



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9282nd meeting

Wednesday, 15 March 2023, 10.35 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Afonso	(Mozambique)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Ms. Gatt
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 21 February 2023 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/130)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 21 February 2023 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/130)

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, and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/130, which contains a letter dated 21 February 2023 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Grundberg, Ms. Msuya and Ms. Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania, in her capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

I now give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: I brief the Council as Yemenis and Muslims around the world look forward to the holy month of Ramadan. Having lived in this region for many years, I have come to really appreciate the holy month of Ramadan as a time of reflection and hope.

Almost a year ago, as Ramadan was just beginning, the United Nations-mediated truce ushered in a new phase of relative calm on the front lines and gave us the opportunity to make progress on efforts to relieve the suffering of the Yemeni people. As the holy month approaches again and despite the dire economic and humanitarian situation, Yemen is still benefiting from the achievements of the truce. But of course, all the

Yemenis I have talked to hope for a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. That remains my priority.

The overall military situation in Yemen continues to be relatively stable. Since the truce came into effect on 2 April last year, Yemeni men and women have experienced almost one year of lower levels of violence. But that is fragile. I am concerned about the uptick in the number and intensity of clashes in several front-line areas, in particular along the fronts in Marib and Taiz. I call on the parties to exercise maximum restraint during this critical time, including by refraining from escalatory public rhetoric, in order to avoid destabilizing the situation. In addition to the relative calm, elements of the truce continue to be implemented. Thanks to the valuable support of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, commercial flights continue to operate three times a week between Sana'a and Amman. Fuel ships, along with other commodities, continue to enter the ports of Al-Hudaydah. Yet those gains are also fragile. Daily life remains a struggle for most Yemenis. The economic situation continues to be dire, with the sadly familiar pattern of tit-for-tat economic retaliations rather than cooperation. New restrictions hinder the freedom of movement of civilians, particularly women, and impede commercial traffic between different parts of the country. Yemenis' access to basic services remains limited. That underscores what I stated almost one year ago (see S/PV.9017) — that the truce can only be a stepping stone. We urgently need to build on what was achieved by the truce and work towards a nationwide ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement to end the conflict in Yemen.

With the security situation remaining relatively stable but no agreement on the way forward, Yemen may seem to be in a precarious political holding pattern. Nonetheless, intense diplomatic efforts are ongoing at different levels to bring the conflict in Yemen to an end. We are currently witnessing a renewed regional diplomatic momentum, as well as a step change in the scope and depth of the discussions. I welcome the continued efforts of Member States of the region, in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, and I ask the parties to seize the opportunities created by the regional momentum. I also call on all sides to maintain an environment conducive to discussions and to allow the time and space needed for the discussions to bear fruit. Impatience at this juncture risks a return to a cycle of violence and unravelling what has been achieved to date.

I have been clear in previous briefings to the Security Council that short-term solutions and a piecemeal approach can only bring partial relief. A ceasefire and a sustainable political settlement can be achieved only through a more comprehensive approach. I continue to actively engage with the Yemeni parties, as well as regional and international stakeholders, to achieve that objective. The parties, as well as States of the region, are clear that any understanding reached as part of the ongoing discussions must be translated into an inter-Yemeni agreement under United Nations auspices. A resumption of the political process is a central element in that regard and remains at the core of my mandate.

The political process must take into account the complexities of the conflict. It will be a difficult process, which requires strong planning and a vision backed by the commitment of the parties. In that regard, I welcome the recent efforts of the Government of Yemen through the ongoing work of the Consultation and Reconciliation Commission. I stand ready to work with the Yemeni parties and support them, so that when the political process starts, they can engage with confidence and a clear sense of direction. A political process that addresses the concerns and aspirations of the Yemeni people must be Yemeni-owned and inclusive. It must include the voices of a wide range of Yemeni stakeholders, including young people, civil society and women. Last week's observance of International Women's Day serves as an occasion to reflect on the role that women play in furthering peace, but is also a reminder of the continued risks and restrictions they face. Women are central to the social fabric of Yemen and their meaningful participation is essential for moving Yemen forward. I remain committed to promoting the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of the peace process, in line with the women and peace and security agenda, as outlined in resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions.

Allow me to also briefly update the Council about the meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees' Exchange Agreement, which is co-chaired by my Office and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Deliberations are still ongoing between the parties, and I ask them to continue to engage in good faith. It is my sincere hope that they will be able to implement their obligations under the Stockholm Agreement to release all conflict-related detainees. I urge the parties to finalize the details of

the current phase they have agreed on, including the implementation plan, and I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting those talks.

Returning to my overall efforts to achieve peace in Yemen, I reiterate my appreciation for the Council's unity and steadfast support. That support and unity of purpose was underscored during my recent visits to Moscow, Abu Dhabi, Paris, Tehran and Riyadh. Allow me to also take this opportunity to welcome the recent agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic ties, which was facilitated by the People's Republic of China. That dialogue and good-neighbourly relations are important for the region and for Yemen. The parties must seize the opportunity presented by that regional and international momentum to take decisive steps towards a more peaceful future. That requires patience and a long-term perspective — and it requires courage and leadership. Much has been achieved over the past year, and now is the time to take the next steps.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: As we said in recent briefings, the past year has brought a number of improvements to Yemen. The truce, of course, was a major step forward. The fact that many of its key provisions have persisted, even months after the truce itself expired, raises hopes. As ever, we want to reaffirm our support for Mr. Grundberg's work, and we want to commend the efforts in the region to support United Nations mediation and promote peace. Another improvement has been the decline in the number of people going hungry in Yemen, which has fallen by almost 2 million people. The number of people facing the worst level of hunger — the phase 5 level of the Integrated Phase Classification — has dropped to zero. That is largely thanks to the tireless efforts of humanitarian workers, the generous support of donors and the truce itself. There has also been progress on the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. Last week, the United Nations Development Programme announced the purchase of a replacement vessel that should arrive in Al-Hudaydah in May, which means that the offloading operation could be finished by September — if donors quickly provide the remaining \$34 million needed.

But we must not rejoice too much, because Yemen remains a staggering emergency. This year, more than 17 million people are counting on aid agencies for

assistance and protection. But too often, agencies do not have what they need to help. That is what I want to discuss today. Access and security are still major challenges, funding is in short supply and economic problems are pushing even more people into destitution.

Let me start with the perennial challenge of access and security. For once, there is a bit of good news on that issue. Agencies are now increasingly present in places that were previously extremely hard to reach due to fighting, constraints imposed by the authorities and internal United Nations security rules. In recent weeks, agencies have reached former front-line areas in Al-Hudaydah, remote parts of Hajjah hosting numerous displaced people, and other hard-to-access locations. Those missions are part of a larger commitment to move the aid operation as far as possible out of the major hubs and closer to people's needs, wherever they might be. The Houthi authorities also recently accelerated their approvals of aid projects in the areas under their control, which is welcome.

But despite those rays of light, the overall picture on access and security remains very dark. In Houthi-controlled areas, Yemeni women aid workers are still unable to travel without male guardians, both within and out of the country, which has caused serious disruptions to the ability of agencies to assist women and girls safely and reliably. The humanitarian community calls on the Houthi authorities to lift all such movement restrictions and work with us to identify an acceptable way forward on that issue. In addition, Houthi attempts to interfere with aid operations remain rife and include efforts to force agencies to select certain contractors for third-party monitoring and assessments. Moreover, two United Nations staff members remain detained in Sana'a following their arrest by Houthi authorities in November 2021. We ask for their immediate release.

Agencies are also concerned about growing vaccine scepticism, particularly in Houthi-held areas, and the role that is playing in the rising rates of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and polio. Given the current levels of malnutrition, we worry that low rates of vaccine coverage will cause even more children to fall sick or die from measles, polio and other diseases. On top of those challenges, insecurity persists in many areas, threatening aid workers and preventing access in some places, especially in Shabwah and Abyan. It has now been more than one year since five United Nations staff members were kidnapped in Abyan. Again, we ask for their immediate release.

Donors have all of those issues at the top of their minds as they consider where to spend their money this year. Many of them are asking whether principled aid delivery is even possible in such an environment. For now, the answer is still "yes". Last year, aid agencies assisted nearly 11 million people every month. Doing so is much harder than it should be and often requires many rounds of discussions, leading to numerous delays — but it was and still is possible. We can absolutely keep going if we have enough money.

That brings me to my next point: funding for the aid operation. Two weeks ago, the Secretary-General joined the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland in hosting the seventh annual Yemen pledging event, at which more than 30 donors promised \$1.16 billion for humanitarian action. Given everything else going on in the world, that is an impressive result, and my thanks go to those donors. However, it is also the lowest amount that the event has raised since 2017 and will not be nearly enough to get the aid operation through the end of the year. At the pledging event, many donors raised serious concerns over the impediments by Houthi authorities, in particular the *mahram* requirements that restrict the movement of Yemeni women aid workers.

We know that donor funds are tight and that other crises compete for their support. Donors often point out that many of those other emergencies come with fewer concerns for them in spending their money. Therefore, for now, we urgently advocate the immediate disbursement of all pledges. The promises made at the Yemen pledging event need to be honoured — and quickly. That is essential to ensure the continuity of essential programmes, some of which are already closing. We will also continue to advocate the full funding of the response plan, for which we need \$4.3 billion to help 17 million people. As we do so, we will work closely with donors and other stakeholders on the access problems that I spoke about earlier and about which so many donors warned us at the event. We also remain deeply worried about the need for more support to strengthen Yemen's economy. Economic decline is among the top drivers of humanitarian needs and aid agencies would like to do much more to help Yemenis move beyond the immediate crisis.

One priority is to clean up the terrible landmines and other explosives that are killing and maiming so many people, in addition to choking economic life. We are eager to start, but we need more resources and more specialized partners. Getting started also requires

ensuring that agencies face fewer obstacles and are able to deliver principled assistance. We have recently heard several important commitments in that regard.

Beyond mine action, the United Nations is working with donors and partners on a revised economic framework that will help address the broader economic drivers of humanitarian needs in Yemen. This year offers an important opportunity for making progress on those economic drivers, while we still have the benefit of a massive aid operation in the country. If we miss that opportunity, it will become much harder to ever transition towards a smaller aid operation without putting millions of lives at risk. Those efforts will depend on everyone's support — which means investment by donors and policy measures to promote economic growth. The Government of Yemen and the Arab coalition countries are already taking steps in that regard, including by providing more support to the Central Bank in Aden and easing regulations on imports bound for Red Sea ports. However, the loss of Government revenue following Houthi attacks on oil export infrastructure in October remains a serious challenge, particularly with regard to the efforts to pay salaries and fund basic services.

As we move into the holy month of Ramadan, we hope that everyone will take stock of the situation in Yemen and how the world can help, including by making efforts to address the issues I have just described, as well as by supporting the work under way to deliver what Yemen really needs more than anything else: peace.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Dautllari.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), pursuant to paragraph 19 (e) thereof. The most recent such briefing took place one year ago, on 15 February 2022 (see S/PV.8966). As such, this briefing will cover the period from 15 February 2022 to date.

Since the most recent briefing to the Council, the members of the Committee have met four times in informal consultations. During the informal consultations held on 10 June 2022, the Committee heard a presentation by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. During the informal consultations held on 9 September

2022, the Committee heard a presentation by the Panel of Experts on Yemen on its mid-term update, which was submitted to the Committee on 28 July; of the eight recommendations contained in that update, the Committee acted on one. During the informal consultations held on 29 November, the Committee met jointly with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia to discuss issues related to the smuggling of weapons between Yemen and Somalia. During the informal consultations held on 20 February, the Committee heard a presentation by the Panel of Experts on Yemen on its final report, which was submitted to the Committee on 30 December 2022 and to the Security Council on 21 February (see S/2023/130). The Committee also discussed the recommendations addressed to it and is currently considering follow-up actions.

During the reporting period, through resolution 2624 (2022) of 28 February 2022, the Houthis were listed as an entity subject to the targeted arms embargo. Furthermore, on 26 September 2022 the Committee approved the inclusion of two individuals on its sanctions list, and on 4 October it approved the inclusion of an additional individual. The Committee did not receive any de-listing requests during the reporting period. Also during the reporting period on 1 November 2022, the Committee received a notification of an exemption to the assets freeze under paragraph 12 (a) of resolution 2140 (2014); no negative decision was taken by the Committee on that notification. The Committee continued to receive vessel inspection reports from the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.

The President: I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to express our deep sympathy to Mozambique and Malawi following the catastrophic cyclone that hit the two countries. We reaffirm our solidarity with those countries for that disaster.

I thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their briefings. I also thank the United Nations for its efforts to support peace in Yemen. I would like to thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania,

Ms. Albana Dautllari, for her statement and for her efforts undertaken as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014). I also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of Yemen.

Despite the fragile situation in Yemen, the current situation is better than it was one year ago. The intensity of confrontations has diminished, and the Yemeni Government continues to implement several confidence-building measures, despite the continued violations by the Houthis. In that context, we welcome the convening of the seventh meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees Exchange Agreement and the progress made with regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. Based on the recent developments in Yemen, I would like to make four points:

First, the current focus should be on intensifying efforts to achieve a permanent agreement that halts hostilities and to launch comprehensive political negotiations among the Yemeni parties. The Houthis must heed the call for peace and genuinely respond to the proposals for ending the conflict. If they persist in their intransigence, we will hold them fully accountable for the continued plight of the Yemenis. We also commend the considerable efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide humanitarian, economic and political support to the Yemeni people, and we reiterate our support for the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council.

Secondly, the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law, the human rights abuses and the crimes perpetrated by the Houthis against civilians and civilian infrastructure must end. We strongly condemn those violations, including the blockades, shelling, laying of mines, attacks on Yemeni ports, arbitrary detentions, torture and forced disappearance. Of particular concern are the violations perpetrated against women and children. The Houthis persist in their indoctrination campaigns targeting children, including through summer camps and altering school curricula to include extremist ideology. The Houthis also continue to undermine Yemeni women's rights and restrict their role in society, necessitating intensive efforts and serious actions to end those unacceptable oppressive practices.

Thirdly, we appreciate all efforts to enforce the arms embargo imposed on the Houthis. We thank the United States, United Kingdom and French navies for

their efforts in intercepting and confiscating smuggled shipments destined for the Houthis, which threaten maritime navigation, security and stability in the region. We call for strict compliance with the arms embargo and for undertaking a constructive role in achieving a sustainable political settlement in Yemen.

Fourthly, we emphasize the need to continue supporting the humanitarian response and economic recovery efforts in Yemen. We welcome the convening of the donors' conference in Geneva last month. The United Arab Emirates will this year implement development, rehabilitation and humanitarian projects valued at \$325 million in the health-care, renewable energy and agricultural sectors. Those projects include the construction of the Hassan Dam in the Abyan Governorate, benefiting about 13,000 farmers, as well as a renewable energy project in Aden that will generate 120 megawatts of energy. Also, the United Arab Emirate deposited \$300 million in the Central Bank of Yemen at the end of last year to support the stability of the Yemeni rial.

In conclusion, we fully support efforts to reach a political solution to the crisis in Yemen that will end the ongoing conflict, address the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people, and achieve security, stability and prosperity in Yemen and throughout the entire region.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank our distinguished briefers for their informative updates on the situation in Yemen. Brazil extends its deepest appreciation to them for their efforts in search of a better future for the Yemeni people. I also welcome the delegation of Yemen to today's meeting.

The ongoing civil war in Yemen has brought untold suffering to the Yemeni people and plunged the country into a humanitarian crisis. It has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and left millions more without access to medical care, water and food. As made evident by the High-level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, held in Geneva last month, humanitarian action remains vital to saving countless lives in the country, with two thirds of its population in need of assistance. Brazil has made a financial pledge to be channelled to the World Food Programme, with a view to contributing to the promotion of access to potable water and basic sanitation in Yemen.

However, much remains to be done. A key element is to ensure that Yemen has proper access to affordable food and resources to rebuild its food system in line

with the recommendation of the most recent white note of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the topic. As one of the focal points for armed conflict and hunger at the Security Council, and notwithstanding recent progress on the ground, which we welcome, Brazil continues to believe that the food-security situation in Yemen deserves special attention, as set out in the most recent *Hunger Hotspots* report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme.

The promotion of food security is a crucial means to achieving stability and reinforcing trust, de-escalate competition over available resources and forging a path to conflict resolution and durable solutions. Sanctions and unilateral measures that may hinder access to agricultural goods must be avoided. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Yemen should have the necessary conditions to enact the proposed transformations in favour of the priority attributed to food security.

Furthermore, facilitated access to financial resources must be insured, especially with regard to food-import needs, in accordance with the FAO's proposal for a food-import financing facility and the Food Shock Window of the International Monetary Fund.

It is difficult to achieve food security in a protracted crisis, and it is even more difficult to achieve peace and stabilization without improving the security situation. Brazil believes that the advancement of the intra-Yemen dialogue is key, as illustrated by ongoing efforts to exchange prisoners of war, among other initiatives. In this vein, we highly encourage the pursuit of direct negotiations between the parties as a means of enhancing mutual understanding, building trust and bridging all outstanding differences. At this crucial moment, we would insist on the importance of continued restraint from taking any escalatory actions, especially against civilian targets.

The latest developments in the salvage operation of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker mark a promising step towards the protection of the Red Sea region. This has been a looming threat for far too long, and the recent news is a testament to the power of collective action through the joint efforts of all parties involved. It is Brazil's hope that all measures are soon implemented so that the tanker is safely replaced, and the risk of an environmental disaster entirely eliminated.

In brief, Brazil reiterates its steadfast support for Special Envoy Grundberg's resolute efforts in favour of a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Brazil urges both parties to show the necessary flexibility, engage constructively in meaningful dialogue and pave the way for a future of peace, stability and development for Yemen.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Mozambique and my own country, Ghana (A3).

We thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their briefings and welcome the participation of the representative of the Republic of Yemen to today's meeting. We also thank Ms. Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania, for her briefing on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

Since this is the first joint statement of the A3 on Yemen, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to collectively encourage the continuing efforts of the Special Envoy to bring the Yemeni people together around the concept of an inclusive Yemeni-led peace that delivers security, stability and prosperity to all Yemenis.

In respect of the political processes, we are encouraged that the elements of the expired truce continue to hold, affording the people of Yemen the rare opportunity to enjoy the longest period of relative calm since 2015. We encourage the parties to seize this period of tranquillity to advance engagements that could lead to a national dialogue where the crisis in the country would be addressed.

We believe the people of Yemen deserve more and, accordingly, welcome the parties' continuing engagements with regional stakeholders and the Special Envoy to renew and expand the truce, particularly the efforts involving local solutions for local problems. We pledge our support for every effort that will help restore lasting peace in Yemen. We encourage the parties, especially the Houthis, to engage constructively with the Government in good faith, motivated solely by the best interests of the people of Yemen.

We welcome the commencement of the seventh meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the implementation of the Detainees' Exchange

Agreement last week in Geneva. It is an important confidence-building measure by the parties that we hope will lead to an agreement on the release of all detainees in fulfilment of their obligation under the Stockholm Agreement. The release of detainees will give hope and help ease the pain of the many Yemeni families that have been waiting anxiously to know the fate of their loved ones.

While there has not been any major military escalation, we remain concerned about the risk from ongoing limited military activity along the front lines in Ma'rib, Sa'dah, Al-Hudaydah and Lahij governorates. We renew our appeal to the parties to continue to adhere to the elements of the United Nations-brokered truce and to stave off any action that might potentially unravel the fragile security situation in the country.

Addressing the high humanitarian needs of Yemen remains of utmost importance and must continue to engage the attention of the international community. The scale of the humanitarian challenge faced by Yemen is daunting. Two thirds of Yemen's population — some 21.6 million people — still depend on outside aid, and more than 2 million Yemeni children suffer from acute malnutrition. Despite the soaring levels of hunger and poverty, funding shortages in recent years have forced the United Nations to scale back or cut half of its programmes, including emergency food assistance. The A3 therefore welcomes the generous pledges made by donors last month in Geneva, at the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, amounting to about \$1.2 billion to support the humanitarian relief efforts in the country.

As we laud this resource-mobilization effort, we note with concern that it falls far below the target of \$4.3 billion and corresponds to just 28 per cent of what the United Nations said was required to prevent the further deterioration of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. We make an urgent appeal to the donor community to shore up support to help bridge the funding gap and ensure that every Yemeni in need of support is able to receive it.

It is regrettable that, notwithstanding the Council's repeated appeals to the parties, constraints in access continue to be a major barrier to the efficient and effective delivery of aid in Yemen. The imposition of administrative and bureaucratic impediments to the operations of humanitarian agencies, including restrictions on the movement of female staff, affect the

delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to segments of Yemeni society. We are particularly concerned about the persistence of the *mahram* obligation imposed on female humanitarian staff, which requires them to be accompanied by male guardians in Houthi-controlled areas. Such restrictions have a negative impact on the work of humanitarian workers and hinder access to aid. It bears repeating that the parties, particularly the Houthis, have an obligation to grant unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to all those in need under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

On a broader scale, we are concerned about the recurrence of various violations of women's rights, particularly their fundamental rights to movement, expression, work and access to health care, as well as protection from gender-based violence.

Supporting Yemen's weak economy should remain a key part of the international community's efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in the country. Improvement in the socioeconomic conditions in the country will help to reduce dependence on humanitarian aid. On that note, we welcome the decision of the Yemeni Government to allow commercial imports into the Red Sea ports, as that will further boost the country's economy. We reiterate our call for international support for Yemen's economy as part of the efforts to improve the living conditions of the people.

The risk posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war in Yemen remains high. One of the consequences of the reduction in hostilities appears to be the high incidence of landmine explosions as civilian activities and movements increase. As we call for increased international action to deal with the issue, we appeal for greater local support in the country to curb that threat. In addition to ensuring civilian safety, increased demining efforts will be required to help to free up the affected agricultural land for food production and facilitate the country's early economic recovery.

In recent times, childhood vaccines have become the subject of misinformation and disinformation in Houthi-controlled areas, threatening to undermine people's confidence in vaccines and their willingness to vaccinate their children. We deplore such propaganda against time-tested vaccines that have protected children all over the world from preventable diseases, such as tetanus, polio, meningitis and measles, among others. We call on those spreading the falsehood to desist

from that act, and we urge the Yemeni Government to intensify its campaign against the spread of such malicious information.

On the issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil vessel off Yemen's Red Sea coast, we welcome the acquisition of a crude carrier by the United Nations as an initial step towards transferring the oil from the decaying vessel, and we look forward to its speedy arrival in Yemen. We urge the parties to allow the salvage operation to go ahead unhindered. We commend the United Nations and all stakeholders that have brought us thus far, and we note the shortfall of approximately \$34 million still required for the emergency phase of the operation.

The potential environmental and humanitarian damage and the resultant cost of clean-up of approximately \$20 billion far outweigh the funding gap sought. It is therefore in the collective interest of the international community to raise the remaining amount as soon as practicable before the vessel's arrival in Yemen in May.

In conclusion, the A3 underscores the need for the parties to prioritize the interests of the people of Yemen over and above any other interest. The solution to the crisis in Yemen is political. We therefore encourage the parties to negotiate directly in good faith and urge them to refrain from any provocations that could lead to an escalation in violence. The parties must continue to make concessions, strive to find common ground to renew and extend the truce agreement and ultimately find a lasting and comprehensive solution to the crisis.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by joining other speakers in offering condolences to Mozambique and Malawi for the terrible damage that Cyclone Freddy has caused in those countries. I thank Mr. Grundberg and Ms. Msuya for their briefings.

As Ramadan approaches, so too does the one-year anniversary of the United Nations-brokered truce. The United Kingdom welcomes the continued efforts towards a negotiated political settlement and reiterates the need for dialogue to bring together all Yemeni parties. We urge the Houthis to engage directly with the internationally recognized Government of Yemen and with the United Nations. An inclusive political settlement is the only way to bring about stability in Yemen.

While we work towards long-term stability, as other speakers said, we must also act to mitigate the suffering of the Yemeni people right now. Nearly 22 million Yemenis are in urgent need of assistance. The United Kingdom welcomes the vital role of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism in facilitating commercial cargo flows into Yemen to alleviate the suffering.

Mahram requirements in the north are excluding women from delivering and accessing assistance. As well as being an egregious injustice, that drives up the cost of living. We strongly urge the Houthi authorities to reconsider that policy.

Efforts to address economic instability are also fundamental to reducing the humanitarian need. The United Kingdom welcomes the generous financial contributions of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to address the serious economic situation of the Yemeni people.

Houthi terrorist attacks and threats have blocked the Government of Yemen's oil exports, again increasing the cost of living for Yemenis. We call on the Houthis to refrain from all escalatory action.

Arms smuggling is destabilizing Yemen and the region. The British Royal Navy and our United States and French partners continue to interdict Iranian arms shipments. We call on all involved to stop driving regional instability.

Finally, like other speakers, we welcome the major progress made on the *FSO SAFER* salvage operation. The procurement by the United Nations of a replacement vessel is a vital step towards mitigating the threat of a spill. But the mission does not stop there. We ask the United Nations to share its detailed budget and for the international community to step up and fill the \$34 million funding gap. Without that, the operation cannot start.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings today. I also extend our appreciation to Albania, in its capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), for its report. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to this meeting.

It has been six months since the United Nations-mediated truce formally lapsed on 2 October last year. While that was a great disappointment, it is

encouraging that key elements underpinning the truce broadly continue to hold and that the situation on the ground remains relatively stable. This current period of calm provides a crucial opportunity for the parties to advance the dialogue towards sustainable peace.

We acknowledge the coordinated efforts of regional partners in their support for peace in Yemen, and we stress the importance of Yemeni ownership in both the negotiation and the implementation phases of any agreement. An inclusive Yemeni-led process under the auspices of the United Nations, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, is the only way to achieve sustainable and long-lasting peace.

Independent and impartial human rights monitoring in Yemen is crucial to documenting serious violations on the ground. All parties to the conflict have the responsibility to protect Yemeni civilians, fully abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law and build on the progress made towards peace. Accountability and justice are essential foundations in building a stable future in Yemen. Malta is encouraged by the seventh meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the implementation of the Detainees' Exchange Agreement, which opened in Geneva last weekend. We commend the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their work and encourage parties to engage constructively in the discussions.

Malta remains deeply concerned about reported impediments to humanitarian access across Yemen. Parties must work to limit and overcome bureaucratic obstacles to ensure that life-saving aid reaches those in need in a timely manner. We also underline the need for adequate and predictable funding. It is in that spirit that Malta has made another financial contribution to the humanitarian response plan at the high-level pledging event held in Geneva in February. We commend Member States that have also pledged their support and encourage other countries in the region and beyond to contribute in a generous manner.

The imposition of *mahram* requirements in Houthi-controlled areas continues to prove to be a major detriment to Yemeni women's access to essential services, exacerbating their already vulnerable situation. Women humanitarian workers must be allowed to perform their crucial work without impediment. The increasing security issues faced by humanitarian actors also remain of grave concern, and

authorities must ensure the safety of aid workers and support staff. Like Assistant Secretary-General Msuya, we too are concerned about the United Nations staff in Sana'a detained by the Houthis and call for their immediate release.

Women and children continue to bear the brunt of the suffering in the conflict, accounting for more than three quarters of the 4.5 million displaced persons in Yemen, and experience compounding vulnerabilities. Millions of children not only suffer from acute hunger, but continue to be exposed to recruitment by armed groups, forced marriages, trafficking, child labour and even commercial sexual exploitation. Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim innocent civilians on a regular basis and have been the main cause of children's deaths since the truce began. Landmines also exacerbate the devastating impacts of the conflict, denying many Yemeni families access to their homes, farms and other sources that are essential to their livelihoods. In that respect, Malta calls for greater efforts in the demining process, particularly in the Al-Hudaydah region. To that end, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement in this important area.

I would also like to reiterate our thanks to Albania for its work as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), which has proven to be an important tool to advance peace and security in Yemen. In late February, a joint operation by the United Kingdom and the United States led to the seizure of anti-tank guided missiles and missile components in the Gulf of Oman. That underlines the continued fragility of the situation and the need to ensure strict adherence to the arms embargo.

In conclusion, Malta would like to extend its appreciation to United Nations colleagues for their tireless work regarding the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. The purchase of a very large crude carrier last week is a critical development in the United Nations-coordinated operation to avoid a catastrophic environmental, economic and humanitarian disaster. We hope that, in achieving that major step, the United Nations plan will be expedited to ensure that the imminent threat to Yemen and the region is resolved without further delay.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian

Affairs, Ms. Joyce Msuya, for their briefings. We also thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania, Ms. Albana Dautllari in her capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), for her briefing.

The situation on the ground in Yemen can be characterized as relatively stable. The return to a large-scale military confrontation has been avoided even in the absence of an official ceasefire. We hope that the calm in Yemen will continue and not be broken by a new round of tensions and that key Yemeni players will continue to adopt a constructive stance to allow for the resumption of the ceasefire and pave the way for a full-fledged political process. Under such circumstances, it is important to exercise restraint and avoid provocative actions. At the same time, as we continue to work towards de-escalation, we must not forget that, without broad dialogue on all political issues, achieving long-term stability will remain impossible.

We welcome all efforts to move the settlement of the Yemeni issue forward and reduce tensions in the Middle East, as a whole. We are convinced, however, that restoring the ceasefire in Yemen and consolidating its results through United Nations mediation and other important channels and mechanisms requires the harmonization of external approaches. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy to consolidate international assistance to the Yemeni parties.

The logical consequences of Hans Grundberg's efforts should be the development of a comprehensive and sustainable plan for a political settlement under United Nations auspices. That is not an easy job — it will require a constructive approach, flexibility and willingness to compromise. Besides, the international legal framework for a Yemeni settlement will need to be updated to reflect the realities on the ground. Our ultimate collective goal must be reaching a lasting and comprehensive solution to the many problems faced by Yemen and that greatly affect its neighbours. We believe that the emerging positive trends affecting Yemen's neighbours at the regional level could also contribute to that end.

For our part, we continue to encourage the official Yemeni authorities, represented by the Presidential Leadership Council, and the Houthis to adopt a constructive approach to resolving their differences. We are convinced that, in the current situation, we must focus on launching direct inter-Yemeni dialogue with

the participation of all parties involved in the conflict, including the Houthis. Such a format could be the prelude to returning the situation in Yemen to the path leading towards a peaceful political process.

We would like to recall that sanctions are one of the Security Council's most powerful instruments, and they are intended to restore peace and security, not punish anyone. They should be applied in a targeted and flexible manner and regularly reviewed until they are completely lifted, which also ultimately holds true in the context of Yemen. Accordingly, the work of the 2140 Committee should be carried out in a strictly neutral and depoliticized manner. The main task of its Chairs is to facilitate the search for consensus solutions in the face of what are sometimes the irreconcilable positions of its members. Their work must be as objective and impartial as possible. Care must also be taken to ensure that the Panel of Experts adheres to its mandate in its work. Its work should result in progress towards much-needed regional détente and create the conditions necessary for further de-escalation.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that the difficult socioeconomic situation in Yemen unfortunately persists, despite the many efforts of international and regional donors. We have consistently called for a lifting of all restrictions on the delivery of food, medicine and other essential goods to all areas of Yemen, without exception. We call on all stakeholders in the Yemeni settlement to continue their cooperation in that area with international financial organizations and to support the work of specialized United Nations agencies. We reiterate our support for the work of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would also to express my condolences to Mozambique and Malawi for the effects of the onslaught of Cyclone Freddy. Let me thank Special Envoy for the Secretary-General Hans Grundberg, Assistant Secretary-General Joyce Msuya and Ambassador Albana Dautllari for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of Yemen at this meeting.

Currently, the security situation in Yemen remains fragile. It has been more than five months since the truce ended. There have been sporadic exchanges of fire in some areas of the country. We call on the parties to the conflict to remain calm, exercise restraint and refrain from any action that may undermine mutual

trust and ignite tensions. Recently in Geneva, the two parties began talks on a prisoner exchange, brokered by Special Envoy Grundberg. China commends such talks and hopes the dialogue can yield positive outcomes and add to the enabling conditions for rebuilding trust and positive interaction.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains dire. The eight-year conflict has claimed nearly 400,000 lives, caused at least 13,000 casualties among women and children and forced more than 5 million people into displacement. Just when the Yemeni people are in urgent need of food, health care and infrastructure, many of the Organization's assistance programmes in the country are facing the risk of shutdown owing to insufficient funding. We welcome the United Nations high-level humanitarian pledging conference on Yemen. We call on the international community to scale up humanitarian and development input in Yemen in order to guarantee adequate funding for United Nations operations in the country.

China also calls on the parties concerned to lift unnecessary restrictions on the Organization's humanitarian operations. The risks posed by the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker affect the economic, humanitarian, security and environmental sectors and must be addressed without delay. China welcomes the announcement by the United Nations Development Programme that a replacement tanker has been found. We look forward to an early start of crude oil transfer.

Dialogue and negotiations are the only realistic way to resolve the Yemeni issue. China calls on all parties concerned to uphold the overriding goal of political settlement, put the interests of the Yemeni people first, fully demonstrate their political will and move proactively and positively in the same direction. The international community must make efforts to create a favourable atmosphere in that regard.

China commends Saudi Arabia, Oman and other Arab countries of the Gulf for their mediation efforts and fully acknowledges Special Envoy Grundberg's work in that regard. We are keen for countries with influence on the Yemeni situation to contribute constructively to that end. Last week, the delegations of Saudi Arabia and Iran held talks in Beijing and achieved an important outcome, with the announcement of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between them. That outcome is uplifting news for today's world, fraught with uncertainties and instability. It has injected

a positive element into the peace, stability, solidarity and cooperation landscape of the region. We hope it can also create conducive conditions for improving the situation in Yemen.

The Beijing dialogue was a success story of diplomacy. It was a victory for peace and a small showcase of the Global Security Initiative in action, an initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping. Alongside the rest of the international community, China stands ready to continue its unwavering efforts towards resolving the Yemeni issue and maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): Let me start by joining others in extending our condolences and support to the people of Mozambique and Malawi who were affected by the disaster of Cyclone Freddy — by all accounts, a truly horrific storm. I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Assistant Secretary-General Msuya and Ambassador Dautllari for their insightful updates.

Last month's pledging conference represented an important step towards meeting the dire humanitarian need in Yemen, where two thirds of the population need aid. Much more is needed, however, as a \$3.1 billion shortfall remains. We commend those donors who pledged to help and urge the international community to give generously in order to help raise the \$4.3 billion needed to address the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The United States remains resolute in its commitment to alleviate the suffering of millions of Yemenis. Secretary Blinken announced our additional contribution of more than \$444 million to the humanitarian response in Yemen, with more to come this year. That announcement brings our total humanitarian aid to more than \$5.4 billion since the conflict began. We are concerned that if the United Nations and its partners do not receive additional funding, the humanitarian community will be forced to make cuts to critical programmes. We cannot afford further deterioration of the humanitarian situation or disruption of the positive environment created by the truce.

We reaffirm the importance of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism in facilitating the flow of essential goods, including food and fuel, into Yemen. Unfortunately, inside Yemen, we are concerned about reports that the Houthis are blocking the flow of essential goods from the south. Such threats

to economic activity increase the suffering of all Yemenis and exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. Those Houthi actions further compound the humanitarian and economic consequences of Houthi attacks on Yemeni ports, which deprive Yemen of hundreds of millions of dollars in resources for salary payments and services.

We are also increasingly concerned about diminishing humanitarian access to Yemen's most vulnerable, exacerbated by Houthi *mahram* requirements, which hinder aid operations, as others have raised today. We continue to call on the Houthis to release our detained Yemeni staff members, who have done nothing wrong, and to reunite them with their families. The United States remains supportive of intensive discussions among the parties and is hopeful that they will lead to an expanded Yemeni-Yemeni agreement, under United Nations auspices, that paves the way for a durable ceasefire and inclusive political process. That is the only path to address Yemenis' calls for justice, accountability and redress for human rights violations and abuses.

We welcome the Republic of Yemen Government's continuous support for United Nations efforts and appreciate the support from Saudi Arabia, Oman and other countries of the region. We urge the Houthis to engage in negotiations in good faith and to work with the United Nations to keep Yemen on the path to peace. We hope that the recently announced agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran will contribute to efforts to secure a durable solution to the conflict in Yemen, address the continued flow of Iranian lethal aid to the Houthis and ensure Iranian support for a Yemeni political process. Efforts to achieve stability in the region are welcome.

On sanctions, we are pleased that the Council renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and sanctions measures last month. We would also like to thank the Panel of Experts for its annual report (S/2023/130) and excellent coverage of investigations into violations of the targeted arms embargo under resolution 2140 (2014). We are dismayed, however, to see weapons continue to flow from Iran to the Houthis. So far this year, the United States, France and the United Kingdom have intercepted four vessels carrying thousands of such weapons, in direct violation of the Council's targeted arms embargo. We remind the Member States involved in those illicit transfers that they are in violation of Council resolutions and

that only by ending such shipments will they allow the Yemeni people the greatest possible chance at peace.

Finally, we welcome the Organization's recent announcement regarding the acquisition of a very large crude carrier onto which oil from the decaying *FSO SAFER* oil tanker will be offloaded. This effort will prevent an environmental catastrophe in the Red Sea that would have dramatic humanitarian and economic repercussions. We urge the United Nations to move forward as expeditiously as possible with this operation and call on donors to help raise the additional \$34 million in funding needed.

This is a hopeful moment for Yemen. We stand ready to support peace. After eight long years of war, we hope that Yemen and its neighbours will choose peace and work to bring its rewards to a population that has suffered for far too long.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by joining those who have expressed condolences to and solidarity with Malawi and your country, Mozambique, Mr. President, following the irreparable loss of life and damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening the monthly briefing on the situation in Yemen. We take note of the information provided by Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, by Ms. Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and by Ambassador Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania, in her capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

We welcome the representative of Yemen to today's meeting.

Ecuador acknowledges that it is imperative to strengthen strategies to establish a solid structure for dialogue, based on trust and good faith, with a view to brokering a definitive ceasefire and implementing lasting solutions and sustainable peace. Nonetheless, despite the progress about which Ms. Msuya informed us, it is estimated that more than 17 million Yemenis depend on humanitarian assistance to survive. According to the statistics of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 4.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. Women, boys,

girls, persons with disabilities and persons with mental illness face a humanitarian situation that is aggravated by the collapse of public services and adverse climate conditions. Against that backdrop, we deplore the use of practices that impede safe access to humanitarian assistance, such as bureaucratic obstacles — or worse still, the obligation for female personnel to travel in the company of male guardians. We support the difficult and productive work on negotiations conducted by Special Envoy Grundberg. Political signals are encouraging and give us reason to believe that we are very close to creating an environment that is conducive to and ideal for political negotiation, which is influenced by the regional momentum to which Mr. Grundberg referred.

Along those lines and as signatories of the shared commitments initiative of the women and peace and security agenda, we urge parties to ensure that, in accordance with resolutions 2624 (2022) and 2643 (2022), negotiations processes include the full, equal and substantive participation of all stakeholders, in particular women. We call on the teams on the ground to evaluate the best alternatives that will allow for the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security in Yemen. We also urge them to consider as a priority in the negotiations the implementation of an immediate action plan for the removal of mines and improvised explosive devices, which are the main cause of mutilation among civilians, especially minors.

Ecuador believes that there is no better time to reconsider the need to establish effective mechanisms for accountability and access to channels of justice. Similarly, we urge the Houthis to release political prisoners and officials of the United Nations and humanitarian aid agencies, who have been arbitrarily deprived of their freedom. We reiterate our concern about the issue concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker and the imminent environmental threat posed to Yemen, the region and the planet. All efforts to remedy that situation are feasible. I would like to conclude by calling on the Council to continue its efforts towards establishing a serious and constructive political dialogue with the primary objective of bringing about peace, stability and well-being to the resilient Yemeni people.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join others in expressing our profound condolences following the natural disaster that hit your country, Mozambique, Mr. President, and Malawi. Our thoughts are with the families that have been affected.

I would like to thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya for their briefings, in particular their efforts to promote peace and protect civilians in Yemen.

I also thank Ambassador Albana Dautllari of Albania for her briefing on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

The international community met in Geneva on 27 February to reaffirm its solidarity with the Yemeni people at a high-level donor conference. In addition to the generosity shown by many States, Switzerland notes the vibrant appeal of Ms. Naeam Al Kulaidi of the Tamdeen Youth Foundation, who said,

“We have the impression that the world is beginning to forget us... Nothing is more important for Yemen than to end the conflict so that the people can have a chance to live in security and dignity”.

After eight years of conflict, the time for hesitation has come to an end. We must respond to those legitimate aspirations without delay. The decision by Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic relations last week represents an important signal for peace and stability in the region, which Switzerland, the protecting Power of both countries, welcomes. Echoing the appeal made by Ms. Al Kulaidi, Switzerland would like to highlight the following three points.

First, we welcome the commitment of the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia to the ongoing dialogue for peace and urge the parties to engage resolutely to silence weapons for good. We also note with satisfaction the willingness of the parties to fulfil their obligations under the Stockholm Agreement to release all detainees. In that regard, the current discussions of the oversight committee in Switzerland are a step in the right direction and must be implemented as soon as possible. In addition, we call on all parties to exercise restraint and show full readiness for an intra-Yemeni national dialogue. Indeed, the positive momentum we are witnessing must be reflected in the finalization of an inclusive political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of the entire society. Last week’s open debate (see S/PV.9276) reminded us that in Yemen, as elsewhere, the inclusion of women in the peace process is essential for a just and equal future.

Secondly, we would like to thank the many countries that demonstrated their support for the people of Yemen at the donors' conference. That momentum of solidarity must not stop; some activities remain underfunded, such as those related to water, sanitation and the protection of civilians. It also implies a more sustainable and systematic approach that goes beyond short-term aid. Despite last week's important and welcome milestone in averting an oil spill in the Red Sea, the *FSO SAFER* tanker rescue plan requires the continued attention of the entire international community.

Thirdly, the continued restrictions on humanitarian actors, including women, are unacceptable and must be lifted immediately. The economic warfare being waged by the parties to the conflict has had a severe impact on Yemenis, who are increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid. Children remain among the main victims of mines and explosive remnants of war. However, reconstruction work is not possible without addressing that issue. We therefore urge the authorities and the international community to make mine action a priority.

In conclusion, Switzerland calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and the relevant human rights provisions. The year 2023 must be the year of change. The truce must be restored and extended to a permanent ceasefire. Time is of the essence, and the civilian population cannot wait any longer.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Mr. President, let me join others in expressing my condolences to your country, Mozambique, and to Malawi.

Returning to our discussion today, we thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their informative briefings.

We are encouraged by the recent developments in and around Yemen. The core benefits of the truce brokered last year still hold today, increasing the hope of putting an end to a war that has devastated the country for nearly eight years. We commend the Special Envoy's efforts in fostering trust between the parties and beginning the long-awaited healing process that Yemen so desperately needs. We fully support all efforts that move the parties closer to a political solution to this bloody conflict. The Yemeni people and their aspirations must be central to reaching a just and lasting political settlement, which must be a Yemen-owned and Yemeni-led process facilitated by the United

Nations. We support the efforts of President Al-Alimi and the Government of Yemen, as well as the regional efforts of Saudi Arabia, Oman and other regional actors in that regard.

Yemen still faces challenges that need to be overcome. Continued international support is crucial, and the outcomes of the high-level pledging event held on 27 February demonstrated that there is a willingness to support the Yemeni people. However, the maximalist demands of the Houthis do not allow for a constructive engagement with Special Envoy Grundberg and do not allow regional actors to find a political solution to the conflict. All the developments in the region should in time enable a peaceful settlement of the war in Yemen. We continue to be concerned about the continuous violations of resolution 2216 (2015) by the Houthis, who continue to smuggle weapons and ammunition, as demonstrated by the weapons seizure by the British navy on 2 March. Such weapons are used by the Houthis to attack civilian infrastructure. We condemn those acts and call for full accountability for violations of humanitarian law.

The international and local aid workers on the ground must be fully protected from all the impediments and security challenges. We are concerned about the observation of *mahram* for local aid workers and call on the Houthis to end that practice, which affects women and children especially. We are also worried about the misuse of Internet platforms to spread inaccurate information to people on health services, and we call for that practice to be stopped. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of the staff of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, as well as other civilians, who were abducted by armed groups or forcibly disappeared, and for putting an end to the continued detention of Yemenis employed by the United States and the United Nations.

On a separate note, I would like to commend the efforts of the Government of Yemen in allowing more goods to come into the country from the port of Al-Hudaydah.

In conclusion, let me commend the United Nations Development Programme for its work in acquiring the proper vessel for preventing *FSO SAFER* oil tanker from turning into the ecological tragedy of our times.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): Mr. President, I would like to join other speakers in expressing our heartfelt sympathy to and solidarity with your country, Mozambique, as

well as Malawi, and the people of those two countries, for the recent damage caused by Cyclone Freddy.

Let me thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. We are grateful for the efforts that they and their teams continue to make for the Yemeni people. I also thank the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) for her briefing.

Japan welcomes the ongoing engagement by the parties to the conflict and the countries of the region with a view to establishing a long-lasting peace. The unanimous adoption of resolution 2675 (2023) indicates the strong will of the Council that the ongoing sanctions should be continuously implemented. Realizing a durable peace will require not only a mere extension of the truce but also Yemeni ownership of a long-term national reconstruction. Japan fully supports the Special Envoy's role to promote that process towards establishing a sustainable peace. We also hope that the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran will be a positive step towards resolving the Yemeni issue.

However, we are deeply concerned about the unchanged pattern of the supply of arms to the Houthis, as reported by the Panel of Experts on Yemen in its final report (see S/2023/130). We urge Member States to implement the arms embargo and support the efforts to establish peace in Yemen. Japan is also concerned about the various disruptive actions taken by the Houthis inside Yemen to undermine the Government of Yemen's economic capability. We urge the parties concerned to prevent any behaviour that leads to economic instability. The peace process should be underpinned by a stable economy. In that regard, we commend the strong support of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for the economy of Yemen. The peace process and national reconstruction should go hand in hand with economic development. In March, the project to strengthen the functions of the Port of Aden will be launched, with development assistance from Japan. That project shows our strong commitment to the reconstruction of Yemen's economy, as Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi stated at the pledging conference held in February.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, we are encouraged by the agreement made to purchase the oil tanker in order to finally proceed with the emergency phase project. Japan commends the efforts of the United

Nations Development Programme to implement that high-risk and unprecedented operation.

The importance of continuing to support people in need and deliver life-saving livelihood programmes cannot be overstated. Japan respects and appreciates the efforts of aid workers operating in a challenging environment, and urges the parties concerned to improve access for and secure the safety of aid workers, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, we continue to stand ready to support the peace and recovery process, and we urge all the parties, in particular Yemenis, to seize the momentum to reconstruct the country, prioritizing the lives of the Yemeni people.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleagues in expressing my condolences to Mozambique and Malawi following the cyclone that hit their countries. I would like to thank Hans Grundberg and Joyce Msuya for their briefings and I also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the representative of Yemen. I would like to share three points.

First, the current momentum is encouraging. A de facto truce continues to hold on the ground, which we must maintain and transform into a durable cessation of hostilities. France calls on the parties, first and foremost the Houthis, to act responsibly to reach a political agreement with the Government of Yemen. The current calm must be accompanied by confidence-building measures — that is the only way to build a lasting peace. In that regard, France welcomes the meeting currently being held in Geneva on prisoner exchanges. We also hope that other mechanisms for dialogue and de-escalation, such as the military coordination committee, can be reactivated under the auspices of the United Nations.

Secondly, France reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations mechanism for inspecting the ships arriving in Houthi-controlled ports. In that context, we welcome the decision by Saudi Arabi and Iran to re-establish diplomatic relations. We hope that it will contribute to advancing the ongoing negotiations between the Yemeni parties and to strengthening regional security and stability. From that point of view, it is essential that Iran cease its destabilizing activities. That momentum must lead to a comprehensive and inclusive political solution, which will involve developing a peace plan that takes into account the

concerns and interests of all Yemenis. France will continue to lend its full support to the Special Envoy in order to achieve that. In that connection, we reiterate the importance of involving Yemeni women in defining the future of their country. We call on the Houthis to engage in negotiations without delay and in good faith.

Thirdly, we must not forget the Yemeni people and the severe humanitarian crisis they have been suffering for years. We announced our pledge of almost €23 million for 2023 at the donors' conference held last month in Geneva. However, aid cannot benefit the Yemeni people if the working conditions and safety of humanitarian staff are not fully guaranteed. That is why France reiterates its call for the preservation of the humanitarian space. The restrictions imposed on United Nations and other humanitarian personnel by the Houthis must cease, including for the women humanitarian workers forced to have male chaperones. France calls on the Houthis to immediately and unconditionally release all detained United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

In conclusion, as members are aware, the situation of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker continues to pose the imminent risk of an ecological and humanitarian disaster. In that regard, we welcome the purchase by the United Nations of a replacement vessel to enable the transfer of millions of barrels of oil as an important first step. We call for the swift and full implementation of the United Nations-coordinated plan.

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

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Security Council's presidency for this month. I wish you every success in discharging your tasks. I also congratulate your Japanese predecessor on his successful presidency in February.

I join previous speakers in conveying my sincere condolences to your country, Mozambique, and to Malawi, for the lives and property lost due to the recent cyclone.

My thanks also go to Ms. Joyce Msuya and Mr. Hans Grundberg for their briefings, and to Ms. Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania, for her report on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

The Presidential Leadership Council reaffirms its commitment to a lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of the agreed political terms of reference — namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2216 (2015), which forms the basic foundation and framework of the United Nations-led peace process. My country reiterates our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and for all regional and international efforts aimed at reviving the truce and resuming the comprehensive political process led by the United Nations and owned by Yemenis.

However, peace cannot be achieved without a true partner who renounces war, believes in a political partnership and in equal rights for all Yemenis, rejects violence as a means of imposing a political agenda and believes in the State as the sole holder of power and arms. Any negotiated peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen must therefore involve a comprehensive process that includes all those pillars and allows for a settlement of all issues, including the true cause of the conflict. The Houthi militias must renounce their so-called divine right to rule the Yemenis; otherwise, the long-awaited peace we desire will only serve as a temporary cure and a means for the Houthi militias to attempt imposing what they could not achieve through the war. That will lead to a new cycle of violence and chaos, with new waves of displacement and migration. That will also be the beginning of a long period of instability, ultimately leading to further conflicts that will threaten the security and stability of Yemen and the region, as well as the safety of international navigation.

In order to bring about an end to the humanitarian suffering, we must first end the war and achieve peace. The truce agreement reached in April last year presented us with a real opportunity to achieve that. The Government of Yemen provided all the necessary compromises in order to extend and sustain the truce as a starting point for realizing a comprehensive ceasefire and resuming the political process. We have respected all the truce provisions — namely, opening Sana'a airport to international flights and allowing ships to enter the port of Al-Hudaydah, despite the fact that the Houthi militias insist on refusing to open the main roads to the besieged city of Taiz and on refusing to approve a truce extension, thereby imposing obstacles

to peace and continuing their violations. Recently, they targeted the national economic facilities and the oil-export ports, which led to the interruption of oil exports and deprived the State of its most important national revenues for the payment of salaries and the provision of basic services. State institutions and food security were also jeopardized and the humanitarian crisis was exacerbated.

Moreover, Houthi militias continue to instil terrorist and extremist ideologies in children and are recruiting them in their war against the Yemeni people. We warn of the future catastrophic results of child recruitment in schools and derailing the education process from its objectives, as a result of which Yemenis will pay the price for generations to come. The Houthi militias continue to drive citizens from their homes. In Yemen today, more than 4 million people are internally displaced. Civilians are subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and forced disappearance in the prisons of those militias. In addition, the widespread and arbitrary use of mines and unexploded munitions is causing innocent people — mostly women and children — to lose their lives on a daily basis. In addition, the Houthi militias are creating obstacles to hinder the work of international humanitarian organizations, including by impeding access to humanitarian aid and relief operations.

The conflict in Yemen has lasted almost nine years. Now, when the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is being held, we note that many of the gains made by Yemeni women have been eroded. The Houthi militias continue to violate the rights of Yemeni women and repress them. The militias use sexual violence against women and deny them their political, economic and social rights, while abducting hundreds of Yemeni women and putting them in secret jails. The Houthi militias fabricate charges against women, while torturing, blackmailing, intimidating and sexually harassing them in retaliation for their political, media and human rights activities. Like the Taliban, the Houthi militias impose restrictions on women in the areas under their control. The Houthis restrict women's movement and deprive them of their basic rights by not allowing them to move among cities and governorates, unless accompanied by a male *mahram*. Those militias separate the people in educational facilities and governmental institutions on the basis of their gender. They deprive women of their right to a good education and to work outside the house. Yemeni women have been deprived of the

ability to participate in political and social life and the opportunity to contribute to building their society.

The economic dossier is a top priority for the Presidential Leadership Council. The Government is committed to supporting economic and development stability in Yemen. We have been putting plans in place to advance economic recovery, reconstruction and resilience. During recent months, the Yemeni Government, with the support of the Presidential Leadership Council, implemented a number of structural reforms to strengthen the role of vital institutions and ensure economic and monetary stability in the country, along with reforms of monetary policy and measures to strengthen banking and financial institutions, while also combating money-laundering and the funding of terrorism.

Today, there is an opportunity for humanitarian support to play a role in achieving economic stability by channelling humanitarian funds through the Central Bank of Yemen. That will greatly strengthen the efforts under way to achieve economic recovery, maintain currency value and improve living standards, while also integrating development priorities and needs in order to achieve a rapid recovery. Those are urgent issues. We cannot wait until the end of the war to deal with them, in particular because the emergency assistance offered to the Yemeni people will not last for a long time.

My country's Government commends the intensive international efforts under way to implement the arms embargo imposed by the United Nations. Since the end of the truce, several operations to smuggle Iranian weapons, munitions, rocket fuel and explosive material have been aborted, including through the confiscation of thousands of assault rifles that were on route to the Houthi militias. That demonstrates that the Iranian regime is stepping up its arms smuggling to the Houthi militias. We call on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security, and to put an end to the destructive behaviour of the Iranian regime, which continues to interfere in my country's domestic affairs by continuing to support those militias and to hinder all efforts to end the Yemeni crisis. The Iranian regime insists on prolonging the conflict in Yemen and the region and endangering regional and international peace and security.

The Yemeni Government sincerely believes in dialogue and the peaceful and diplomatic resolution of disputes. We underscore the importance of the

principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States. We support all serious and sincere efforts undertaken in good faith to achieve peace and stability in the region. We also hope that the agreement between the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran will lead to a new phase of good relations in the region. We hope to see Iran stop interfering in Yemeni affairs and to see a real change in the behaviour of the Iranian regime and its destructive policies towards my country and the region.

The month of Ramadan is drawing near. The Yemeni people are closely following the seventh meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees Exchange Agreement, which is being held in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations. I thank Switzerland for hosting that round of negotiations. We reiterate that the Yemeni Government is committed to releasing all detainees, hostages and prisoners, in accordance with the principle of the unconditional release of all detainees, in order to put an end to their suffering and to allow them to reunite with their families based on the Stockholm Agreement. We underscore that the issue of the detainees remains a priority for the United Nations, the Special Envoy and the Security Council. Indeed, that issue has remained unresolved for too long. Pressure must be brought to bear on the Houthi militias to release all detainees and abducted persons, including the four individuals noted in the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the journalists, academics and others who have been imprisoned for their opinions. Efforts aimed at ensuring the release of those prisoners and putting an end to obstacles by the Houthi militias to the resolution of that humanitarian issue must continue.

Yemeni cultural property and heritage are being systematically looted, destroyed and smuggled as a result of the conflict. We call on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to take effective and practical measures to safeguard Yemen's cultural heritage. We call on the Council to take the necessary measures to facilitate the safe return to the competent Yemeni institutions of the looted Yemeni cultural heritage. In that connection, we are grateful for the efforts of the American security services, which made it possible to seize and return 77 cultural items to the Yemeni Government. I also thank Switzerland and Sweden for having hosted the high-level pledging conference as part of the humanitarian response plan for 2023. I thank the brotherly and friendly countries

for their humanitarian honourable positions and their support for the humanitarian response plan in Yemen and their continued efforts to reduce the suffering of the Yemeni people. We will always remember their positions, and they will form an integral part of our fraternal and friendship relations. We also value the brotherly roles of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in various economic, development and humanitarian matters, which seek to assist Yemen and support its efforts to restore the State, peace and stability, in particular those countries' support for promoting the Yemeni Central Bank reserves, as well as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's provision of oil derivatives in order to support the oil sector and maintain basic services.

In conclusion, we also welcome the implementation of the first phase of the United Nations plan for addressing the situation of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. My country values those efforts and stands ready to facilitate United Nations efforts to avert an imminent environmental, humanitarian and economic disaster. We emphasize the need to continue to work expeditiously in that regard, and to ensure the necessary financing to implement all phases of the rescue plan and to avert that imminent and ongoing threat.

The President: In my capacity as the representative of Mozambique, I wish to wholeheartedly thank all delegations for their expressions of solidarity and support to our people and our Government in the aftermath of the devastation caused by the cyclone — one more cyclone — this one called Freddy. In this hour of grief, we are certain that we will enjoy Council members' support for and solidarity with our people. This tragedy once again underscores the urgency of addressing as a matter of priority the detrimental impact of natural disasters and their causes. As we assess the damages, we will keep States and the United Nations family informed and updated. I thank Council members from the bottom of my heart.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

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 12.30 p.m.