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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Sánchez Izquierdo
	France	Mr. Olmedo
	Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	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

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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 (*spoke in Russian*): 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. Ghada Mudawi, Deputy Director, Operations and Advocacy Division, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: One year since the parties agreed to a truce under United Nations auspices, Yemen is again at a critical juncture. The truce has continued to deliver well beyond its expiration six months ago, and the parties are engaging on next steps. I believe we have not seen such a serious opportunity for making progress towards ending the conflict in eight years. But the tide could still turn unless the parties take bolder steps towards peace.

The parties recently showed that negotiations can deliver results. In March, under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the parties agreed in Switzerland to release almost 900 conflict-related detainees from all sides. They also agreed to meet again in May to make further progress on their commitment as part of the Stockholm Agreement to release all conflict-related detainees. And they agreed to undertake joint visits to each other's detention facilities, including in Ma'rib and Sana'a. The release operations took place between 14 and 16 April, reuniting hundreds of Yemeni families with their loved ones, just in time for them to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr together. That renewed the hope of many more Yemenis that their relatives too might soon be released.

The emotional scenes of detainees being released over the past few days demonstrated the power of peaceful negotiations. I commend the parties on the cooperation they showed to achieve that result. But I also remind them of the suffering of the many more Yemenis still waiting for their loved ones to return. I encourage them to make swift progress towards fulfilling their commitment to release all conflict-related detainees. I also commend Yemeni civil society for its crucial role in advocating for detainee releases. I thank the Swiss and Jordanian Governments for their support to my Office on this file, and the ICRC for its role in the implementation of the release operation. And I thank my Deputy, Mr. Muin Shreim, and the broader team that has been working on this file in my Office, for all their dedication and persistence.

Another encouraging sign is that many aspects of the truce continue to be implemented beyond its lifespan. Yemen is experiencing the longest period of relative calm yet in this ruinous war. Fuel and other commercial goods continue to flow into Al-Hudaydah. And commercial flights continue between Sana'a International Airport and Amman. However, that is not enough. Yemenis still live with unimaginable hardship every day. And recent developments are a reminder that escalation can quickly reverse hard-won gains.

I am concerned about recent military activity in Ma'rib, Shabwa, Taiz and other governorates. We have seen in the past how escalation, particularly in Ma'rib, has spilled over to front lines elsewhere. I call on the parties to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from provocative actions and continue to engage with my Office to ensure maintained de-escalation.

While an important achievement, the truce was meant to be a temporary measure to open up space for political talks to sustainably end the war. We could never rely on it to deliver a peaceful future to Yemen. As such, I have continued my engagement with the parties to identify next steps towards a permanent ceasefire and the reactivation of a political process under United Nations auspices. I have also engaged with them on measures that can alleviate the economic and humanitarian situation in the country. In recent weeks, I met with representatives of the Yemeni parties, as well as regional officials. I have visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Oman, as well as Brussels and Geneva.

Discussions are also ongoing among regional and Yemeni stakeholders. Building on the achievements of the truce, representatives of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman were recently in Sana'a, where they have engaged in constructive dialogue. Saudi representatives also held productive discussions with members of the Presidential Leadership Council in Riyadh. I am working closely with regional and Yemeni stakeholders to ensure that such channels feed into United Nations efforts to mediate an end to the conflict.

I also welcome the statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, issued at a ministerial meeting in Beijing, committing to enhancing their cooperation on matters that would promote security and stability in the region. A supportive regional environment will reinforce peace efforts in Yemen.

Any new agreement in Yemen must be a clear step towards a Yemeni-led political process. It needs to include a strong commitment from the parties to meet and negotiate in good faith with one another. The political process needs to orient towards the future that so many Yemeni women and men have told us they want, that is, one of accountable governance, equal citizenship and social and economic justice.

We need to see a Yemeni-owned ceasefire that durably stops the violence, ensures the safety and security of Yemenis and builds trust for a political process. We need the parties to refrain from using economic measures as tools of hostility, and create the conditions to allow people and businesses to work unimpeded. We need to see greater freedom of movement of people and goods across all of Yemen, including renewed efforts to open roads in Taiz and other governorates. We need to see the full opening of Sana'a airport, with expanded destinations, and we need to see commercial goods continue to enter Yemen smoothly and without delays. And we need to see public-sector salaries paid nationwide.

I believe that all of that is not only necessary but also attainable. Yemen has a rich history of compromise, negotiation and dialogue. My Office continues to engage along multiple tracks to build on the benefits of the truce and build towards a process for Yemenis to come together and agree on how to sustainably end the

conflict. The economic, political and military tracks need to reinforce one another. And we need to address both short- and longer-term measures.

As part of the military and security track, my Office continues to engage with the delegates of the parties to the military coordination committee, which was established during the truce. We stand ready to reconvene the Committee to support any new agreement on the way forward. We also work with Yemeni civil society, security actors and experts to prepare for an implementable and sustainable ceasefire, as well as inclusive and accountable security at the national and local levels.

On the economic track, we continue to engage the parties and their technical representatives, as well as civil society organizations, experts and researchers, the private sector and international financial institutions. The aim is to provide a forum in which the parties can resolve differences and jointly identify solutions on pressing economic challenges, with the support of Yemeni technical experts and international and regional partners.

All of that needs to be rooted in the work towards an inclusive, intra-Yemeni political process, because only Yemenis can debate and ultimately decide on the future political, economic and security governance of Yemen. In addition to my engagements with the parties and regional actors, I continue to consult Yemeni women, youth and civil society. I am always struck during those engagements by the resilience of the social fabric. That is one of the country's most important national resources, and one that we must leverage for peace. My Office recently held consultations with diverse Yemenis on advancing the participation of women and marginalized groups in the peace process. Women must have a say in the future of their country.

Let us be under no illusions. There is a lot of hard work to be done to build trust and to make compromise. Yemenis need to come together under United Nations auspices to agree on how to end this long and terrible war. There is even more work to be done to recover, rebuild and reach a sustainable, just and equitable peace. Mediation efforts will always adapt and evolve. But the parties must not allow this moment to pass by without coming to an agreement. As always, I remain grateful for the support that I have received from the Security Council. I ask the international community to redouble its support to ensure that this delicate and rare opportunity is not lost.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Grundberg for his briefing. I hope that the injury to his right hand will not prevent him from continuing proactive efforts to advance a Yemeni settlement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mudawi.

Ms. Mudawi (*spoke in Arabic*): This month marks one year since the announcement of the United Nations brokered truce in Yemen. Even beyond its expiry in October, the truce provided precious relief for civilians after many years of grim war and ignited hope that a peaceful settlement to the conflict could be finally reached. As Mr. Hans Grundberg mentioned today, there is an unprecedented opportunity to make progress towards peace. If seized, it could improve people's lives and reduce their suffering.

(*spoke in English*)

Over recent weeks, we have seen continued easing of import restrictions, allowing more commercial goods into the country that Yemenis rely on to survive. In March, the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen cleared 41 ships bound for Red Sea ports carrying 825,000 metric tons of commercial food, fuel and other goods — double the amount recorded in January.

We also have good news to report on the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. In a major milestone for the United Nations-coordinated operation to address the threat posed by the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, a replacement vessel, the *NAUTICA*, set sail to Yemen on 6 April. It is expected to arrive in the Red Sea area in the first half of May. Efforts are ongoing to mobilize the additional funding needed for the project. On 4 May, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom will host a donor conference, which we hope will bridge the remaining gap. Meanwhile, a \$20 million loan has been made available from the Central Emergency Response Fund to enable the start of the on-water operation next month and prevent any delays while further contributions come in.

Those positive developments come not a moment too soon for the people of Yemen, who face multiple and severe humanitarian threats. Across the country, more than 21 million people need emergency assistance. Events in recent weeks have added to that already massive humanitarian caseload. Torrential rains have affected more than 100,000 people countrywide. The humanitarian impact has so far been relatively limited, but forecasts indicate worse weather is yet to

come. While there had not been a major resurgence in fighting, escalating clashes in Ma'rib and Shabwah have displaced nearly 10,000 people since early March. Preventable diseases, such as measles and polio, are spreading at a dangerous pace, putting Yemen's youngest at even higher risk. We fear those outbreaks could deteriorate fast, especially in Houthi-controlled areas, where we are seeing increasing impediments to immunization, as well as misinformation that is fuelling vaccine scepticism. Aid agencies are doing everything they can to respond, including by taking action to anticipate and prepare for risks before they materialize.

At the same time, work is also under way to provide better conditions so that people will be able to restart their lives and livelihoods when the fighting finally stops. To that end, the humanitarian community is scaling up efforts on mine action and support for displaced communities to integrate, resettle or return to their homes. Last year, funding enabled the humanitarian community to avert the worst, and by the end of 2022 we saw a reduction in the number of people facing severe food insecurity — from 19 million people to 17 million people. Those gains, however, could easily be lost in the absence of sustained funding. We therefore urge donors to quickly fulfil the commitments made at the pledging event in February and to urgently scale up support. We know that is no small ask under tightening budgets and rising demands, and we know that donors have concerns about growing restrictions and interference, especially in Houthi-controlled areas.

That brings me to my second point, which concerns the challenging operating environment in Yemen. Over the past month, the humanitarian community has continued to make progress in reaching underserved areas. United Nations agencies are opening an office in Taiz and conducting missions to remote locations across the country. Those are all positive steps, but they come against a backdrop of large and chronic access impediments. So far in 2023, aid agencies have reported 628 access constraints. Most of those are in Houthi-controlled areas and include movement restrictions and interference in needs-assessment and contracting. Incidents have also been reported in Government-held areas, including related to the issuance of work permits. While the vast majority of those incidents are resolved following engagement by the humanitarian community, they cause undue delays to critical missions and impede the timely delivery of humanitarian aid. I regret to say that one area where little progress has been

made is on the issue of restrictions on the movement of female Yemeni aid workers in Houthi-controlled areas. The current restrictions continue to prevent female Yemeni staff members from participating in vital humanitarian activities, and that in turn severely impedes the provision of critical services that only women can deliver, while also undercutting our ability to reach the most vulnerable communities. All of our staff, including female staff members, are essential to humanitarian operations. That is true in Yemen as it is elsewhere. They must be able to move freely and without impediment both inside and outside the country.

We also regularly contend with other types of restrictions and directives that hamper humanitarian movement. On 24 March, the Houthi de facto authorities announced significant limitations on United Nations and humanitarian flights to and from Sana'a, attributing the decision to issues related to international commercial flights. Following extensive negotiations led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, it has been agreed that United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flights can be resumed three days a week. We reiterate our call to all the parties to the conflict, especially the Houthi de facto authorities, to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by facilitating the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief and ensuring the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel so that they can execute their essential functions. At least two carjackings have taken place since our previous briefing (see S/PV.9282) on the west coast and in Abyan. In Sana'a, two United Nations staffers who were detained in November 2021 remain in detention. And the five United Nations staff members abducted in Abyan last year are still missing, 14 months later. We call for their immediate release and for the protection of all humanitarian staff.

While funding and access are critical to the immediate aid operations, we must also prepare for the long run. That means addressing the underlying drivers of humanitarian need, including Yemen's deteriorating economy, which is itself a product of the conflict. A critical part of that work is protecting the flow of commercial imports. I have already mentioned that there has been some encouraging progress in that regard. However, we remain concerned about certain continuing obstructions, particularly to the overland transport of commercial goods from areas controlled by the Government to those under Houthi control. Beyond commercial imports, much more must be done

to stabilize Yemen's economy, such as strengthening people's incomes, scaling up demining efforts and restoring basic services. Ensuring a resumption of oil exports from Government-held areas is also critical, including for strengthening foreign-currency reserves.

To recap, we need urgent and unequivocal action on three points — increased funding, unimpeded access and investments aimed at stabilizing the economy. But more than anything, Yemenis need lasting peace. Now is the time to deliver it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Mudawi for her briefing.

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Deputy Director Mudawi for their briefings and wishing Mr. Grundberg a speedy recovery for his right arm.

The United Kingdom welcomes the ongoing efforts to advance peace in Yemen. The Saudi and Omani delegations' visit to Sana'a represents progress in the efforts to find a settlement to the eight-year conflict. The return of hundreds of former detainees to their homes is welcome progress for the individuals and their families, as well as for the prospects for wider peace. We congratulate all involved in their safe return. Inclusive intra-Yemeni political talks under the auspices of the Special Envoy are a vital next step. At this time of hope, we are grateful for the unity of the Security Council. Sustainably improving the lives of the Yemeni people must remain our collective priority. With that in mind, we call on the parties to refrain from provocation. The recent clashes in Ma'rib and Shabwah have had significant humanitarian consequences, displacing 10,000 people as well as threatening progress towards peace.

Clearly the need for an impactful humanitarian response remains critical, especially as long as a sizeable funding gap remains. While we commend the progress made, we still call for greater ambition in addressing the recommendations of the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation. As Ms. Mudawi just said, we urge authorities across Yemen to allow unfettered humanitarian access in order for vital humanitarian work to go ahead. In particular, we echo her calls for an end to the impediments to independent assessment and monitoring, the fair selection of service providers

and free movement, especially of national female aid workers in the north. The United Nations, donors and local authorities should step up and work together to effectively address the needs of people in Yemen.

Finally, we are at a critical moment in the efforts to address the threat posed by the *FSO SAFER*. The replacement vessel has begun its journey to Yemen, but there is not enough funding for the salvage operation to take place. The costs of inaction will be severe, with marine life and coastal livelihoods devastated, life-saving humanitarian assistance for 17 million people disrupted and the global economy losing billions in trade every day. On 4 May, the United Kingdom will co-host a pledging conference with the Netherlands and in partnership with the United Nations, as Ms. Mudawi mentioned. The event is aimed at filling the shortfall and providing a long-term solution for Yemen. It is on all of us — States, the private sector and individuals — to step up and help. The time to act is now. We all have a stake in averting this potential catastrophe.

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

We thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and the Deputy Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ghada Mudawi, for their briefings, and we welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Yemen in this meeting.

We are encouraged by the renewed optimism surrounding the ongoing negotiations to find a solution to the Yemeni conflict. We welcome the pragmatism that has so far characterized the engagement of key stakeholders in the conflict, not least the direct negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis and the valuable intermediary role being played by Oman, demonstrating the importance of regional efforts in the negotiation process. However, a sustainable solution to the conflict lies firmly in the hands of the Yemeni people. It is our hope that the current international and regional efforts will lay the foundation needed for an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process that will lead to a lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict. We call on the parties to take advantage of the prevailing climate of trust, hope and

enthusiasm surrounding the negotiations to achieve a breakthrough in ending the crisis.

We were further encouraged by the release of nearly 900 conflict-related detainees this month as part of the implementation of the agreement reached by the parties in Geneva last month. It is a significant confidence-building measure that gives cause for further optimism that with commitment and determination, the parties can reach agreement on some of the most consequential issues of the conflict. We commend the efforts of all stakeholders, particularly the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to achieve that feat. We support every effort that takes us a step closer to durable peace in Yemen.

We call on the parties to seize the moment and deepen their negotiations in good faith to reach a nationwide ceasefire that will afford the people of Yemen an opportunity to ultimately chart their own political future. The few months of relative calm that they enjoyed after the inception of the expired truce a year ago have given them a glimpse of the opportunities that await should there be a sustainable resolution of the country's crisis. Any attempt by any of the parties to reverse such marginal progress would therefore be counterproductive and should not be countenanced.

The A3 would also like to remind the Council that hope for a lasting peace in Yemen requires pursuing an inclusive political process that takes into account all segments of the population, including women. We therefore welcomed the Special Envoy's holding last month in Cairo of a consultative meeting with Yemeni men and women as an important step towards the full, effective and meaningful participation of Yemeni women in all stages of the peace process. That is particularly critical in view of their long-demonstrated willingness and capacity to engage in communal and national efforts aimed at resolving the conflict.

Notwithstanding the recent positive developments, we have been taken aback by the incessant Houthi provocations, including military escalations in Ma'rib and Shabwah and the targeting of senior officials of the Government of Yemen in Taiz. We renew our appeal to them to prioritize the interests of Yemenis and to demonstrate their full commitment to the peace process so as to preserve the fragile security situation in the country.

The international community must not relent in its efforts to address the humanitarian crisis facing the country. In spite of recent marginal progress on

the humanitarian front, the needs remain high, with a majority of the population still requiring assistance. We call for increased international support to bridge the funding gap needed to effectively address the humanitarian crisis facing the Yemeni people. We are saddened that constraints on access still persist and continue to be a major impediment to efficient and effective aid delivery in Yemen despite the people's dire humanitarian needs. The imposition of administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks on humanitarian agencies' operations, including restrictions on the movements of female staff, are affecting the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to segments of Yemeni society. We are particularly concerned about the persistence of *mahram* obligations imposed on women humanitarian staff, requiring them to be accompanied by male guardians in areas controlled by the Houthis. In that regard, we renew our appeal to the parties, especially the Houthis, to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and grant unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to all in need.

With the prospect of peace on the horizon, every effort must be made to support Yemen's weak economy to create viable opportunities to improve the country's socioeconomic conditions and reduce its dependence on external humanitarian support. On that note, we renew our appeal to the international community to dovetail support for the country's economy with every effort aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people. Above all, a peaceful resolution of the conflict holds many more prospects for the country's ailing economy than anything else. It will make it possible to schedule more flights to and from Yemen, open up the ports for the entry of essential goods for ordinary Yemenis and help to ease inflation. Above all, it will facilitate a resumption of oil exports to bring in badly needed foreign exchange for the payment of salaries to public servants, among others.

The risk posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war in Yemen must be tackled head-on to bring down the number of casualties associated with that menace and to increase economic productivity as a semblance of normalcy returns to the country. Aside from ensuring civilian safety, increased demining efforts will help to free up the agricultural land affected for food production and contribute to the country's economic recovery. We renew our call for effective international and local collaboration to deal comprehensively with the issue.

We must not underestimate the danger posed by the misinformation and disinformation in Houthi-controlled areas designed to undermine people's confidence in vaccines and their willingness to vaccinate their children. Such acts must stop in the interests of children's health. And special attention must continue to be paid to the general welfare of children, who have been overwhelmingly affected by the war. It is regrettable that notwithstanding the efforts of the international community, many children are still living in deplorable conditions without access to good sanitation or water, which puts them at increased risk of malnutrition, cholera and death from common infectious diseases. The best interests of children should prevail at all times.

On the issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil vessel, we look forward to the speedy arrival of the crude carrier in Yemen next month for the initial phase of the operation to commence. It is our expectation that when it arrives, all parties will cooperate with the United Nations for the safe and quick transfer of the oil from the decaying vessel into the newly acquired carrier. Despite the continuing funding shortfall, the international community is very close to averting a major global environmental and humanitarian disaster and must not let those efforts be derailed by the approximately \$29 million outstanding.

The people of Yemen are yet again on the cusp of reversing the devastating consequences of years of conflict that have brought them nothing but misery and suffering. The parties must not let that opportunity slip through their fingers. Peace, for which the people of Yemen have been yearning for the past eight years, is finally within the grasp of the parties, who need only stretch out a willing hand to grab it.

In conclusion, let me wish Special Envoy Grundberg and his right arm a speedy recovery.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Deputy Director Mudawi for their briefings.

This time last year we saw a glimmer of hope in the ocean of despair that Yemen had become in its eight-year war. From April to October, the truce would bring about a drastic reduction in the levels of violence, and above all for the first time in years would open a window of hope for a national ceasefire and the beginning of a political process — for prospects for a better future for all Yemenis. But regrettably, there was no ceasefire.

Even the truce was not further renewed; the road to Taiz was not opened, as called for; and the fighting, in general, did not stop. But there is no denying that the desire for change was in the air. That true spirit prevailed and its positive dividends have continued.

In such dire situations, where human lives are on the line, every step counts. Hard-won gains should be preserved in order to further build on positive outlooks. Flights to and from Sana'a airport have allowed thousands of people to travel. Activity at Al-Hudaydah port has enabled the entry of life-saving goods for everyone. The exchange of prisoners is a very welcome and important step forward, and we applaud the role of civil society in that respect. Such positive developments help to establish the much-needed confidence between the parties in order to move further ahead. We are happy to note that all the parties have come to accept that war is not the solution and that peace, however difficult, is the best alternative for all.

In that context, we welcome the talks in Sana'a between Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Houthis and look forward to further positive steps. We appreciate the role of Saudi Arabia and Oman in the talks and call on the Houthis to engage in good faith for the common future of all Yemenis. An inclusive political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of women, young people and all factions of Yemeni society, is vital to sustaining peace in Yemen. The Security Council should maintain its unified support for Yemen in its efforts towards peace and national reconciliation.

Nonetheless, we remain worried about the continuing armed clashes with the Houthis in Government-controlled areas. We reiterate our call for de-escalation and abstention from military attacks that exacerbate insecurity and harm civilians, and for the Houthis to fully embrace peace.

The need for a promising political path towards a long-lasting settlement has become even more evident, given the overall catastrophic situation in the country, as the representative of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reminded us again today. The scars of nearly a decade of war are nowhere more visible than the dire humanitarian crisis. Too many people are still dying unnecessarily in the war, but far too many more are dying because of the war, from lack of daily necessities and services, famine and diseases.

We firmly condemn any constraints imposed on humanitarian action, in particular on female local humanitarian workers who are essential to reaching the neediest, namely, the countless women, girls and children who have been heavily affected by the conflict because of the restrictions in Houthi-controlled areas. We call on the parties to ensure free access and free movement for all the female local humanitarian workers.

Finally, we reiterate our call for the immediate release of the United Nations and non-governmental-organization personnel and other civilians abducted by armed groups or forcibly disappeared, as well as for the release from the ongoing incarceration of the Yemenis who were employed by the United States and the United Nations.

Peace is no longer a remote wish in Yemen. It is a real prospect. Yemenis and all stakeholders involved should do everything they can not to let this opportunity pass.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I also thank Special Envoy Grunberg and the Deputy Director for Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Ms. Ghada Mudawi, for their briefings, and I acknowledge participation of the representative of the Republic of Yemen at today's meeting.

In April of last year, Yemen's warring sides had agreed to a military truce, which marked a significant moment of hope and granted critical respite to Yemeni civilians suffering from the horrors of war. After the truce lapsed, critical tenets continued to hold, bringing relative calm across the country. Parties to the conflict, especially the Houthis have a responsibility to maintain and build on the gains towards peace they have made in the last 12 months. They must refrain from any provocations and escalations and engage constructively in genuine dialogue towards a durable and permanent ceasefire.

We welcome the mediation efforts of Oman and Saudi Arabia in their support for peace in Yemen and are encouraged to see the parties engaging in dialogue. At this delicate juncture, we reiterate the importance of an inclusive Yemeni-led process with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, youth and civil society, under the auspices of the United Nations. This is the only way to achieve sustainable, long-lasting peace.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation continues to be devastating for the country's civilian population. Humanitarian access remains hampered by bureaucratic obstacles and restrictions, threatening the lives of

millions of Yemenis in need of urgent aid. This includes the delivery of vaccines, particularly to children, to ensure protection from sickness or death from such preventable diseases as measles and polio.

Malta calls on the Houthis to revoke restrictions of movement for aid workers and engage with the humanitarian community on an acceptable way forward. Such disruptions limit the delivery of humanitarian assistance and prevent equitable access to essential services. Aid operations must be allowed to perform their critical work without interference, and authorities must ensure the safety of aid workers and supporting staff. Furthermore, the mahram requirements imposed by the Houthis restrict the freedom of movement of Yemeni women and girls, as well as women humanitarian actors. Regrettably, the enforcement of these requirements has intensified.

On a more positive note, Malta is very encouraged by the release of nearly 900 conflict-related detainees over the weekend, as a result the agreement made at the Supervisory Committee on the implementation of the Detainees' Exchange Agreement last month. The agreement is a clear example of compromise and confidence-building, and we commend the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their support. We hope parties can build on the success of this cooperation and fulfil their commitments to the Stockholm Agreement and to releasing all conflict-related detainees and those arbitrarily detained.

Malta is also pleased to see further developments on the United Nations-coordinated operation for the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. We applaud United Nations colleagues for their tireless work.

My final point concerns mines and explosive remnants of war, which remain one of the leading causes of civilian death in Yemen, in particular of children. Even when peace is finally declared in Yemen, the legacy of these explosives will live on, whether in the life-changing injuries of children without limbs or sporadic explosions that kill at random and pollute farmland. We call on parties to stop the use of these indiscriminate weapons and support urgent mine-clearance efforts.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen. It is the responsibility of parties to demonstrate leadership, compromise and steadfast will to achieve peace.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg for his briefing and wish him a speedy recovery. I would also like to thank Ms. Ghada Mudawi for her briefing. I welcome the presence of the representative of Yemen in the Chamber today.

On the truce, we welcome the current positive momentum. The context is favourable for establishing foundations of trust between the parties. On the ground, we see that the truce is ongoing, even if we must remain vigilant against any provocation. The Security Council recently condemned the escalations in Ma'rib and Shabwa, for which the Houthis bear responsibility. This truce must be transformed into a complete and lasting cessation of hostilities. France calls on the parties — first and foremost the Houthis — to act responsibly to reach a political agreement with the Yemeni Government.

France welcomes the progress made with regard to certain confidence-building measures. We welcome the agreement reached in Geneva on 20 March on prisoner exchanges and call for its full implementation. France also supports such United Nations confidence-building mechanisms as the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen and is also working to preserve maritime security in the area.

The ongoing discussions at the diplomatic level are encouraging. France welcomes the efforts and involvement of Saudi Arabia, Oman and other actors in the region. One year after its creation, it is essential that the Presidential Leadership Council remains united in view of the discussions to come.

The Security Council must support the work of the Special Envoy, whose efforts we commend, to achieve a peace plan. This is the only way towards a comprehensive and inclusive political solution that takes into account the concerns and interests of all Yemenis. France calls for the full, equal, substantial and effective participation of Yemeni women in the political negotiations. Only a lasting political solution will allow for tangible improvement of the economic situation in Yemen and an alleviation of the humanitarian crisis.

We reiterate our concern about the deteriorating working and security conditions of humanitarian personnel. The restrictions imposed on United Nations and humanitarian personnel by the Houthis, to which Ms. Mudawi referred, must end, including restrictions on female aid workers who must be supervised by

male guardians. France also calls on the Houthis to immediately and unconditionally release the detained United Nations and other humanitarian personnel.

With regard to the situation of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, France welcomes the recent progress made. A ship is on its way to the Red Sea to allow for the transfer of oil. However, a sum of nearly \$30 million is still needed to ensure the full implementation of this emergency operation, and we call on Member States and the private sector to redouble their efforts, including in view of the donors' conference in early May, co-organized by the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mrs. Sánchez Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Grunberg, and wish him a speedy recovery. We also thank the Deputy Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We also welcome the presence of the permanent representative of Yemen at this morning's meeting.

Ecuador acknowledges and welcomes the diligent and effective work of Special Envoy Grunberg and his team, whose efforts with the Government of Yemen, the Houthis and various countries of the region have managed to establish conditions conducive to a responsible and sustainable political agreement after eight years of conflict. My delegation agrees with the Special Envoy's view of the renewed momentum for peace in Yemen and the region as well as internationally — that it has raised hopes of consolidating a comprehensive agreement based on a commitment to democracy, good governance and national reconciliation. The release of nearly 900 political prisoners is one of the tangible outcomes of the dialogue process, and we hope to see more prisoners released soon. We join the call to eliminate the obstacles to access to humanitarian assistance, in accordance with international law. It is unacceptable that at this critical moment female humanitarian personnel continue to see their work restricted and their safety threatened.

We recognize that the political context is fragile and that significant risks persist. If the situation in the country is to be addressed, we believe that all actors have to act concertedly to respond to the challenges that would follow a definitive cessation of hostilities, chief among them planning a road map for an inclusive and participatory political transition;

giving attention to humanitarian assistance needs; rebuilding infrastructure for the provision of basic services; reducing security threats; and establishing State institutions that will enable the reactivation of the economy, investments and development. In that regard, my delegation calls for continued work on strengthening three specific areas.

First, we must maintain the agreements reached during the truce in order to prevent an escalation of hostilities.

Secondly, we must continue to implement strategies such as the consultation process with Yemeni men and women, which can ensure an inclusive and participatory approach to the peace negotiation processes, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council on the full, equal and substantive participation of women at every stage.

Thirdly, we must ensure the country's economic revitalization and development by, among other things, eliminating the obstacles restricting the operations of its national and international airports and main seaports, which would also improve access to humanitarian assistance. We are relieved to learn that the situation of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker is close to being resolved. In that regard, we want to acknowledge the work of all the parties that have made the operation possible. We hope that the threat to Yemen and the region will be overcome in the next few weeks and that the donors' contributions will reach the country as soon as possible.

The primary motive for arriving at a final peace agreement is the welfare of the 21.6 million Yemenis who are depending on humanitarian assistance for survival — and the 4.5 million people who have been forcibly displaced by violence and insecurity, as well as the children at risk of being killed or maimed by mines and improvised explosive devices. On their behalf, I reiterate my delegation's call for continued efforts to reach a comprehensive and sustainable political agreement that will lead to an environment of peace, stability and well-being.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Deputy Director Mudawi for their briefings.

This month marks a year since the truce mediated by the United Nations was agreed. As we see the growing momentum, including the recent tangible progress in the form of a prisoner exchange, we are

encouraged by the increasing communication between the parties to the conflict and the countries of the region. We believe that ongoing engagement can help build confidence and pave the way for a meaningful dialogue towards a lasting peace in Yemen. At the same time, it is regrettable that we have seen a military escalation by the Houthis that has resulted in a number of casualties, and Japan condemns that development. We reiterate that there can be no military solution in Yemen, and as the Security Council said with one voice through its press statement this month (SC/15251), the parties should engage constructively in efforts to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. The role of the Special Envoy is indispensable in achieving a durable ceasefire and a comprehensive and inclusive political solution to the conflict. In any such solution, ownership by the Yemeni people is crucial.

While we have heard promising updates today, we have to remind ourselves that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen persists. We continue to call for unhindered access for humanitarian assistance operations to aid people in need. We also want to draw attention to the tragic fact that many Yemenis are falling victim to the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, which are a serious threat to human security. If we do not solve that problem, people's lives will continue to be threatened.

During last month's briefing (see S/PV.9282), we were encouraged to hear from the representative of Yemen that the Government of Yemen is implementing the necessary structural reforms for strengthening economic institutions. Establishing resilient institutions is vital for achieving long-term economic stability in Yemen, and tackling the issues regarding the Central Bank of Yemen and the country's currency is also in line with achieving that goal.

In conclusion, Japan believes the Council must stand united in support of those emerging but fragile gains. This opportunity must not be missed. Japan continues to make diplomatic efforts and provide humanitarian assistance and capacity-building support to realize peace and stability in Yemen.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank both of the briefers for their informative updates. Brazil would like to express its appreciation for their work and dedication in support of peace, stability and progress for all Yemenis. I also welcome the delegation of Yemen to today's meeting.

We are encouraged by the positive developments in the region, which include a resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Brazil once again congratulates China on its success in mediating that agreement. We would also like to point to the commendable efforts of the Governments of Iraq and Oman in the process of bringing about a rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the same spirit of dialogue and cooperation, the recent agreement on the exchange of nearly 900 conflict-related detainees is another promising step in the right direction. Not only does it help to rebuild trust, but it also sends a strong message that peace is achievable through diplomacy and negotiation. Brazil commends the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all the parties involved for that achievement. We also urge all stakeholders to continue making progress on the path to peace.

If we are to effectively take advantage of the opportunity created by the renewed push for a sustainable resolution to the conflict in Yemen, it is crucial that the parties refrain from provocations and prioritize the welfare of the Yemeni people. The recent military escalation in the provinces of Shabwah and Ma'rib, which resulted in numerous casualties on both sides, was very worrisome. In that regard, Brazil notes that the Security Council has been unanimous in condemning such attacks, which threaten to undermine the positive momentum we are seeing on the ground. We therefore call on all the parties, particularly the Houthis, to exercise restraint and commit to de-escalation to prevent a return to the tragedy of full-blown war. We must remember that lasting peace in Yemen can be achieved only through dialogue and compromise, rather than through force. Brazil reiterates its call for a ceasefire agreement in Yemen that can lead to a comprehensive political process under the United Nations auspices.

The road to reconciliation must also involve a comprehensive plan for economic reconstruction that should entail rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, promoting local industries and ensuring that all Yemenis have access to basic services and opportunities for a better life. The international community is crucial to supporting such efforts, providing the necessary resources and expertise to help the country tackle its challenges and achieve sustainable growth and development.

At the same time, Brazil remains concerned about the protracted humanitarian crisis in Yemen, in which millions of people continue to suffer from the lack of the ability to meet their immediate needs, including food, water and health care. We must act with urgency to alleviate their suffering. That includes addressing the issue of food security, which is of paramount importance. All people have the right to access affordable and nutritious food. International cooperation is needed to help Yemen build resilient agricultural systems that can support long-term food security and provide the foundation for the country's development. As we have highlighted on previous occasions, promoting food security is essential to achieving stability, reinforcing trust and reaching durable solutions. Restrictive measures imposed against Yemen should not hinder access to agricultural goods or undermine the conditions necessary for economic stability and development. The easing of import restrictions is a welcome step in that regard.

Together, we can contribute to a new chapter in the history of that ancient and resilient nation by fostering dialogue, promoting cooperation and supporting all efforts to build a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Yemen.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Ms. Mudawi for their briefings and welcome the representative of Yemen to this meeting.

Let me make three points today.

First, to date, the political process in Yemen has maintained positive momentum. The parties concerned have maintained communications on the resumption of the truce. Saudi Arabia, Oman and other countries of the region have made active efforts to achieve de-escalation and a permanent ceasefire in Yemen. China welcomes that and commends Special Envoy Grundberg's efforts to promote peace talks. We hope that all parties in Yemen will prioritize the interests of the people by making decisive political decisions and meeting one another halfway in an effort to achieve tangible progress in the Yemeni political process and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, as soon as possible. Thanks to Special Envoy Grundberg's good offices, a deal for the exchange of detainees was reached between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis. China welcomes the successful completion of the first phase of the prisoner exchange and hopes that

the two sides will steadily pursue work for its follow-up and continuously inject positive energy into Yemen's political process.

Secondly, the security situation in Yemen has recently been under increased stress. China expresses grave concern about the escalation of military operations in Ma'rib and Taiz and the consequent casualties. We call on all parties to the conflict, not least the Houthis, to exercise calm and restraint, avoid taking provocative actions, which undermine mutual trust and create tension, and prevent the further deterioration of the security situation to provide the conditions necessary for the political settlement of the Yemeni issue.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in Yemen remains dire. Malnutrition is acute in Yemen, where more than two thirds of the population live below the poverty line. We call on the international community to step up humanitarian and development assistance to Yemen and provide adequate funding for United Nations operations in Yemen. The parties concerned should provide the needed facilities for United Nations humanitarian operations and lift unreasonable restrictions on them.

Concerning the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which poses a great threat given its potential consequences, we must begin the transfer of crude oil, as soon as possible. The replacement tanker for the *FSO SAFER* set sail for the Red Sea after it was refitted at a Chinese port, which was a key step towards realizing the transfer of crude oil. China appreciates the efforts made by the United Nations to that end and hopes that the related budgeted funds will be made available as soon as possible.

On 6 April, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and Iran met in Beijing and announced the resumption of diplomatic relations with immediate effect. The two countries expressed their willingness to make new strides on the road of détente as a result of the Beijing dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iran in early March. That is of great significance in terms of strengthening regional unity and cooperation and easing tensions in the region. It sets a good example for resolving conflicts through dialogue and consultation and provides an excellent model for promoting global security initiatives. It also fully demonstrates that peace and development are the shared aspiration of the people and represent the current trend in the Middle East. China hopes that all parties in Yemen will follow the current regional trend, respond to the voice of the

people, positively take advantage of opportunities and make greater efforts and take substantive steps towards the political settlement of the Yemeni issue, as soon as possible.

As a good friend and partner of the countries in the region, China stands ready to promote regional peace and stability and achieve lasting peace in Yemen.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, to whom I wish a speedy recovery, and the Deputy Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ghada Mudawi, for their briefings and, above all, their significant efforts to promote peace and the protection of civilians in Yemen.

While the events of the past months attest to the growing political will to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, we believe that the current opportunities must be translated into lasting peace. In that regard, Switzerland would like to underscore the following three points.

First, we welcome the prisoner exchange negotiated in Switzerland and take this opportunity to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Special Envoy for their significant efforts in achieving that positive outcome. The prisoner exchange represents not only an important confidence-building measure between the parties to the conflict, but also a renewed sense of optimism for hundreds of families in Yemen. It is impossible to remain unmoved by the images that we all saw last weekend, including those of a father hugging his son and of a brother seeing his family for the first time after more than five years. All will be reunited to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr. In that context, the peace talks in Sana'a are a positive milestone. Such welcome, but fragile, progress must pave the way towards the realization of an inclusive political settlement under the auspices of the United Nation and a national dialogue with the participation of all of society. In this respect, we welcome the work of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman. Nevertheless, Switzerland is also aware that there is still a long way to go to resolve the conflict in Yemen. That is why we urge the parties to quickly find concrete solutions that will benefit the entire population.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the excessive restrictions to which humanitarian actors, especially women, are subjected. We condemn those obstructions and call on all parties to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to

the civilian population in need, including access to women and children. We are also concerned about the recent escalation in violence, particularly in Ma'rib and Shabwah, and urge the parties to remain calm and exercise restraint. The truce agreed upon a year ago has strengthened the protection of civilians, but efforts must be made to ensure that those responsible for all violations of international humanitarian law are prosecuted and held to account.

Thirdly, we welcome the progress in the implementation of the salvage plan for the *FSO SAFER* tanker, and in particular the fact that the replacement vessel *NAUTICA* has set sail for the Red Sea. While that is a key step forward, \$29 million is still needed to complete the first phase of the operation. As such, the participation of Member States that have not yet contributed, as well as that of the private sector, to make up the lacking funds is crucial. We already stressed here in this Chamber last month (see S/PV.9282) that, without the additional funding, we will not be able to avoid an environmental disaster that could have negative consequences for peace in the region. In that context, we welcome the conference organized by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in May 2022. Finally, those contributions should in no way prejudice the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Yemen.

The Council must remain fully engaged and support the renewal of the truce in Yemen and the prospects for change that appear to be emerging in the country. Switzerland stands ready at all times to host discussions in order to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Hans Grundberg and Ms. Ghada Mudawi for their valuable briefings on the latest developments in Yemen. We reaffirm our support for the United Nations efforts in that context and also welcome the participation of the Ambassador of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Al-Saadi, in today's meeting.

At the outset, we would like to express our deep appreciation and full support for the continuous mediation efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to end the war in Yemen, including their efforts to renew the truce, maintain the ceasefire and concurrently implement measures to improve the humanitarian and economic situations in order to initiate an inclusive political process among the Yemeni parties.

We also appreciate the sincere efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman to achieve reconciliation in Yemen, and we underscore the importance of making concerted efforts to seize the current opportunity and end the Yemeni crisis. Doing so will enable the beginning of a new phase to end the suffering of the Yemeni people and to restore security, stability and prosperity to their country.

The recent release of hundreds of prisoners and abductees gives new hope for the possibility of achieving more progress on the humanitarian, economic and political tracks. We hope that step will open up the possibility for releasing all prisoners and abductees based on the “all for all” principle, agreed upon in the Stockholm Agreement. In that regard, we commend the efforts made by the Office of the Special Envoy and by the International Committee of the Red Cross to accomplish that important humanitarian achievement. We also welcome today’s generous humanitarian gesture made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which led to the unilateral release of 104 Houthi prisoners as another step to support peace.

In the light of the positive transformation in Yemen and the region, we stress the need to develop a road map that paves the way for launching a national dialogue among Yemenis under the auspices of the United Nations. To achieve that goal, we must prioritize the interests of the Yemeni people and their future above all other considerations and abandon the threat or use of arms. It is also critical to commit to dialogue as the only means to resolve differences until a peaceful solution is reached based on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions.

As a year of relative calm in Yemen had passed, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its full support for regional and international efforts aimed at finding a political solution for the Yemeni crisis. We also reaffirm our continued humanitarian support for the brotherly Yemeni people to achieve stability and development in Yemen.

In the humanitarian and economic contexts, we call for a sharper focus on reviving the Yemeni economy, as it is closely related to alleviating the acute humanitarian crisis and improving the living conditions of Yemenis. We call on the Houthis to lift all restrictions imposed on international humanitarian organizations, including its restrictions targeting women. We further stress the

importance of supporting efforts aimed at empowering Yemeni women and supporting their participation in the political, economic and social areas.

In conclusion, we emphasize the need for wisdom and reason in the upcoming period. We must follow an approach that embraces calm, dialogue and peace while focusing efforts on reconstruction, development and prosperity, both in Yemen and across the entire region.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I Special Envoy Grundberg and Deputy Director Mudawi for their helpful updates.

On 2 April, we marked one year since the United Nations-mediated truce in Yemen began, initiating the longest period of calm since the war started, as noted by the Special Envoy. The truce laid the foundations for renewed peace efforts while delivering tangible benefits to the Yemeni people, saving thousands of lives. We are encouraged that the terms of the truce have largely continued to hold and thank the Government of the Republic of Yemen for its restraint, particularly following Houthi attacks, which the Council condemned in a press statement (SC/15251) earlier this month.

Today there is yet even more reason for optimism. We welcome significant efforts towards peace in Yemen, including the visit by Saudi and Omani delegations to Sana’a, as well as the public commitment by the Government of the Republic of Yemen to take additional steps to achieve peace. We also welcome the release of approximately 900 prisoners, from all sides of the conflict, which took place between 14 and April. Those developments are important steps forward, building on the progress and intensive negotiations of the past year. We recognize the strong support of regional partners Saudi Arabia and Oman, as well as the unflagging dedication of the Office of the Special Envoy.

We call on the parties to seize that momentum and work to secure a new, more comprehensive agreement that will pave the way for a United Nations-mediated Yemeni-Yemeni political process. That is the only way to resolve the conflict in a durable manner and reverse the humanitarian crisis and economic strain on Yemenis. While we welcome recent efforts to promote regional de-escalation, only Yemenis can bring lasting peace to Yemen. As such, we must focus on supporting the efforts of the United Nations to bring the Yemeni parties together in an inclusive political process. We hope that the process can include meaningful input from women and civil society leaders and respond to the Yemenis’ calls for justice, accountability and redress for human rights violations and abuses.

At this critical juncture in negotiations, restraint is more important than ever. Houthi actions, such as the recent attacks in Taiz and Ma'rib, threaten the positive progress we have seen and exacerbate Yemenis' suffering.

While there is welcome progress toward peace, we cannot neglect Yemen's dire humanitarian situation. A tremendous shortfall remains in the humanitarian appeal, and we call on donors to close the funding gap. We also remain concerned about restrictions on humanitarian access, including Houthi interference in independent assessments and monitoring visits, contracting and tendering processes, and restrictions on women's freedom of movement. Such interference must end, as it hinders aid delivery and prevents assistance from reaching Yemen's most vulnerable.

We call for the release of our United States staff members from Yemen who have been forcibly detained for 18 months. In the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan, we call on the Houthis to release them immediately and unconditionally.

We welcome news that the *NAUTICA* tanker, a very large crude carrier contracted to offload oil from the *FSO SAFER* tanker, has set sail toward Yemen to begin the first phase of the project. We urge donors to provide funds and help make up the shortfall needed to begin the operation. We urge the United Nations to ensure that the project implementation proceeds on schedule.

Finally, I would like to wish the people of Yemen a Ramadan Mubarak and to convey the best wishes of the people of the United States on the upcoming Eid Al-Fitr celebrations. May the coming weeks and months give the people of Yemen even more cause for celebration.

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

We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Grunberg, and the Deputy Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ghada Mudawi, for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Today we are undoubtedly bearing witness to a turning point for this long-suffering country where, for a number of consecutive years, there has been an acute military, political and humanitarian crisis. In terms of a Yemeni settlement, considerable progress has been

observed. All of the parties are clearly striving to avoid another large-scale escalation and are genuinely interested in normalization.

Nonetheless, this is a slow and fragile process. Prior to discussing the launching of a full-fledged political process, the Yemeni actors need to reach agreement on a number of political issues, with a view to renewing for a lengthier period of time the truce that was suspended last year, expanding the provisions thereof and mitigating the acute humanitarian crisis. The parties need to be willing to engage in reciprocal concessions in order to overcome key differences. It is indispensable that the international legal basis for settlement be renewed in order to ensure that it reflects current realities.

We hope that all influential political stakeholders in the country will maintain a constructive position. That will help to consolidate a lasting regime for ending the hostilities. Under these circumstances, the need to exercise restraint and forestall provocations is greater than ever before.

There has been heartening progress in addressing the issue of prisoner exchange. We welcome what was arrived at and achieved by the Special Envoy in late March, in particular the agreement on the exchange of detainees and the prisoners. The agreement was reached between the official Yemeni authorities and the Houthi movement, and we welcome the beginning of its implementation.

We urge the Yemeni stakeholders to step up negotiations geared towards continuing to resolve the question of forcibly detained persons and other humanitarian issues. We believe that meaningful progress in this direction would facilitate confidence-building and also help to create an atmosphere favourable to the establishment of a full-fledged nationwide dialogue with the participation of all of the leading political forces in Yemen, under the auspices of the United Nations. This will also help to ensure a lasting normalization of the situation.

For our part, the Russian Federation will continue to coordinate its approaches with all leading Yemeni actors and key regional partners. We note the unstinting efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy to ensure that the Yemeni parties return to the negotiating table. Our support for Special Envoy Grunberg was reaffirmed during his discussion with the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, on 17 February. Our

shared goal should be the long-term comprehensive settlement to the numerous problems that Yemen has been enduring, problems that have spilled over into neighbouring States and significantly affected them.

At the same time, we continue to be discouraged by the persistent fixation of a number of Security Council colleagues on the need to renew the export of Yemeni oil. Now is not the time to advance national agendas, despite the desire of some parties to continue to exploit the country's resources.

We are concerned by the persistent dire socioeconomic situation in Yemen, where the world's largest humanitarian disaster has unfolded. The Yemeni people, regardless of where they reside, need to have unfettered access to food, medicine and other basic necessities on a non-discriminatory basis.

We note the efforts of the actors in the region on the financial and humanitarian tracks. We also hope that there will be a prompt resolution to the issues around the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. In its current state, the tanker continues to pose a serious threat to the Red Sea ecosystem.

In conclusion, I wish to recall the consistent efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation to improve the situation and achieve robust peace, stability and sustainable development in the Persian Gulf region. The achievement of these objectives is the focus of the Russian blueprint for ensuring collective security in the Persian Gulf region, which was renewed in August 2021.

I now resume my functions as the 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 assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. We sincerely wish you all success in discharging your duties. I also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the friendly country of Mozambique, for his successful presidency last month. I thank Mr. Hans Grundberg and Ms. Ghada Mudawi for their briefings.

Two weeks ago, one year had passed since the agreement on humanitarian truce under the auspices of the United Nations and its entry into force. That truce was a glimmer of hope for the Yemeni people as a positive step towards achieving a comprehensive

ceasefire and reviving the peace process. However, all hopes were quickly dashed when the Houthi militias refused to extend the truce in October of last year. Despite fully implementing the humanitarian truce provisions after it expired while supporting efforts for its renewal upon instructions from His Excellency Mr. Rashad Al-Alimi, Chair of the Presidential Leadership Council, and following concessions after concessions, the Houthi militias sought to thwart all the benefits that had been achieved for the Yemeni people and chose unprecedented escalation. They launched attacks against ports and economic facilities and continue to threaten the safety and security of international navigation. Today, as diplomatic momentum is building up, optimism prevails once again in Yemen as conditions are now more conducive than ever to achieve peace.

Here we are again, with another opportunity to really test how serious the Houthi militias are about achieving peace and ending the humanitarian crisis that they have caused. The Presidential Leadership Council stresses once again its commitment to building the sustainable peace and safe future that the Yemeni people deserve. In that context, the Yemeni Government commends the continued efforts of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to alleviate the humanitarian suffering and revive the peace process in Yemen, as part of its initiative announced in March 2021. We reiterate our support for the efforts of our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sultanate of Oman, as well as all the other commendable efforts and endeavours made at the regional and international levels and aimed at ending the Yemeni crisis and achieving comprehensive and sustainable peace based on the agreed political terms of reference — that is, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive national dialogue conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). We stress the need for any proposed political initiatives or solutions to this crisis to be based on a comprehensive assessment of the conflict in Yemen, addressing its causes and limiting its repercussions and effects on the various political, economic, social and humanitarian fronts in a way that prevents a recurrence of the cycle of fighting and violence, and that meets the aspirations of the Yemeni people to build their national, civil, democratic and modern State based on respect for human rights, justice, equality, the rule of law and guaranteeing public freedoms.

The Yemeni Government affirms its eagerness to end the suffering of the Yemeni people and its positive engagement with the efforts of all brothers and friends aimed at a complete ceasefire and the launch of a comprehensive political process led by the United Nations, through its Special Envoy to Yemen, so as to establish peace, end the conflict, empower and restore State institutions and achieving the security and stability that Yemenis desire.

My Government addressed the Council last month (see S/PV.9282) regarding the recent military escalation of the Houthi militias in the governorates of Ma'rib and Shabwah. That resulted in a new human tragedy by displacing thousands of civilians and families, mostly women and children, in addition to the Houthi militias' terrorist attacks targeting the Governor of Taiz and other officials. All of that reflects a blatant disregard for the efforts for calm and the renewal of the humanitarian truce, in a clear confirmation of the militias' lack of real determination to engage in the efforts for peace and to cease their attacks and war on the Yemeni people. While my Government appreciates the Security Council's united condemnation in its press statement (SC/15251) of the Houthis' escalation and the terrorist attack on 25 March, we renew our call to the Council and the international community to realize the seriousness of that escalation and provocative acts. That is particularly important at this crucial stage, when we must coordinate all efforts to compel the Houthi militias to deal seriously with the joint endeavours of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the international community and to return to a comprehensive political process sponsored by the United Nations. We stress the importance of monitoring the behaviour of the Houthi militias, for which past experience is the best evidence. The reality has not changed, and they continue to violate their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law on a daily basis.

Over the past year, the economic file has been a top priority for the Presidential Leadership Council and the Government, which has carried out reforms aimed at promoting the effective and coherent work of our economic institutions in order to achieve economic recovery and concrete improvement in the indicators of the general budget, raising total revenues, maintaining relative stability for the national currency, creating job opportunities and improving food security. All of those reforms have been carried out despite the Government's reduced capacity, the contraction of the national

economy by half due to the war's repercussions and the Houthis' continued attacks on ports and national oil installations. Since mid-2022 those attacks have cost us about \$1 billion that should have gone to improve basic services and pay salaries.

All of those issues are increasing the human suffering of our citizens and exacerbating the catastrophic effects of the continuing escalation, not to mention the constant obstacles imposed by the Houthi militias on humanitarian operations and their blatant interference in the work of humanitarian relief agencies. They have been diverting aid away from the needy, preventing the passage of food trucks and basic commodities to the governorates under their control, in a flagrant violation that threatens the lives of millions, and imposing illegal levies in order to steal from merchants and raise the price of food commodities for the people. In that context, we urge the international community and all partners to continue providing support to the Yemeni Government to limit the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis, overcome its economic and development challenges, strengthen the State's public resources, and contribute effectively to achieving stability and economic recovery.

Regarding the prisoner exchanges, the Yemeni Government welcomes the completion of the implementation of the first phase of the process of exchanging prisoners and detainees between the Government and the Houthis under the joint auspices of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. In the past three days hundreds of Yemeni families have rejoiced at seeing their children after years of absence, and we hope that important step will be the start of the process of closing that humanitarian file and building on it to achieve a comprehensive and just peace throughout Yemen.

The Houthi militias need to be committed to enabling access to all detainees, the disappeared, the abducted, and those under house arrest, and to release them according to the all-for-all rule, without restrictions or conditions, in a manner that guarantees an end to their suffering and reunites them with their families under the Stockholm Agreement. The Government reaffirms the importance of keeping the issue of prisoners and detainees on the list of priorities of the United Nations, the Special Envoy and the Security Council. We are very grateful for the role of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy, led by our sister nation of Saudi Arabia, in closing that humanitarian file, and the role of the

Office of the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross in facilitating the release and exchange operations.

The Yemeni Government welcomes the progress made in the safe rescue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker by purchasing a replacement tanker to offload its crude oil and sail it towards the Yemeni coast, which is an important step towards preventing and eliminating the threat of an imminent environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophe. We are also committed to providing every possible support and facilitating all necessary efforts to complete the implementation of the United Nations plan. We call for contributions to bridge the financing gap of the rescue operation plan

and affirm the importance of adhering to the time frame for its implementation in order to avoid this potential disaster.

In conclusion, the great people of Yemen are looking forward to an end to the war and their suffering, and to achieving the just, comprehensive and sustainable peace that Yemen and Yemenis deserve, as confirmed by the agreed regional and international terms of reference.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): 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 11.40 a.m.