international humanitarian law. Military activity combined with negative rhetoric and escalatory political and economic measures create a situation where simple miscalculation could reignite a cycle of violence that would be difficult to reverse. I therefore urge the parties to actively work to extend the longest period of relative quiet we have seen in the past eight years, which offers a much-needed reprieve for the Yemeni population.

The absence of large-scale fighting is also positive for the continuation of the elements operated under the truce. Since the truce first came into force, on 2 April 2022, 97 round-trip flights have transported almost 50,000 passengers between Sana'a and Amman, with 46 flights operating since the expiration of the truce, on 2 October 2022. Similarly, 81 fuel ships entered the port of Al-Hudaydah, of which 29 entered since the expiration of the truce. I welcome the continuation of those measures, which allow Yemenis to continue to experience the benefits of the truce beyond its formal expiration last October.

Allow me now to turn to the current state of mediation efforts.

I have been in continued contact with the parties as well as with countries of the region. Discussions have focused on options to secure agreement on military de-escalation and measures to prevent further economic deterioration and mitigate the impact of the conflict on civilians. We know from experience, however, that short-term measures and a piecemeal approach that focuses on individual issues can provide only temporary and partial relief. That is why I have also been engaging the parties on embedding those immediate-term measures in a more holistic vision and ensuring movement towards a more comprehensive settlement. That includes the resumption of the political process and a nationwide ceasefire.

We are currently seeing an intensification of regional and international diplomatic activity to resolve the conflict in Yemen. I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the efforts of Saudi Arabia and Oman in that regard. We are witnessing a potential step change in the trajectory of this eight-year conflict. The ongoing dialogues are a possibility that should not be wasted and that demand responsible actions.

While regional and international support is crucial in both the negotiation and implementation phases of any agreement. I would also like to stress the importance of Yemeni ownership of the process. Many of the issues on the table, especially those related to sovereignty issues, can be sustainably resolved only through an inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue. My Office continues to hold consultations with a variety of Yemeni stakeholders, including political parties, women's groups and civil society. That helps to ensure that the negotiation agenda is not solely determined by the warring sides and that the substance developed and discussed with the parties is informed by the perspectives and interests of a diverse range of Yemenis.

The situation remains complex and fluid. Based on my recent discussions with the parties, I note the following.

The various dialogue efforts of the past months have allowed for a clearer definition of the parties' positions and the development of options for mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues. Nevertheless, it is important that discussions on the short-term way forward be framed in the context of a more comprehensive approach that delineates a clear pathway towards a sustainable political settlement. Some of the issues on the negotiations table cannot be viewed in isolation. There are sequencing challenges as well as concerns for guarantees for all sides. They need to be addressed.

In addition to working towards a shared vision for an end to the conflict, it is also essential to break that vision down into concrete, actionable steps; otherwise, challenges will arise and cause delays in the implementation phase. Ultimately, any set of steps should be geared towards facilitating an inclusive Yemeni-led process, under United Nations auspices, for sustainably resolving the conflict.

Let me conclude by reiterating that I am encouraged by the intensified discussions that are taking place. Yemen needs an agreement that includes a shared vision for the way forward in order to avoid a return to full-blown conflict. I therefore urge the parties to make the most of the space for dialogue provided by the absence of large-scale fighting.

I would also like to reiterate my sincere appreciation for the steadfast support of the Council. Its united position sends a clear signal to the Yemeni parties that the international community expects, and

is committed to helping them make progress towards, a comprehensive settlement and a more peaceful future.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: As we usher in a new year, I am hopeful that a decisive turn in this conflict remains possible. We just heard very eloquently from Mr. Grundberg about the moves he is making to make that a reality. And I want to start by being very clear that the most important efforts we can make as the international community in the humanitarian, political and any other sphere is to support Mr. Grundberg in those most important primary efforts. I wish the Special Envoy good luck.

However, I also fear that the year 2023 will be another extremely difficult one for the people of Yemen.. Humanitarian needs remain alarmingly high, as the country's economy continues to weaken and basic services hang by a thread. Meanwhile, people's access to humanitarian assistance is being impeded, as aid agencies are forced to contend with an increasingly challenging operating environment and an unencouraging funding landscape.

An estimated 21.6 million people across Yemen will need humanitarian assistance and protection services this year. It is precisely because that is such a high percentage of the country's total population that the United Nations has for so long talked about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen as being the worst we see across the globe. But even that staggering figure does not truly convey the reality or extent of people's suffering. It does not relay to us the impossible choices parents make as they struggle to feed their children. It does not tell us the story of those families whose hopes of returning home — even in Yemen we have displacement and refugees — are fading with each passing year. And it does not reflect the fear and risk that people face, especially women and girls, while doing simple activities, such as fetching water or walking to school.

In the coming weeks, the humanitarian community will release its plan for the coming year to respond to those needs. Of course, it is important to know that we cannot do this alone. In 2022, thanks to strong donor support, aid agencies delivered life-saving assistance to almost 11 million people every month. We did

that despite an increasingly challenging operating environment and key funding gaps across a number of sectors. As we begin this year, I urge the international community to continue to stand in good faith with the Yemeni people by giving generously to the humanitarian appeal and narrowing the existing funding gaps for those equally life-saving livelihood programmes. We will do our part to strengthen the aid operation. That includes redoubling our engagement with all parties to the conflict to remove impediments and strengthening monitoring and accountability mechanisms, in line with the recommendations of the inter-agency evaluation that was issued last year.

As we have briefed the Security Council before, access constraints remain a major obstacle in Yemen — one of the worst in the world. Last year, humanitarian partners and agencies reported more than 3,300 access incidents. That is the equivalent of almost 10 per day. Collectively, those incidents — whether being stopped at a roadblock, not allowed to start a journey or stopped from taking needed staff on a journey — affected the provision of assistance to more than 5 million people. Again, 3,300 incidents and 5 million people affected by unnecessary and unhelpful access impediments.

Bureaucratic impediments are the most frequently reported constraints, including restrictions on humanitarian movements and delays in visa and work permit approvals. We have seen some progress in the areas controlled by Ansar Allah, with approvals on project agreements during December. But that is not enough, as procedures remain extremely cumbersome.

We also have to cope with attempted interference, which is prevalent at every stage of aid delivery. That is particularly severe in areas under Houthi control, where authorities often try to compel the selection of certain contractors, restrict the travel of aid workers or otherwise seek to influence aid operations. I appeal to the leadership of Ansar Allah to remove those unnecessary and unhelpful impediments. Those constraints delay the delivery of urgent assistance.

I am particularly concerned about the imposition of strict *mahram* requirements, primarily in areas under the control of the Houthi de facto authorities. Those restrictions have wide-ranging and, frankly, unacceptable operational impacts. They prevent Yemeni women aid workers from travelling without a male guardian, both inside and out of the country. They

curb the work of our staff. And they limit the social and economic participation of female humanitarians. They impede effective programme delivery by forcing delays, or even suspensions, of critical missions and programmes. And they are increasingly severing our access to Yemen's most vulnerable people — women and girls — as they are in all countries affected by humanitarian catastrophes. Women and girls are always disproportionately affected by crises, and even more so in the case of the implementation of the *mahram* edict.

Despite our continued engagement with the Houthi authorities and the commitments made by them to find solutions, we have yet to see any tangible change. Instead, *mahram* restrictions have only become more prevalent and entrenched. After many months of discussions, we are still trying to work with the authorities to find an acceptable path forward. But with every day that passes without a solution, this issue is becoming more acute and more urgent.

The security situation in Yemen also remains difficult for humanitarian operations. Aid agencies reported almost 150 incidents of violence against their personnel last year, the vast majority of them taking place in Government-controlled areas. Just last month, the office of a humanitarian non-governmental organization was attacked in Aden. Thankfully, there were no casualties, but some damage to the office's facilities was reported. Two United Nations staff also remain detained in Sana'a after 14 months, and another five are still missing after being kidnapped in Abyan almost a year ago. That is the backdrop against which Resident Coordinator David Gressly and his team have to operate to try to improve protection for humanitarian workers.

The trends that I am describing — of increasing interference, restrictions and violence against our colleagues — should not continue. Aid workers, including female Yemeni aid workers, must be able to carry out their work safely, independently, rapidly and without hindrance. Anything less is an affront to the people we serve. I therefore appeal to all parties to the conflict, as we have so often, to facilitate the safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to all civilians in need and protect humanitarian personnel and assets, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Members may have heard that paragraph before, and I am sure that they will again.

Over recent months, we have seen signs of increasing economic tension emerge between the parties, with potentially harmful consequences for the people of Yemen. We know from experience that even a small deterioration in Yemen's economy can have major ripple effects for millions of people. Despite a certain amount of currency appreciation last year, the Yemeni rial is now trading at 1,250 to the dollar in Government-held areas. I believe that that is the lowest point since the truce was announced in early April. I urge the parties to do everything possible to avoid any actions that could further destabilize the economy. And I call on the international community to redouble its efforts precisely to boost Yemen's economy and restore basic services, which is as crucial a priority as the many others that we in the humanitarian community profess to serve.

Every month, we brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in Yemen and advocate for the means to respond to people's needs, and we will continue to do that for as long as it takes. But what the people of Yemen really want is not more briefings with people like me and others on the humanitarian situation. They want a lasting end to the conflict. This brings me back to where I began: our full support for the efforts of Hans Grundberg, his team and all the Member States that support his Yemeni-led search for peace under United Nations auspices.

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

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings. We are extremely grateful for the work that they and their teams continue to do for the Yemeni people.

The United Kingdom welcomes efforts by all parties to build on the relative peace we continue to see. All steps towards a negotiated, Yemeni-led political settlement under United Nations auspices are steps towards the long-standing peace that Yemenis deserve. That is the only way to fully address the humanitarian situation, which remains dire across the country. While efforts continue to seek a lasting solution to the conflict, we must intensify efforts to improve the immediate humanitarian situation and address long-term drivers of the humanitarian crisis.

The Houthi block on oil exports has plunged the Government of Yemen into dire economic straits. We urge the international community to take all steps to mitigate its impact and support Yemen's Government at this critical time. With the launch of the humanitarian response plan at the end of this month, the United Kingdom encourages all donors, current or prospective, to remain committed to alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people. In order to ensure access to life-saving assistance, we further call on the authorities in the north and south for unfettered access for our partners across the country. As Mr. Griffiths has outlined, the introduction of *mahram* requirements in the north does the very opposite. We call for an immediate end to those restrictions, which curtail Yemeni women's ability to both deliver and access crucial aid and remain employed.

Lastly, I want to reiterate our concern about the delays surrounding the operation to salvage the *FSO SAFER* tanker, to which the United Kingdom has dispersed £6 million in funding. In order to avoid an entirely preventable crisis, we call on the United Nations and all parties to continue working together at pace. Urgency needs to be balanced with rigour, but we must identify ways to avoid further delays.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Japan for its leadership as President of the Security Council during the month of January and am grateful for the convening of this first monthly briefing of the year on the situation in Yemen. I also appreciate the information provided by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Martin Griffiths.

The conflict in Yemen is having devastating consequences on the civilian population. According to estimates, by 2023, 17 million people will suffer from food insecurity, more than 60 per cent of the population will require international assistance for their survival, and all Yemenis will face the effects of the deterioration in the economy and in the provision of public services. Ecuador rejects the acts of violence perpetrated by the Houthis during the last quarter of 2022 that targeted the lives and safety of United Nations personnel and the civilian population, including children, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Ecuador condemns the illegal trafficking of arms and attacks on sea ports and strategic oil infrastructure and demands the release of humanitarian personnel and political

prisoners, who have been arbitrarily deprived of their freedom.

As proponents of the Council's women and peace and security agenda, we condemn the measures taken by the Houthis to hinder the free movement of women and the work of humanitarian personnel on the ground. As has been discussed in depth at recent Council meetings, adopting policies that undermine women's basic rights means undermining the possibility of building inclusive and peaceful societies. Similarly, we note with concern the findings of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2022/493) with regard to the persistent high number of children killed and maimed by explosive remnants of war. In that regard, we reaffirm the need to dramatically step up demining efforts and the clearance of improvised explosive devices, in line with Yemen's obligations as a signatory of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Ecuador acknowledges that, during the period that the truce agreement was in force, prior to its expiration on 2 October 2022, tensions between the parties were de-escalated, and the civilian population saw the period of greatest calm of the eight-year conflict. Ecuador therefore encourages Special Envoy Grundberg to continue his efforts to unblock the negotiations between the Houthis and the Yemeni Government, with a view to renewing the truce agreement for an additional six months.

Ecuador welcomes the progress on the situation concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and hopes that the first phase of fuel transfer is carried as planned during the first quarter of 2023.

The people of Yemen deserve peace, stability and well-being. Ecuador joins the Secretary-General's call for the parties to return to the path of negotiations aimed at finding lasting solutions by employing the necessary Security Council mechanisms to implement a definitive ceasefire and initiate a serious and transparent political dialogue.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their informative briefings and express our support for their work on the ground. I also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of Yemen.

Since the expiration of the truce in October 2022, a new phase of uncertainty has begun in Yemen, despite the relative calm that has been seen on the ground. My country reaffirms the need to reach a new truce and remains convinced that a peace agreement can be reached between the parties. We note with interest the intensive diplomatic efforts being made in the region in order to find a solution. We are following very closely the ongoing talks on renewing the truce in the country and call on all stakeholders to demonstrate responsibility, flexibility and compromise by engaging in good faith in an inclusive, frank and constructive dialogue whose main focus is to ensure the well-being of the Yemeni people. In that regard, we commend all the actors in the region for their efforts to find a way to facilitate negotiations.

My country remains very concerned about the welfare of children, who along with women are the main victims of the conflict that has devastated the country. According to a UNICEF press release published in December, more than 11,000 children have been killed, maimed or wounded in Yemen, and nearly 4,000 have been recruited among those fighting on the ground. We are also very concerned about the devastating effects of malnutrition, especially in the governorates of Hajjah, Al-Hudaydah, Sa'dah and Amran. The winter has also made the humanitarian situation worse for vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons. At least seven newborns died recently in tents in the central governorate of Ma'rib because of the extreme cold. Another six newborns died in Al-Ma'acher camp owing to the chronic lack of adequate heating and shelter. We also note with regret the ongoing restrictions on the movement of women humanitarian workers, which has made their working environment more difficult. We therefore urge the parties to ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian sites and to respect international humanitarian law.

We welcome the World Bank's additional \$150 million contribution to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in order to build resilience and address the rising food insecurity of Yemen. That increased support will be allocated to the Yemen Food Security Response and Resilience Project, which is jointly implemented by three United Nations bodies, in order to scale up efforts to recover the livelihoods of people in rural areas, boost household food production and provide emergency assistance to vulnerable Yemeni households. In that regard, we

call on the international community to make greater efforts to address the financing gap in order to support Yemen's economy and public services, including its schools and hospitals. We also take this opportunity to reiterate the need to step up mine action efforts, including the identification, marking and clearance of dangerous areas.

In conclusion, Gabon reiterates its appreciation to Special Envoy Hans Grundberg for his tireless efforts, through dialogue, to reach a new truce agreement and eventually a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Yemen. That is the only way to ensure a return to lasting peace and restore the well-being of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Issahaku (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Hans Grunberg and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings.

At the outset, we note with regret the continuing inability of the parties to reach an agreement to extend the truce, despite the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy and other stakeholders. Ahead of a new truce agreement, it is imperative that the parties stave off any action that has the potential to threaten the fragile security situation in the country and escalate violence, with its attendant consequences for the civilian population. We therefore implore the parties to exercise restraint and continue to observe the elements of the truce as the negotiations proceed in order to find common ground for its renewal. We underscore the need for the parties to treasure and guard the benefits that the people of Yemen have accrued following the initial implementation of the truce agreement and the continuing tacit observance of its tenets, including the significant reduction in human casualties and the resumption of international commercial flights to and from Sana'a.

The international community, in particular the stakeholders in the region with influence over the parties, must leverage that relationship to implore the parties to choose peace over violence; consensus-building over confrontation; flexibility over rigidity; and above all, a return to the negotiation table with an open mind, guided solely by the supreme interests of the people of Yemen. Attempts to rearm will not serve the cause of peace. After nearly a decade of fighting, it is high time for the parties to the conflict to work assiduously towards a long-term ceasefire in order to create the conditions necessary for a negotiated political solution. It is our firm belief that the Special Envoy's

proposal for a six-month extension of the truce offers a propitious opportunity that could ultimately lead to such an outcome.

Addressing the humanitarian crisis that has bedevilled the country remains of the utmost importance and must continue to engage the attention of the international community. As many as 21.6 million people — a huge number — are in need of humanitarian assistance. UNICEF also recently reported that about 11,000 children may have been killed or injured in Yemen since 2015, with many more children at risk of death from preventable disease or starvation, which is deeply distressing. We urgently appeal to the donor community to shore up its support for the humanitarian response plan for the country in order to help alleviate the suffering of the affected populations.

The risks posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war in Yemen remains high and unfortunately are now the leading causes of death and injury in the country. Even more troubling is the disclosure that, between July and September 2022 alone, landmines and unexploded ordnance caused 164 deaths or injuries in the country — 74 of them suffered by children. As we call for increased international action to deal with the issue, we appeal for the immediate lifting of the bureaucratic and administrative bottlenecks that have impeded United Nations demining efforts in the country in order to curb that menace.

It is regrettable that impediments continue to be put on the access of humanitarian organizations, which are by definition impartial, to people in need of assistance in Yemen. The imposition of administrative and bureaucratic restrictions on the movement of humanitarian staff, in particular female staff, has affected the delivery of critical humanitarian aid to segments of Yemeni society. Such interference in the delivery of aid violates international humanitarian law. We remind the parties of their obligation to grant unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need.

Unfortunately, the deteriorating economic conditions, including the depreciation in the value of the Yemeni rial, high inflation and rising food prices, continue to put essential and basic supplies, including food, out of the reach of many Yemenis. We call for support for Yemen's economy as part of the collective efforts to improve the humanitarian needs of the country.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on the parties to put the interests of the people of Yemen above any other interest and to make the necessary concessions as they strive to find common ground on contentious issues in order to renew the truce agreement.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I too would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their insightful and powerful briefings today.

It is clear from what has been portrayed by our briefers that the situation in Yemen remains dire. We commend the efforts of the Special Envoy and echo his call for the truce to be re-established with the utmost urgency. We know that is possible, as we witnessed the signing of a United Nations-brokered truce last year in April, which was extended until October. Those six months were the longest period of calm since the war began eight years ago and brought a measure of respite and hope to the Yemeni population. Though the truce has lapsed, we welcome the fact that some elements of the agreement have continued to hold and that we have not witnessed a return to large-scale hostilities.

Nevertheless, the situation remains precarious. Intermittent episodes of violence and confrontation continue to be observed. It is crucial that all parties refrain from any escalatory or confrontational measures. Malta calls on all sides of the conflict, in particular the Houthis, to refrain from imposing maximalist demands and to put the Yemeni people first. There can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen. The parties must immediately re-engage in the negotiation process in good faith and work towards re-establishing a truce. That would serve as fertile ground for further efforts to resolve the conflict.

Malta is gravely concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen. Over 21 million people, or two thirds of the Yemeni population, are in need of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 13 million of those in need are children, many of whom have known nothing but the terrors of war. A total of 17 million people are projected to experience crisis-level food insecurity or worse. Millions of Yemenis are internally displaced and lack the most basic access to essential necessities. That is unacceptable from a moral and humanitarian point of view, and we must collectively do more to alleviate the situation.

We urge all parties to the conflict to refrain from any hostilities that could worsen the humanitarian

disaster and underscore their responsibilities to fully abide by and respect human rights and international humanitarian law. We call on the Houthis to open the roads around Taiz and end the city's blockade, which has caused its inhabitants untold suffering for several years. It is time to put the people first.

We also call for the rapid implementation of the first phase of the United Nations-facilitated plan to remove the oil from the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker to prevent a potentially catastrophic environmental disaster.

An inclusive process leading to a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political solution is the only way to bring lasting and durable peace to Yemen. Such a process must facilitate the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and the involvement of young people and civil society. The persistent exclusion of women from peace talks and formal politics continues to undermine the prospects for realizing that peace. Women play an indispensable role at the local and grass-roots levels, and their participation is crucial for a successful political process.

The increasingly limited space allowed to women in Yemen, particularly in the light of the *mahram* requirement in Houthi-controlled areas, is concerning. Yemeni women need to be able to move freely. Women humanitarian workers must be allowed to pass without impediment to deliver life-saving assistance. Anything preventing Yemenis from accessing critical aid is unacceptable.

We reiterate our full support to all United Nations-led peace efforts, especially those of Special Envoy Grundberg. We call on all parties to the conflict, as well as regional actors, to continue to push for a commitment to genuine dialogue and compromise. We also acknowledge the flexibility and constructive approach of the Government of Yemen on key issues and call on the Houthis to also engage for the benefit of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, for their briefings on political and humanitarian developments in Yemen.

We continue to closely monitor the situation in the country. The absence of acute military escalations unambiguously demonstrates the general inclination of

Yemen's leading political forces towards a renewal of the truce. Its implementation, however, is being made more difficult by mutual antagonism. Under those circumstances, it is extremely important to exercise maximum restraint and prevent any provocative actions — especially those of a military nature — that could lead to a catastrophe.

The necessary solutions should be sought and carried out within the framework of an inclusive negotiation process under the auspices of the United Nations, which is the only way to establish peace on the basis of the legitimate interests of all leading political forces. Stabilization can be achieved only through direct dialogue with the Ansar Allah movement, which has long been part of the objective reality of the existing military-political balance of power. In that regard, we welcome efforts through any and all channels aimed at breaking the deadlock in resolving the Yemeni question and paving the way to stabilization.

The international community must now do everything in its power to restore peace to Yemen. At the same time, we are seeing more and more signs that the ultimate goal of our Western colleagues is not a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the large number of challenges facing Yemen, which also directly affect its neighbouring States, but, above all, ensuring the uninterrupted export of Yemeni hydrocarbons to the global market. We consider such an opportunistic approach to be extremely harmful to sustainable peace in the country.

For our part, we continue to provide all possible assistance towards a settlement and maintain contact with both the official authorities and the Houthis. We are actively promoting the importance of inter-Yemeni contacts and privileged dialogue with the Special Envoy. We also express the hope that the Special Envoy's efforts will result in the development of constructive proposals, in coordination with the parties, that could serve as a basis not only for the resumption of the ceasefire but also to launch a full-fledged political process and renew the legal framework for a resolution of the Yemeni question.

Unfortunately, the extremely difficult socioeconomic situation in Yemen persists. We underscore the need to mobilize international efforts to provide assistance to all those in need in the country without exception. Any restrictions on the delivery of food, medicine and other vital goods to all regions

of Yemen and, ultimately, blockades on the country must be lifted in their entirety. We urge for continued cooperation in that area with international financial organizations, as well as support for the efforts of the relevant United Nations entities, without any restrictions on the work or movement of women personnel.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings and their continued efforts to lay the foundation for a comprehensive peace process that will improve the lives of the Yemeni people.

While the United States remains concerned about the situation in Yemen, it is important to take stock of the progress that has been made. A year ago, fighting was raging inside of Yemen, and Houthi attacks were threatening civilians in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Today a period of relative calm prevails, civilian casualties have decreased dramatically, and key elements of the truce continue. While we are concerned about the lapse of the truce agreement, the United States remains hopeful that the parties can reach a new, expanded agreement that paves the way for an inclusive, durable peace. To do so, the Houthis must urgently change course and choose negotiations over attacks on Yemen's economic infrastructure.

We are seeing significant repercussions from the repeated Houthi terrorist attacks on Yemeni ports and international shipping. Those attacks threaten to plunge Yemen back into conflict, to deprive Yemenis of desperately needed resources and to worsen the humanitarian crisis. The Houthi attacks have placed extraordinary pressure on Yemen's economy and have derailed hard-won Government progress on balancing its budget. The attacks are driving up the cost of shipping to and from Yemen, raising the prices of goods for families already struggling to get by. The attacks stand in stark contrast to Houthi statements that Yemen's resources should benefit its people. Instead, Houthi strikes have deprived Yemen of the tens of millions of dollars of hard currency it needs every month to import food and fuel to feed the population and transport essential goods. Those attacks and the harm that they cause to the Yemeni people must stop. The United States hopes that the international community will continue to take a strong stance against Houthi terrorist attacks on Yemen's economic infrastructure, especially at this critical moment.

Despite the ongoing period of calm, Iran continues to send a steady flow of weapons to the Houthis. Just 10 days ago, the United States intercepted a dhow carrying thousands of AK-47s from Iran to the Houthis, which was the third interdiction in recent months. Such lethal external interference can only fuel war and suffering in Yemen, at a time when Yemenis are calling for the Houthis to negotiate to end the war.

The best way for the Houthis to achieve their stated goals of paying public sector salaries, harnessing Yemen's resources to benefit its people and improving the humanitarian situation is for them to sit with the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Yemen, under the auspices of the United Nations, and reach a political agreement. Only Yemeni-Yemeni talks can address the fundamental question of how Yemen's resources are used, and only a Yemeni-Yemeni political agreement can reverse Yemen's dire humanitarian crisis.

We welcome the restraint of the Government of the Republic of Yemen and its continued commitment to peace. The Government's ongoing support for elements of the truce, including the facilitation of fuel imports and continued commercial flights from Sana'a, demonstrate the Government's efforts to ease the suffering of Yemenis. We also commend its establishment of a political negotiating team, which is a clear signal that the Government is prepared to resolve the conflict, and we hope that team can intensify its engagements with the Special Envoy.

On the humanitarian front, the United States remains concerned about the reports of significant access constraints on the aid operation, on which we were just briefed. We support United Nations efforts to address those challenges and urge the parties, particularly the Houthis, to enable the provision of aid, in line with humanitarian principles. We also call for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained United Nations and United States local staff, many of whom have been detained for more than one year and deserve to be reunited with their families.

We remain concerned about the alleged abuses against migrants on the border with Saudi Arabia. We urge all parties to allow United Nations investigators to access both sides of the border in order to thoroughly investigate those allegations.

Finally, the United States notes the important work being undertaken to address the critical situation posed by the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. Donors have come

together to avert ecological and economic disaster. As others have done, we urge the United Nations to take a forward-leaning approach and consider the creative options available in implementing that project. The longer we wait, the greater the risk of a catastrophic oil spill. We remain committed to helping to address the situation and underline our expectation that the United Nations will expedite the implementation of the project.

In conclusion, 2023 provides a unique opportunity for peace. The United States and the international community stand ready to support a peace and recovery process. However, it is the Yemenis themselves who must choose peace. We call on the Houthis to engage in good faith, seize this unique moment of relative calm and choose peace and a brighter future over more war and suffering.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings and welcome the representatives of Yemen and Saudi Arabia to today's meeting.

In 2022, the truce gave the people of Yemen hope for peace and tangible benefits and presented a rare opportunity for resolving the situation in the country. The current situation is generally stable, yet the status quo of neither war nor peace is not sustainable and the window of opportunity for peace will not remain open forever. All parties concerned should act with a sense of urgency and expedite dialogue and negotiations. The international community should provide more constructive assistance.

First, the international community must remain committed to the overall objective of a political settlement. The parties to the conflict, in particular the Houthis, should refrain from taking any action that could undermine mutual trust and compromise the positive atmosphere of the peace talks. They should demonstrate clear political will and set reasonable expectations for matters related to the relevant issues. China appreciates and supports the good offices of Special Envoy Grundberg and the mediation work carried out by Oman. Council members should remain united, work together to facilitate the peace talks and mobilize all parties to engage actively so as to break the deadlock in the Yemeni political process at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, the international community should alleviate the humanitarian situation that has afflicted the Yemeni people, who have suffered the consequences of the eight-year-old conflict. Yemen faces the most serious humanitarian situation on the Council's agenda. According to the estimates of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 21.6 million people across Yemen will need humanitarian assistance this year. China appreciates Saudi Arabia's provision of food aid to the poorest people in Yemen. The international community should increase its humanitarian and development input in Yemen and work collectively to help the country improve its humanitarian situation. We call on all parties in Yemen to provide the necessary humanitarian access and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers. The well-being of the Yemeni people remains a top priority. Last month, at the first China-Arab States summit, President Xi Jinping proposed eight major common actions covering eight areas of cooperation — development, food security, health, green innovation, energy security, dialogue among civilizations, youth development and security and stability. China plans to provide increased humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Arab countries, including Yemen.

Thirdly, the international community should foster a favourable regional environment. The situation in Yemen has important implications for the security situation in the Gulf region, all the countries of which aspire to peace rather than war. China remains steadfast in supporting the countries of the region in efforts to protect national security. We commend their efforts to find a political solution to the situation in Yemen and encourage countries with influence on the situation in Yemen to provide constructive assistance. A stable regional environment is conducive to resolving the situation in Yemen. China encourages the Gulf countries to address their differences through dialogue and to build mutual trust and security together.

Mrs. Neves Moreira (Brazil): We thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their detailed and informative briefings on the situation in Yemen. We also welcome the representatives of Yemen and Saudi Arabia to today's meeting and look forward to their views on the matter at hand.

Amid the eight-year-long protracted civil war, Yemen's legitimate Government and the Houthi militia agreed last April to a two-month comprehensive

ceasefire. Shortly thereafter, a new governing body emerged in Yemen — the Presidential Leadership Council. While the negotiations proceeded, the much-needed respite in the conflict brought a series of benefits to the country, including a substantial decrease in displacement, the resumption of commercial flights to and from Sana'a International Airport and the re-entry of fuel tankers into Al-Hudaydah port. Notwithstanding considerable doubt that it would hold, the agreement was renewed twice and resulted in the lowest level of war-related casualties since the beginning of 2015. In fact, even after its regrettable formal expiration in October, the ceasefire continues to benefit the long-suffering Yemeni population.

As Special Envoy Grundberg previously indicated, the enduring effects of the ceasefire represent a unique window of opportunity for a political settlement that should not be overlooked by the parties. To waste that opportunity would mean worsening the suffering of Yemeni men, women and children. Even in the absence of large-scale hostilities, the persistence of the status quo hinders development and prolongs the dire humanitarian crisis in the country. Let us renew our resolve to avoid that path and contribute to a new era for all Yemenis.

Hundreds of thousands of people have already perished; in addition, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 20 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2023. The economic conditions have exacerbated an already alarming food insecurity crisis in the country that has further aggravated the security situation. We urge all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from measures that undermine the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Brazil reiterates its steadfast support for Special Envoy Grundberg's efforts in favour of a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Brazil supports a ceasefire agreement in Yemen that can lead to a comprehensive political process, under United Nations auspices and with the inclusion of relevant Yemeni groups. We urge the belligerent parties to show the necessary flexibility and engage constructively in meaningful dialogue, with no preconditions, in order to pave the way for a future of peace, stability and development for Yemen.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Allow me to begin by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-

Secretary-General Griffiths for their hard work and their briefings today.

Since the beginning of October 2022, the members of the Security Council have called for the truce to be renewed, extended and expanded, and we deeply regret that the appeal has not been heard by all. The obstructive behaviour of the Houthis and their unreasonable demands have hampered the renewal of the truce. We call on the Houthis to engage in good faith to extend the truce and reach a durable ceasefire in order to allow for a lasting political solution to the conflict, which should be Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned under the auspices of the United Nations. We appreciate the efforts of global and regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, and the efforts of the Government of Yemen to renew the truce. We reiterate our appreciation for the work of Special Envoy Grundberg and fully support his efforts in bringing the parties together to find a lasting solution.

The prolongation of the pain and suffering of Yemeni people is unacceptable, and we call on the parties, especially the Houthis, to end the hostilities and allow humanitarian workers to deliver life-saving aid to people who are in dire need. We deplore and condemn all constraints that restrict humanitarian workers from fulfilling their vital mission, and we are deeply concerned at the imposition of *mahram* for aid workers. We reiterate our call on the Houthis to put an end to that discriminatory practice against women and allow them to perform their duties, at a time when two out of every three Yemenis are in urgent need of assistance.

Among those whose lives depend on humanitarian assistance are also the 12 million children who suffer from a lack of food, water and medical assistance. Any attempt to prevent the provision of humanitarian aid to children is inhumane, and their malnutrition remains an acute challenge of the humanitarian landscape in Yemen.

We also join the call for the immediate release of all the staff of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other civilians, as well as the employees of the United States of America and the United Nations, who have been detained by Yemen.

We remain deeply worried and condemn the terrorist attacks by the Houthis against international maritime shipping and on the port infrastructure. We deplore their economic war, which is further worsening the economic hardship of the Yemenis and delaying the recovery of

the country. The violation of the arms embargo by the Houthis is deeply concerning. The recent seizure of rifles that were being smuggled from Iran to Yemen is not only a serious breach of resolution 2216 (2015) but also another reminder of the malign activities of Iran in the region and the determination of the Houthis to prolong the conflict.

In conclusion, let me reiterate once more our support for Special Envoy Grundberg and his efforts to renew the truce.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Hans Grundberg and Mr. Martin Griffiths for their comprehensive briefings, and I welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Despite the end of the truce and the disruption of the political track due to the behaviour and procrastination of the Houthis, the international community and all the people of Yemen are determined to end the protracted war and the prolonged suffering of the brotherly Yemenis. Therefore, we reiterate our support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a permanent ceasefire agreement and implementing additional economic and humanitarian confidence-building measures in order to pave the way for all parties in Yemen to engage in dialogue and reach a comprehensive political solution. In that context, we commend the positive position of the Presidential Leadership Council and its efforts to achieve stability throughout Yemen. We also express our firm support for the important role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to end the crisis in Yemen. We also value the mediation efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman.

Achieving security and stability in Yemen will require the Houthi militia to abandon its terrorist activities and destructive agenda. The long list of Houthi violations against the Yemeni people includes acts of oppression and terrorism, killings and forced disappearances. In addition, the Houthis continue to recruit children and indoctrinate them with extremist and violent ideologies, while treating women with abuse.

The repeated rejection by the Houthis of proposals to renew the truce requires the Security Council to take a stronger approach in order to discourage the Houthis from military escalation, which we strongly condemn, and to compel them to respond seriously to United Nations and regional initiatives to end the war.

That stronger approach should include the adoption of measures to enforce the arms embargo imposed on the Houthi terrorist militia. We once again express our deep concern at the continued violations of the arms embargo, which threaten regional and international peace and security. We were recently informed of a number of shipments seized in transit to the Houthis, which contained weapons, ammunition and explosive materials, as well as components of missiles and drones that could be used to launch cross-border attacks. We reiterate that any attack by that group on neighbouring countries will be met with a firm response by the Arab coalition.

At the humanitarian level, we stress the importance of de-escalation and building on the progress achieved during the truce. The Houthi militia must stop its economic war, which targets the economic interests of Yemen, and lift all the restrictions imposed on humanitarian workers, in particular women. The United Arab Emirates will continue its humanitarian efforts to advance the Yemeni economy and improve the delivery of health and education services throughout Yemen.

In conclusion, as we begin a new year, we hope that 2023 will pave the way towards peace in Yemen and the recovery of its economy, which will enable the brotherly Yemeni people to focus their energies and capabilities on achieving sustainable development and ensuring a prosperous future for succeeding generations.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Hans Grundberg and Martin Griffiths for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of Yemen and Saudi Arabia in the Chamber today. For my part, I have three messages.

First, the Security Council must do everything it can to prevent a resumption of hostilities on the ground. The breakdown of the truce has created lasting instability. The situation is fragile and can deteriorate rapidly if the parties decide to resume hostilities. Eight years of conflict in Yemen have shown that the military option is not a solution. We therefore call on all parties, including the Houthis, to show restraint and not give in to the temptation of violence. The actors in this conflict must show responsibility. Any new confrontation will only increase the suffering of the population. France also condemns the Houthi strategy to stifle the Yemeni Government economically.

Secondly, it is also our responsibility to preserve the humanitarian space, which is being seriously

affected, as Mr. Griffiths reminded us. The lives of Yemenis depend on it. While the need for humanitarian assistance remains high, full humanitarian access and better working conditions for humanitarian actors must be ensured. We reiterate our deep concern about the restrictions on United Nations and humanitarian personnel. We are particularly concerned about the imposition of male guardians. Several of us have been mentioned this point. The Houthis must respect women working for non-governmental organizations, cease their intimidation of female aid workers, and immediately and unconditionally release detained United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, France is proud to announce an additional contribution of €1 million to the United Nations-led rescue plan. This will bring our total contribution to €2.26 million. We hope that the first phase of the plan can be quickly implemented in order to avoid an ecological catastrophe. We also call on the Houthis, who are currently in control of the ship, to fully cooperate with the United Nations in the implementation of the rescue plan.

Thirdly, we would like to express our full support for the Special Envoy's efforts to prevent a resumption of hostilities and promote dialogue between the various Yemeni and regional actors. France recalls its commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen. We reaffirm our support for the Yemeni Government, which is striving in difficult conditions to meet the expectations of the population.

France calls on the parties involved, first and foremost the Houthis, to commit without delay and in good faith to a political process to end the crisis. We welcome the constructive involvement of certain regional actors in the mediation, notably the Sultanate of Oman. It is essential that all these mediation efforts be carried out in perfect coordination with those of the Special Envoy.

France calls on the Houthis to change course and think of the interests of the Yemeni people rather than their own ambitions. We take note of the ongoing talks and call on the Houthis to engage fully and in good faith with the mediation efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy, who made a special trip to Sana'a. We also call for progress being made towards a lasting ceasefire and a political process among Yemenis.

Finally, France reiterates the importance of the participation of Yemeni women in the peace process

and in the decision-making process concerning the political future of their country. Alongside the Special Envoy, we will continue our commitment to bringing an end to this conflict.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to thank the Special Envoy, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for their briefings and for the arduous work they have carried out.

As the year begins, we strongly encourage the ongoing efforts to reinstate the truce between the Yemeni Authorities and the Houthis. We hope for the continued consolidation of the tangible benefits that the respite in fighting brought to the Yemeni people. We deem it essential that the Security Council support these efforts towards a political settlement of the conflict, which can lead to durable peace and stability in the country. At this stage, we are particularly concerned over the unparalleled humanitarian tragedy, the continued threat to the free movement of goods in one of the most important points in international shipping lanes, and the possibility of sanctuary that the conflict might offer to terrorists and extremists.

Mozambique joins the voices of those Council members who repudiate in the strongest terms possible the continued violence against humanitarian personnel and the restrictions on humanitarian work and operations. We call for the immediate release of all aid workers being held captive. We are also disturbed by reports of continued recruitment of children as combatants, as well as the widespread and indiscriminate use of landmines and unexploded ordnance, which results in high casualties among civilians, mostly women and children. We wish to remind the parties involved of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

It is Mozambique's considered view that the risk of relapse into renewed all-out war is still high. We believe no efforts should be spared in averting such a development.

We echo the calls for an urgent and generous response by the international community to the United Nations humanitarian appeal for Yemen. We commend in particular the openness and willingness of the Yemeni Government to find a negotiated solution to the conflict. We reiterate our strong support for the important role being played by the Special Envoy in this process.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings and, more importantly, for their efforts aimed at promoting peace and protecting civilians in Yemen.

As the new year begins, Yemenis are once again suffering the effects of rampant inflation and high levels of food insecurity, compounded by increasingly harsh economic measures put in place by the parties to the conflict. People's livelihoods have been destroyed by devastating drought and flooding, both of which have been exacerbated by climate change. In addition, Yemenis have limited access to basic services, which has increased their humanitarian needs and worsened the human rights situation in the country.

The truce has provided a much-needed respite for the civilian population. We echo the calls of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the parties to the conflict to re-establish a formal truce and work towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. In their words, it is time "to choose peace for good".

Switzerland believes that the following elements should be part of this choice for peace.

First, we welcome the fact that a *de facto* truce continues to be largely respected. We call on the parties to continue the dialogue in good faith and to exercise restraint. The longer-term goal of an intra-Yemeni political settlement that involves all of society and includes the voices of women and marginalized groups must remain at the centre of peace efforts. We welcome the various dialogues under way and highlight the engagement of the Sultanate of Oman. It is important that all those dialogues are aligned with the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy, whom we fully support.

Secondly, humanitarian assistance must be guided by the needs of the affected population and be independent of any political considerations. Currently, the operating environment for humanitarian actors is becoming increasingly restrictive. Rapid and unhindered humanitarian access must be guaranteed throughout the country and by all parties to the conflict. All humanitarian personnel, both women and men, must be allowed free movement in order to distribute goods or services for the benefit of the most affected population. We also reiterate the need to minimize bureaucratic restrictions such as delays in approving

visas or work permits, as these impede an effective response in line with humanitarian principles.

Thirdly, we have an obligation to protect children, who are particularly affected by this conflict. Many of them are victims of explosive remnants of war, deprived of schooling or recruited for war efforts. We therefore urge all parties to the conflict to protect the welfare of children, to release them immediately from their ranks and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. We call on them to implement signed action plans and commitments on children in armed conflict. Furthermore, given the prevalence of threats related to mines and explosive remnants of war, we stress the importance of allowing essential equipment for humanitarian demining to be imported, and we call on the international community to mobilize to fill the funding gap.

Finally, with regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, Switzerland calls for a rapid implementation of the first phase of the salvage plan. Efforts to avoid an ecological disaster in the Red Sea must be redoubled.

The Council has repeatedly reaffirmed that the truce must be formally restored and extended into a permanent ceasefire. That is an essential step towards a lasting peace in Yemen. Switzerland reiterates this message today.

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

I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings today. Japan commends Mr. Grundberg's dedicated and continuous efforts towards realizing peace in Yemen.

Stability in Yemen is critical not only for peace and stability in the entire Middle East, but also for the security of the adjacent sea lanes, which are directly linked to the security of global supply chains, including for energy. In that light, we are deeply concerned about the unstable security situation in Yemen, which was exacerbated by the Houthi attacks on the Al-Dabba oil terminal and the Qan'ah seaport in October and November.

We appreciate that the Government of Yemen and countries of the region, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, have made concerted efforts to renew the truce

among the parties to the conflict. There is no military solution to this conflict. A political solution through dialogue is the only option. We strongly support the ongoing efforts of the Special Envoy, concerned parties and the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and hope that such engagement will lead to a concrete peace process.

Japan calls on the parties concerned, especially the Houthis, to take the necessary actions to renew the truce in Yemen, thereby paving the way for constructive talks towards realizing a durable peace. The long-standing conflict in Yemen has led to the world's worst humanitarian crisis. In order to meet the urgent needs of people in a dire situation, Japan, as a major donor country, has been providing humanitarian assistance to Yemen, in cooperation with international organizations. We commend the United Nations and all humanitarian workers — male and female — in Yemen for their tireless efforts to deliver assistance under extremely difficult circumstances. All parties concerned have to make sure that humanitarian activities are being conducted without obstructions.

This year, Japan will continue to support the people of Yemen by providing an additional humanitarian assistance package. That includes assistance for the United Nations plan for the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, as we believe it is imperative to prevent the unleashing of a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe in the region.

However, providing humanitarian assistance alone is not sufficient to deliver peace and stability in Yemen. It is also important to create an environment in which the Yemeni people, including women, can engage in economic activity. To that end, we believe that our assistance to strengthen the functions of the port of Aden should play an important role in the reconstruction of the economy. We also believe that our capacity-building programme for officials of the Government of Yemen can contribute to Yemen's economic recovery, which is essential for long-term peace.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council that Japan remains committed to continuing to make efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations and countries concerned, to realize peace and stability in Yemen.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to express my sincere wishes for success in your tasks. I also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of India, for her successful presidency last month. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks for the role played by India, Kenya, Ireland, Mexico and Norway during their membership in the Security Council and to express our sincere wishes for success to Japan, Mozambique, Ecuador, Switzerland and Malta during their membership in the Council, which begins this month. I also thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings.

More than three months have passed since the Houthi militias refused to renew and expand the truce, which was aimed at alleviating the human suffering of the Yemeni people. Despite the fact that the Yemeni Government, under the guidance of the Presidential Leadership Council, continues to show absolute flexibility by continuing to facilitate commercial flights to and from Sana'a airport and enabling fuel ships to reach the port of Al-Hudaydah to alleviate human suffering, the Houthi militias continue to deepen the human suffering of Yemenis by manipulating the fuel black market, obstructing the work of banks and financial institutions and creating a parallel economy by preventing the circulation of national currency notes in the areas under their control. Most dangerous of all is the insistence of those terrorist militias on rejecting the option of peace and pushing towards violence and a return to the beginning of the conflict through their terrorist escalation that targets civilians, displaced persons and the capabilities of the Yemeni people.

My country's Government has addressed the Council over the past months about the flagrant violations committed by the Houthi militias, their continual terrorist attacks on ports and economic facilities and their explicit threats to Member States of the United Nations. While my country's Government appreciates the Council's unified voice in condemning the Houthi terrorist attack of 21 October 2022 in a statement to the press issued by the Council, such statements are no longer enough, and greater commitment to peace in Yemen must be demonstrated

by using all means of applying pressure on the terrorist Houthi militias and the Iranian regime that supports them.

The Presidential Leadership Council reaffirms its commitment to the option of peace and supports the efforts of the United Nations to end the conflict and achieve sustainable peace based on the terms of reference of the political solution in Yemen, namely, the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its implementation mechanisms, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). However, peace cannot be achieved without a real partner who abandons the option of war and believes in equal rights for all Yemeni people, and who abandons violence as a means of imposing his political agenda. Our many experiences with those militias, the latest of which are the truce efforts, prove to the world with conclusive evidence what the Yemeni Government has repeatedly warned with regard to the fact that the Houthi militias unfortunately have no desire for peace, but are working to exploit the efforts of the United Nations as a cover for their terrorist behaviour against civilians and civilian facilities in Yemen and the region, threatening international shipping lines and evading any entreaties within the peace efforts. All of that requires the Council and the United Nations to find a new approach to the peace process.

In the light of the procrastination, threats and evasion adopted by the Houthi militias, the approach adopted during the past period has brought Yemenis nothing but a further tightening of the Houthi grip around the necks of Yemenis and prolonging the conflict, while enabling the militias to undermine all efforts aimed at achieving peace. That has led to deepening the humanitarian, economic and social crisis, while the Houthis continue to brainwash millions of children in so-called summer camps, recruiting them and thrusting them into the front lines.

They are also violating women's rights, assaulting them and using sexual violence as a means of suppressing the voices of Yemeni women. In an unsurprising step similar to that taken by the Taliban, the Houthi militias impose the *mahram* system and deprive Yemeni women of their right to education and to participate in public life, at a time when the importance of the role and participation of women at all levels, including efforts to provide humanitarian aid and participate in the political process, is evident.

All the efforts of the Council and the United Nations will continue to fall short as long as the rogue Iranian regime continues to interfere in the internal affairs of my country. That regime continues to support the Houthi militias in prolonging the war, taking the lives of thousands of Yemenis and endangering regional and international peace and security. The Iranian regime continues to transfer weapons and military technology, including ballistic missiles and drones, to the Houthi militias, in flagrant violation of international resolutions, in particular resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2624 (2022).

The interception of a group of ships carrying Iranian weapons bound for Yemen since the end of the truce, including a ship carrying more than 50 tons of ammunition, fuses and propellant for missiles and another ship carrying quantities of missile fuel and explosive materials, in addition to a ship carrying 2,116 assault rifles, were all en route to the Houthi militias. The Tehran regime is escalating arms smuggling operations in preparation for a new round of conflict in Yemen. Therefore, we call on the Council to shoulder its responsibilities for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security and to stop that destructive behaviour, through which the Iranian regime aims to escape from internal responsibilities and meet the demands of the Iranian people, while destabilizing the security and stability of the region by supporting terrorist militias.

Over the past years, the war has destroyed Yemen's cities and countryside, crushed livelihoods and turned the country into an active hotbed for exporting violence in an attempt to turn my country into a springboard for threatening the security of the region and the world. In view of the repeated attacks and terrorist acts by the Houthi militias on the Yemeni people and neighbouring countries, the National Defence Council decided to classify them as a terrorist organization, a measure that requires the Security Council and the international community to move from condemning those terrorist acts to collective action to deter them by including the Houthi militias in the Security Council's list of the terrorist groups as a means of pressure to return to the peace track and the political process, especially since resolution 2664 (2022) has ensured the removal of any sources of concern related to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The Government of Yemen appreciates the United Nations-led efforts to alleviate the scale of human

suffering exacerbated by Houthi terrorist attacks on oil and economic facilities, aimed at cutting off revenues needed to pay salaries and provide basic services.

In addition, the complexities of the economic situation imposed by the Houthi militias by preventing the circulation of the national currency in the areas under their control are pushing more Yemenis to rely fully or partially on humanitarian aid. Therefore, we call on the international community to provide generous support to the Yemen humanitarian response plan for 2023, pressure the Houthi militias to stop their terrorist attacks, allow the circulation of the national currency throughout Yemen and stop the procedures imposed on banks operating with humanitarian organizations.

In conclusion, the situation of the *FSO SAFER* tanker poses a serious threat to Yemen, the region and the world. Unless that dossier is dealt with urgently, the region and the world may one day wake up to an environmental, humanitarian and economic disaster, which will double the human suffering and will cost tens of billions of dollars if it occurs, in addition to disrupting international shipping lanes and destroying the economic and living resources of millions of people in Yemen and the region. The Yemeni Government expressed its support and readiness to facilitate the United Nations-led efforts to address the situation of the tanker. However, serious concern about the prolonged delay in the implementation of that plan cannot be ignored. We once again call on the United Nations to expedite the implementation of the salvage plan in accordance with the proper procedures to avoid an imminent and unfortunate disaster. We warn against the manipulation and procrastination of the Houthi militias and the exploitation of that dossier for political blackmailing.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Japan's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, wishing you every success during your presidency. I cannot fail to note the positive role of the Government of Japan in alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people, for which we are sincerely grateful.

I would also like to congratulate the new members that joined the Council at the beginning of this month and wish them every success. I would like

as well to sincerely thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, for his valuable briefing, delivered from Sana'a, and I commend his tireless and concrete efforts, which we hope will succeed in bringing peace to Yemen. We also support the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and we thank him for his briefing. We appreciate his and his team's tangible efforts in Yemen, which contribute to alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

Since the Houthi militias refused to extend the truce on 2 October 2022, the United Nations has been making efforts through Mr. Grundberg and in cooperation with the coalition countries, specifically the Government of my country, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman and the Presidential Leadership Council, which is the legitimate representative of the Yemeni people. Those efforts did not stop for a moment, with the aim of establishing peace in Yemen. We have all witnessed the insistence of regional and international partners, along with the legitimate Government in all its components, on taking the peaceful path and supporting the United Nations efforts led by Mr. Grundberg to reach a comprehensive political solution that will get the brotherly Yemeni people out of their current plight. The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to support that path and the efforts of Mr. Grundberg until a peaceful solution is reached that returns Yemen to its people with its legitimate Government.

As is known, all Yemeni parties agreed last year to extend the truce in accordance with the Kingdom's initiative to end the Yemeni crisis and reach a comprehensive political solution in the country. However, the Houthi militias refused to extend the truce for political reasons and opportunistic factional ambitions, as they reneged on their commitments at the last minute, cancelled most of the items that were agreed upon and submitted new demands, including the payment of salaries in United States dollars to militia members, refused to implement their pledge to deposit the revenues from the ports of Al-Hudaydah in the Central Bank of Yemen, to be disbursed to all Yemenis, and refused to lift the siege on the besieged city of Taiz since the coup.

On the other hand, the legitimate Government did not reciprocate with the coup forces and did not change its noble, humanitarian and national positions or retreat from the concessions it made during the truce phase, Sana'a airport is still operating and civil, commercial

and humanitarian flights to a number of destinations are continuing. The ports of Al-Hudaydah, Ras Issa and others are operating smoothly and normally according to the United Nations Mechanism for Inspection and Verification. That undoubtedly reflects the awareness, wisdom and patriotism of the leadership of the legitimate Government when it comes to putting the interests of the Yemeni people — all its groups and affiliations — above all other considerations.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries have not yet sensed any real desire on the part of the Houthi militias to end the conflict in Yemen and reach a comprehensive political solution that will get Yemen out of the security and humanitarian impasse it has been in since the militia-led coup in 2014. It is indeed a delicate and extremely sensitive moment that once again makes the Houthi leadership face the international community and gives it another opportunity to prioritize the Yemeni national interests, lay down arms, accept a political solution and engage in serious and direct talks in good faith in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, the international resolutions and the relevant regional initiatives. This is a historic moment, and we hope that the Houthis will abide by all the commitments they have already made during the negotiations and avoid thwarting peace efforts at the last minute.

History will record that the Security Council has failed to take firm action regarding the atrocities and crimes that continue to be committed by the Houthi militias against the Yemeni people, which are prohibited by all international laws and norms, such as planting extremist and terrorist ideas in the minds of younger generations within educational institutions, the continued recruitment of children and sending them forcefully to the battlefronts, the continued siege of the city of Taiz, the arbitrary arrests of journalists and activists, the liquidation of opponents, the imposition of taxes on humanitarian work, the looting of international aid and directing it to those who do not deserve it through the Houthi arm called the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and International Cooperation, and indiscriminately planting mines that lead to the killing and injuring of innocent civilians. In that regard, we recall that the convoy of the Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodaydah Agreement, General Michael Perry, and his accompanying team were exposed to an

explosion last year due to a mine planted by the Houthi group in Al-Hudaydah.

The crimes and atrocities of the Houthi militias also include collective punishment by depriving the Yemeni people in areas not under the control of the militias from obtaining power by targeting the export of natural resources, the income of which is used to pay teachers and workers in the public and health sectors, as happened when the port of Al-Dabba in Hadramawt was targeted late last year.

In short, we can say that, since the 2014 coup, the Yemeni people have become hostages in the hands of the Houthi militias, who control their destiny and impose their extremist ideology on them, as well as blackmailing the international community with the humanitarian situation and threatening the security of the region and the world.

In the face of such atrocities and crimes, and in view of the responsibilities entrusted to the Security Council, more stringent measures should be taken against those militias if they continue to procrastinate and reject peaceful solutions. The designation of those militias as a terrorist group has become an urgent matter and a demand from all peoples of the region who wish to live in peace.

On the other hand, we call for the need to establish an independent international supervisory committee to follow up the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. Events on the ground have proved that the Houthi militias did not abide by the agreement signed

in Stockholm, as the port of Al-Hudaydah still receives smuggled weapons and ammunition used by the militias against the defenceless Yemeni people, including as well to target the countries of the region. There is still a military presence at the port. There is no international mechanism whatsoever to monitor and check port activities. The Houthi militias deliberately put obstacles and impediments in the way of United Nations monitors as they carry out their inspection tasks, in addition to the fact that Al-Hudaydah is still full of mines everywhere, and we believe that the port in its current state represents a threat to international peace and security.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to our allies in the United States of America. Last week, a United States marine force intercepted a ship off the coast of Oman containing weapons and ammunition in transit to the Houthi militias, which are supported by Iran. That constitutes another violation against the Security Council resolutions related to the arms embargo.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will continue to support the international efforts in Yemen pursuant to the relevant international and regional initiatives and resolutions. The coalition countries will never hesitate to defend themselves if those militias target their security and interests, the Kingdom or the Gulf countries in any way. Those militias will be responded to with firmness and force.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.