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Provisional

President: Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Issahaku
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj, Founder and President of the Abductees' Mothers Association.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: I would like to thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to update the Security Council on recent developments in Yemen and my efforts to mediate an agreement between the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah that will set Yemen on a path to sustainably ending the conflict.

Allow me to start by reiterating my condemnation of the murder in Taiz governorate on 21 July of a World Food Programme staff member, Moayad Hameidi. I offer my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. Let me make it clear that humanitarian workers should never be a target. Any loss of life in humanitarian service is an unacceptable tragedy for the United Nations and for the people who benefit from the humanitarian community's life-saving assistance.

While the United Nations family mourns the loss of Moayad, I am greatly relieved about the recent release of our five United Nations colleagues who were kidnapped in Abyan governorate in February 2022. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to securing their release, as well as my solidarity with the other United Nations staff members who are still being held without due process in Yemen. In that regard, let us not forget the plight of conflict-

related detainees, who continue to face the unbearable sorrow of separation from their loved ones. I encourage both parties to continue to work closely with my Office to achieve the unconditional release of detainees on the basis of the all-for-all principle. In that regard, I look forward to today's briefing by Ms. Amat Al-Hajj of the Abductees' Mothers Association.

Turning to my mediation efforts, I have continued my engagement with the Yemeni parties and the Member States in the region. Last week I visited Riyadh, where I held meetings with the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, and other senior Yemeni officials, as well as senior Saudi officials. This week I travelled to Muscat, where I held meetings with Ansar Allah representatives and senior Omani officials. Additionally, my Office has held meetings over the past two weeks with Government officials in Aden and Ansar Allah representatives in Sana'a. The sides continue to express a general willingness to seek solutions, but that still needs to be translated into concrete steps, specifically a clear agreement on the way forward that includes restarting an inclusive Yemeni political process.

Despite the expiration of the truce last October, the hostilities on the front lines have not returned to pre-truce levels and the civilian casualty numbers have significantly declined. However, intermittent fighting and exchanges of fire have continued in some areas, particularly Taiz, Marib, Al-Dhale'e, Al-Hudaydah, Shabwah and Saada. Against that backdrop, there have been public threats to return to war. That rhetoric is not conducive to maintaining a fruitful mediation environment. I call on the parties to refrain from escalatory rhetoric and to continue to use and build on the dialogue channels established under the truce through the Military Coordination Committee to de-escalate incidents.

Allow me to now turn to the increasingly dire economic situation. The parties continue to resort to antagonistic economic measures to weaken the other side, but those tactics primarily hurt civilians while intensifying the atmosphere of mistrust. The Government is still being prevented from exporting petroleum products — its major source of revenue — and intra-Yemeni trade in goods and services remains curtailed due to restrictions and the imposition of exorbitant fees and taxes. The provision of basic services is deteriorating further, power stations are shutting down due to a lack of fuel and electricity

cuts in Aden are reaching 18 hours per day amid the stifling summer weather. As always, Yemeni citizens, including women and girls, continue to bear the brunt of those measures and their consequences. Amid those terrible conditions, the support of \$1.2 billion pledged earlier this month by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a welcome step. But there will be no lasting improvement in the situation until the parties come together to discuss and agree on sustainable solutions to Yemen's economic and fiscal challenges.

The expansion of flights to and from Sana'a airport also remains a pressing concern in view of the need to relieve some of the pressure on Yemeni civilians seeking to travel for medical care, educational and business opportunities or to reunite with loved ones. That also means protecting the operational continuity of Yemenia Airways. Moreover, last month Yemenis in Taiz marked eight years of conflict-related road closures in and around their governorate. That grim milestone is another reminder of the dire need for opening roads in Taiz and other governorates in order to facilitate the freedom of movement of Yemenis who have been facing restrictions on their access to basic needs and engagement in economic opportunities. Political and economic instability are fertile grounds for violent extremist groups. I am concerned about the reports that the activities of violent extremists have recently increased in Abyan and Shabwah governorates, in yet another reminder of the consequences of the long-term absence of a political settlement of the conflict. The fragility of the situation and its impact on Yemeni women and men highlight the urgent need to reach a consensus on the way forward. My Office is working to convene the parties to address some of their immediate priorities in order to build confidence and move towards an inclusive and sustainable political settlement. The levels of trust are low and partial solutions risk being perceived as reversible and providing only temporary relief. For that reason, I continue to pursue a more comprehensive approach that addresses both the immediate and longer-term political, economic, military and security issues.

On the economic front, my Office continues to explore options with the parties on how best to respond to the needs of all Yemenis, including with regard to regular public-sector salary payments nationwide, the improved provision of services, affordable basic commodities, a functional banking system and the facilitation of commercial activity. The issue of salary

payments, including the question of revenue sources, remains a central concern for which the parties need to find a mutually agreeable solution. Economic resources must not be perceived as a zero-sum game. Rather than competing, the parties should cooperate to broaden and expand economic opportunities for the welfare of all Yemenis.

In addition, building on the achievements of the truce, my Office continues to engage all sides on the technical elements required for a sustainable nationwide ceasefire. Over the past few weeks, we have held meetings in Sana'a and Aden with military officials and local security actors. They included meetings with Ansar Allah's representatives to the Military Coordination Committee, following earlier work with the Government representatives. I commend all sides for continuing internal preparations for a ceasefire, and I encourage them to make progress towards a more formalized arrangement.

A resumption of an inclusive, Yemeni-owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations remains at the heart of my mediation efforts. The political process should provide a platform for a plurality of Yemenis from across the country to collectively discuss and determine their own future. It should also pave the way for reconciliation and efforts to address grievances. The recent intensification of the voices of civil society, women and young people on the challenging issues of reconciliation, grievances and injustices once again underlines the importance of the inclusion of a range of Yemenis in the political process.

On the occasion of International Youth Day, which is observed on 12 August, I would like to celebrate Yemeni youth for their critical contributions to peace. Young people make up a majority of Yemen's population. After years of war, many Yemeni women and men have lost their entire adolescence to the conflict. In consultations organized by my Office, Yemeni youth often highlight challenges related to their limited access to employment and education, as well as political inclusion and particular restrictions on young women's participation in public life. Yet despite the challenges, young Yemeni women and men continue to lay the foundations for peace with their determination, resourcefulness and strong belief in a better tomorrow for their country. My Office will continue its efforts to create space for the perspectives and voices of young people, along with other segments of Yemeni society.

The continued unity and steadfast support of the Council and the international community more broadly have been a pivotal asset in my mediation efforts. Similarly, the recent progress on the *FSO SAFER* has shown how concerted international support and multilateral cooperation can bring tangible results. The removal of the oil from the *FSO SAFER* to a new vessel has prevented an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. I would like to congratulate the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. David Gressly, and the United Nations Development Programme and its partners on reaching that great milestone. I also want to commend the role of the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah in facilitating the operation. Looking ahead, the Council's support will continue to be vital to encouraging the parties to maintain an environment conducive to discussions on the way forward and to move towards a just and sustainable peace that meets the aspirations of Yemeni women, men and young people.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

Ms. Wosornu: I welcome the update from Mr. Grundberg on recent political developments in Yemen. Before I proceed, I also want to express my deep sadness at the terrible loss of one of our World Food Programme colleagues, Mr. Moayad Hameidi, who was brutally killed in an attack in Turbah, in Taiz governorate, on 21 July. Another colleague was injured in the attack. Mr. Hameidi's death is an immense tragedy for his family, friends and colleagues and the entire humanitarian community. We send our sincerest condolences to all who knew him and call for a comprehensive investigation into the attack and for those behind it to be held accountable. Mere days from World Humanitarian Day, we pay tribute to Mr. Hameidi's dedication to his work and to the communities he served in Yemen and many other countries — a dedication espoused by so many humanitarians around the world. The attack and others like it show just how real the threats to the safety and security of aid workers are, from violence to kidnapping, harassment and mis- and disinformation. Humanitarians stand with people in need in their darkest hour. They are not and should never be a target.

I want to take the opportunity today to discuss two of the most critical components of our humanitarian

response — access and funding. I will turn to those momentarily.

First, one issue on which we have seen extraordinary progress recently, as the Special Envoy said, is the United Nations efforts to address the catastrophic environmental threat posed by the *FSO SAFER*. On 1 August, the SMIT Salvage team completed the ship-to-ship transfer of more than one million barrels of oil from the *FSO SAFER* to the replacement vessel, the *Yemen*. That is the culmination of years of tireless advocacy, collaboration and innovative problem-solving. It is a significant milestone, and again, I also commend the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, David Gressly, and the United Nations Development Programme for stepping up and taking on this colossal task. However, the work does not stop there. We must now complete the second phase of the operation, in accordance with our agreements with the relevant authorities. To do so, the United Nations urgently needs to close the \$22 million funding gap. I encourage the international community to help us to complete that important work.

In another piece of good news, we are delighted to have finally seen the release last week of five United Nations staff members who were kidnapped in Abyan governorate 18 months ago. Our colleagues are receiving support. We are very grateful to all Member States and other interlocutors who were engaged in those efforts, including some who are in this Chamber, such as the Government of Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. However, other United Nations staff remain in detention in Sana'a, and we demand their immediate release.

Over the course of this year, the humanitarian community has pushed to increase its presence in previously underserved areas across the country. Just this month, the United Nations undertook an assessment mission to Raymah governorate with a view to increasing our operational capacity in that area. However, I am sorry to report that the broader access picture remains bleak. Misinformation and disinformation against humanitarians are on the rise across Yemen, making our work more dangerous and more difficult than it already is. And despite the collective and concerted efforts of the humanitarian community, we have seen limited progress in efforts to expand our operating space this year. Aid workers continue to experience attempted interference in all stages of humanitarian activities and extensive movement restrictions, which have a particular impact on our women national staff and all

those they serve. We continue to engage with both the de facto authorities and the Government of Yemen to chart a path forward to resolve those issues. I renew our call to the parties to fulfil their obligations to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief efforts for all people in need.

In 2023, humanitarians aim to provide support to more than 17 million people in need across the country. However, that important work is being severely hampered by critical funding shortages. Nearly eight months into the year, Yemen's humanitarian response plan has received \$1.34 billion out of the \$4.34 billion — it has received only 31 per cent of what is needed. While we are grateful for the generosity of our donors, major shortfalls across all sectors in Yemen mean programmes and services are having to be cut or scaled back. The World Food Programme recently announced the suspension of its malnutrition prevention activities across Yemen, starting from August, with more cuts expected in the coming months if funds are not urgently received. In July, we received reports from humanitarian partners that only one in five children targeted for severe acute malnutrition support in Al-Jawf governorate were getting the assistance they needed. The cost of inaction for those children, and for many other people across the country, is steep. I urge the international community not to lose sight of the progress made in improving humanitarian outcomes across Yemen and how easily that could be reversed.

While access and funding are necessary areas of focus in the short term, we must also work to address the long-term drivers of humanitarian needs. Of particular concern is the country's failing economy. Public services remain fractured and unreliable. Protests in Aden and surrounding governorates over recent weeks have intensified in the wake of extensive power outages and a currency that continues to decline. Economic hostilities continue to have devastating consequences for millions of people across Yemen already struggling to make ends meet. In the absence of a resumption of oil exports, blocked owing to threats by the de facto authorities, government revenue will continue to dwindle, and service provision will falter. Ongoing trade obstructions will continue to drive the cost of basic goods even farther out of reach. We condemn those actions by the de facto authorities, which serve to compound the misery of so many people in Yemen. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recently announced \$1.2 billion in budget support for the Government of

Yemen, which will help to keep the power supply on and salaries paid. The disbursement of that generous support cannot come too soon. That alone, however, will not be enough to bring Yemen's economy back from the brink of collapse.

It is vital to make progress on a political resolution of this conflict, as the Special Envoy has said, but let me be clear also: a political resolution alone will not solve the humanitarian crisis. Only when such progress is pursued together with improved economic conditions and the re-establishment of essential services will we see humanitarian needs begin to decrease. In the light of donor projections that there will be much less humanitarian funding available next year, collective action is needed to address those drivers now — or we may see needs increase at a time when we will not be able to respond to them. The humanitarian community stands ready to play its part in that work. In the meantime, we will continue to do everything we can to support those most in need in Yemen — no matter who, no matter where, no matter what.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Al-Hajj.

Ms. Al-Hajj (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Abductees' Mothers Association. The Association is a Yemeni human rights organization made up of the mothers, wives and relatives of abductees and forcibly disappeared persons, and of women activists advocating for freedoms and human rights. The Association deals with issues affecting abductees, the arbitrarily detained and the forcibly disappeared. I thank you, Madam President, for your interest in listening to the voice of the victims, who are calling for peace, justice and fairness.

I address the Council today from Taiz, a city that has been under Houthi siege for more than 3,000 days. The war has been going on for far too long, with consequences that have undermined our peace, security and a decent life.

Tragic stories caused by the war in Yemen abound. However, pain and tragedy weigh more heavily upon us when we consider one of the worst consequences of the war, namely, the abductees, forcibly displaced persons and others who are suffering deprivation and pain with their families, in particular the mothers who have lost

their abducted and forcibly disappeared children. We are speaking of civilians who have not participated in the conflict in any way, who have been taken from their homes, newly established checkpoints, and their places of employment, their universities or elsewhere.

Since 2016, we have documented the abductions of 9,568 civilians by different parties to the conflict in Yemen. The Houthis are responsible for most of them — for 9,130 cases of abduction, including 130 women. Thousands have been released, but they are saddled with trauma and permanent physical injury as a result of the systematic torture they faced in the Houthi prisons. Worse, some 140 people were killed as a result of torture or medical negligence inside the prisons.

Some 420 civilians remain detained, and 73 are still forcibly disappeared, 13 of whom are followers of the Baha'i faith, including politician Mohammed Qahtan. Some 50 abductees and three women are being tried by the Houthis in politicized courts. They have been subjected to systematic torture. It is difficult to give Council members a detailed account in the brief time allotted to me.

Some 97 civilians remain in the prisons of the Southern Transitional Council, including 61 forcibly disappeared persons, and 26 detainees are being held by the legitimate Government, including three forcibly disappeared persons. That is what our association has documented. Those numbers are very high for all parties, and abductions persist despite the declared truce.

For decades, the Security Council has instilled in us a humanitarian culture which made us believe that freedom is non-negotiable, a right that cannot be used as a bargaining chip. We commend the role played by the Special Envoy, Mr. Hans Grunberg, in the exchange of prisoners among the parties to the conflict, which has led to the release of hundreds, and only 200 civilian abductees remain outstanding. Many of those have suffered psychological trauma and poor health, as they were subjected to different kinds of abuse, including living in conditions where they became sick due to exposure to the infectious diseases that are widespread in prisons. They have had to face forced displacement and bad economic conditions.

We see this exchange of prisoners and detainees as a good indication that the issue could be resolved once and for all on the condition that it is an all-for-all exchange. We call upon the international community and international rights organizations to assume

their responsibilities and put an end to the suffering of thousands of the abductees, forcibly disappeared persons and their families. Their families are waiting for them, despite their present conditions, which are a violation of their most basic human rights, running counter to all international laws and conventions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

When we speak about the abductees, we speak of thousands of families and children who have been forcibly displaced and forced to live in places with substandard living conditions. They suffer acute shortages of food, medicine and clean water. They live in scorching heat with total power cuts.

Women are the most adversely affected by the conflict, which has undermined their lives and livelihoods. They are enduring social-based violence in different areas under the control of the combating parties. They suffer the presence of landmines and snipers, in addition to policies imposed by the Houthis that limit their abilities to travel, move, work and study. Travel is forbidden for women without being accompanied by a *mahram*, a male relative. Women cannot access basic services, including sexual and reproductive health services. They are also subject to threats, abduction, forced disappearance and even targeted killing. This is especially the case for women peacebuilders and defenders of human rights.

We believe that the Security Council has great power. We trust that it also intends to resolve this specific issue by bringing about an end to the conflict and protecting civilians in Yemen in general. We would therefore present Council members with a number of recommendations, as follows, that we hope will be taken into consideration.

We call for comprehensive peace, the return of State authority, disarmament and non-interference by external parties in our internal affairs. We call for the release of all detainees and abductees and for the fate of those forcibly missing and disappeared to be disclosed. We call for the immediate implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which calls for the unconditional release of abductees and detainees. Utmost priority should be given during negotiations to the issue of male and female abductees and the forcibly disappeared. We call for the families of abductees and forcibly missing persons to be represented in negotiations. We call for this issue to be resolved in a fair manner because it is the most important step towards achieving peace and

stability in Yemen. We call for all those responsible for the abduction and forced disappearance and torture to be brought to domestic and international justice. Indeed, they must not be allowed to enjoy impunity. We warn that agreeing to a fragile peace will lead only to the return of violence and fighting.

There is simply not enough time to give the Security Council a detailed account of the situation. However, it is important for all Council members to know that the Yemeni people and those personally affected have high hopes for the Council in its efforts to make a breakthrough on all tracks.

We remain firm in our resolve to achieve our goal of ensuring human rights, including the right to freedom, justice and equality. We believe in the Council, its role and its support so that our efforts come to a positive end. We will continue making our efforts.

The President: I thank Ms. Al-Hajj 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): I would like to start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg, Director Wosornu and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj for their briefings.

I would also like to join others in condemning the murder of World Food Programme staff member Moayad Hameidi and echo briefers condolences to his family and his friends.

I also want to join others in congratulating the United Nations, the Dutch salvage company SMIT and all who were involved in the successful transfer of oil from the *FSO SAFER* tanker to the *Yemen*. The successful completion of that operation demonstrates what can be achieved when all actors work together in the interests of Yemen and its people.

Taking encouragement from the achievement, the United Kingdom urges all parties to work together to build on the truce-like conditions in Yemen and pave the way for a United Nations-led Yemeni-Yemeni peace process. In particular, it is essential that the Presidential Leadership Council remain united towards one common goal: a lasting and inclusive peace for the Yemeni people. An inclusive peace process under United Nations auspices is the only pathway to permanently ending this war.

Houthi attacks and continued threats to prevent oil exports from Government-controlled areas are having a severe impact on Yemen's economy. Those attacks on the economy are attacks on the livelihoods and services for some of the most vulnerable people in Yemen. We urge the Houthis to stop those attacks.

The United Kingdom welcomes the recent deposit of \$250 million from Saudi Arabia, as the first tranche of a generous \$1.2 billion pledge of economic support. As Director Wosornu said, the Government of Yemen will remain dependent on external financing to provide basic services and pay public salaries until the Houthis stop their economic warfare and the Government can generate its own revenues.

In spite of the relative peace in Yemen over the past 18 months, the humanitarian situation remains dire. We continue to see impediments to the free movement of female aid workers to deliver assistance to women in need, to independent monitoring and assessment missions and to the fair selection of humanitarian service providers. The humanitarian response is already severely underfunded. Those impediments pose additional and entirely avoidable burdens on the humanitarian effort and, ultimately, on the Yemeni people. We urge the Houthis to lift the restrictions and allow unfettered access of humanitarian aid.

Finally, the United Kingdom reiterates its call for the unconditional release of all Baha'is detained by the Houthis.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Eden Wosornu, for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen. We also listened to Ms. Al-Hajj.

We would also like to express our sincere condolences to the family of Moayad Hameidi, the World Food Programme staff member who died on 21 July. That is a tragic incident and demonstrates once again the pressing need to genuinely prioritize the security of humanitarian workers.

We note some positive developments in the situation in the Republic of Yemen, which have been possible thanks to the resolve of key regional players to establish more constructive relations. Despite the

lack of a formalized truce since October 2022, the parties to the conflict are continuing to refrain from large-scale hostilities that could provoke a dangerous escalation of tension. That was achieved largely owing to the intensified mediation efforts since the end of last year of regional Powers, primarily the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman. Furthermore, agreement was reached on a number of important humanitarian issues, including the exchange of prisoners and detainees. In June, Yemenis living in Ansar Allah-controlled territory were able to participate in the Hajj for the first time since the conflict began, thanks to the establishment of flights between Sana'a and Jeddah.

However, the Yemeni settlement is currently paused. It appears to be important to await the outcome of the efforts of international and regional players. We are convinced that escalation is not in the interest of either of the parties. On the contrary, their priority is to continue dialogue and find compromises.

For our part, we intend to continue to closely coordinate approaches with all leading Yemeni protagonists, including Ansar Allah and key regional partners. We strongly urge the Yemeni forces to rule out the option of armed confrontation and to be patient, while maintaining close contact with Special Envoy Grundberg as the key international mediator. We reaffirm our full support for his mediation efforts. We hope that his efforts in support of normalization in Yemen will lead to a long-term truce and an eventual comprehensive political process.

The humanitarian situation in the country remains dire. Two thirds of its population — 21 million people — require humanitarian assistance, and 3.2 million people are facing food shortages. The Yemeni people must have unimpeded access to food, medicine and other essential goods throughout the country, regardless of where they live. Restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and obstacles to the work of humanitarian workers are unacceptable.

I would also like to recall that we have always opposed an expansive interpretation of the Security Council sanctions resolutions on Yemen. Restrictive measures should be used to promote a peaceful settlement and not to fuel political unrest in the region. We note with concern that some foreign naval presences are unscrupulously manipulating Security Council decisions when conducting inspections of vessels in nearby waters.

We welcome the completion of the transfer of oil from the *FSO SAFER* tanker, which is decaying off the coast of Yemen. We note in particular the contribution of representatives of United Nations structures to resolving that issue, including in cooperation with the official Yemeni authorities and the Ansar Allah movement. The resolution of that long-standing problem will make it possible to avert a large-scale environmental catastrophe in the Red Sea.

In conclusion, I would like to recall once again resolution 598 (1987) and other initiatives aimed at subregional stabilization, including the updated Russian concept of collective security.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings. I also listened carefully to Ms. Al-Hajj's statement. We welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen at today's meeting.

I would like to make three observations.

First, there is a need to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation. China commends all relevant parties to the Yemeni issue on maintaining communication on the resumption of the truce and countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, for their ongoing efforts. We hope all parties adhere to the overall direction of a political solution, prioritize the interests and well-being of the Yemeni people and, with a heightened sense of urgency, show political will and the necessary flexibility.

China supports Special Envoy Grundberg in his work and supports the United Nations in its role as the main channel of mediation. China calls on Council members to remain united and on countries with influence vis-à-vis the Yemeni situation to play a constructive role in order to jointly arrive at tangible results in the political process in Yemen as soon as possible.

Secondly, we must monitor closely the security situation. Taiz, Marib and other locations have repeatedly seen sporadic armed conflicts. The security situation in Yemen remains fragile. Against that backdrop, all parties to the conflict should remain calm, show restraint, avoid any action that could prevent mutual trust or increase tensions and avoid all measures that could hamper diplomatic or mediation efforts or complicate the political process.

Thirdly, humanitarian assistance to Yemen must be increased. Eight years of conflicts have plunged Yemen into a serious humanitarian crisis. Currently, 17 million people are food insecure. Health-care, infrastructure and other humanitarian needs are also dire. The Yemeni currency recently depreciated sharply, and inflation has been on the rise, making people's lives increasingly difficult. We call on the international community to increase its humanitarian development aid for Yemen and welcome the economic assistance provided by Saudi Arabia and other countries.

The news that the head of the World Food Programme's office in Taiz governorate was shot and killed is harrowing. The security of humanitarian workers should be effectively guaranteed. The transfer of crude oil from the *FSO SAFER* was recently completed, thereby averting a potential environmental and humanitarian disaster. China highly commends the United Nations and other relevant parties on their efforts and hopes that the funds required for the subsequent clean-up operation will be secured, as soon as possible. We call on all parties in Yemen to negotiate an effective plan for the disposal of the crude oil and the resolution of all other relevant issues.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Edem Wosornu, for their briefings. My thanks also go to Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj for her statement.

In the light of the recent developments of the past weeks, I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, I would like to reiterate Switzerland's strong support for the United Nations efforts to bring about peace and ensure the protection of civilians in Yemen. We thank the Special Envoy for his sustained and inclusive work towards a lasting intra-Yemeni political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations. We also welcome the commitment of Saudi Arabia and Oman to achieving peace. We hope that the current talks will lead to tangible results for the benefit of the entire population. In that context, the decision to relocate Yemeni Government officials to Aden in the near future is likely to strengthen the trust of the people in the authorities.

Secondly, Switzerland strongly condemns the murder on 21 July of Moayad Hameidi, head of the World Food Programme's office in Taiz and expresses its condolences to his family and colleagues. Humanitarian personnel and their activities are protected under international humanitarian law. We therefore call on all parties to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers. We also reiterate our call on the parties to the conflict to allow for and facilitate the rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. That includes not only facilitating access for humanitarian workers to vulnerable members of the population, but also ensuring that international organizations are free to choose their local partners independently.

Thirdly, we welcome the completion of the first phase of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker rescue plan on 11 August. The unity shown from the outset by all the members of the Security Council concerning the matter has been encouraging and remains crucial. It was incumbent upon us to prevent an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe that would have exacerbated the suffering of the Yemeni people at a time when the country is already experiencing a major crisis linked to the armed conflict. That success demonstrates that important results can be achieved through joint efforts. In that regard, Switzerland commends the role played by Yemeni civil society organizations, in particular women, who were among the first to warn of the dangers posed by the shipwreck of the *FSO SAFER*. Their voice, and that of civil society in general, are essential if we are to deal effectively with all the challenges facing Yemen.

Switzerland remains at the disposal of the United Nations and all parties in support of the implementation of other important confidence-building measures, such as the further release of prisoners.

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

We thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, for their briefings. Our appreciation also goes to the civil society briefer, Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj, for providing us with her perspective. We welcome the participation of the representative of the Republic of Yemen at this meeting.

The A3 welcomes the safe and successful transfer of more than 1 million barrels of oil from the decaying *FSO SAFER* to a replacement vessel. Had the international community failed to act in a timely manner, the toll on the economy, livelihoods and environment would have been detrimental to the entire process of stabilizing Yemen. The operation has averted what would have been the fifth largest oil spill from a tanker in history. That was made possible through the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the process, particularly the United Nations and all donors. The successful salvage operation offers us a lesson as to what concerted international efforts, coupled with the cooperation of local stakeholders, can achieve. It comes during the longest period of relative calm since the war erupted nearly a decade ago and is a vivid illustration of a peace dividend. It is a lesson that can be applied to the wider crisis in Yemen. If the conflicting parties in the country showcase their determination and commitment to stop fighting, genuinely seek peace and fully cooperate with the international community for the sake of their people, a solution to the country's crisis will be found sooner rather than later.

While the A3 has no illusion about the complexity of the Yemeni crisis, it is of the firm belief that a long-term solution to the crisis depends on the willingness of the parties to make political compromises in the interest of the people of Yemen. The current period of relative calm offers them a huge opportunity to advance the negotiation process. They must therefore seize the present momentum to engage constructively in the ongoing dialogue for a breakthrough towards ending the crisis. A Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned inclusive political process under the auspices of the United Nations remains the surest path to peace. In addition, the role of regional stakeholders and international actors in the endeavour is critical. The latter must actively use their influence to help the ongoing peace process. Any initiative in that direction will have our full support. Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique therefore acknowledge the constructive role being played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman in the Yemeni peace process. We also commend Special Envoy Grundberg for his efforts towards bringing a peaceful end to the conflict and pledge our unflinching support to him as he strives to accomplish his mission.

We are deeply concerned about the underfunding of the humanitarian response plan in Yemen and its serious consequences. As the country is facing one of

the worst humanitarian crises of our times, the World Food Programme (WFP) is compelled to reduce food rations to millions who depend on them on a daily basis. We make an urgent appeal to the donor community to shore up support to the country's humanitarian response plan, which is currently 70 per cent underfunded, to enable every Yemeni in need of support to receive it. The A3 wishes to highlight the funding shortfall of approximately \$2.9 million faced by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen, which is said to be operating at partial capacity and will have to suspend operations at the end of September if nothing is done about its financial position.

Millions of women and children in Yemen face severe malnutrition due to a lack of aid. That situation is very worrisome. In hospitals, people are still fighting for their lives in the face of widespread hunger and food shortages. Children, unfortunately, remain the most vulnerable victims. Furthermore, Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique remain concerned about the devastation caused by landmines and other explosive devices among civilian populations, especially children. Those remnants of war pose a danger to the daily movement of people.

In the same vein, we are saddened by the killing of the World Food Programme staff member in Turbah, in the Taiz governorate. The A3 strongly condemns such cruel targeting of humanitarian staff and calls for enhanced measures to safeguard the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel. We extend our condolences to the family of the victim and the WFP for the tragic loss of human life.

On a positive note, the A3 welcomes the release of five United Nations defence, safety and security staff, who had been kidnapped in the southern governorate of Abyan for more than a year. We rejoice even more because good news is rare in the context of a war in which civilians, including United Nations personnel, are targeted.

The A3 remains convinced that an inclusive political process, including women, that is owned and led by Yemenis is at the heart of a lasting resolution to this crisis. We therefore encourage the international community to support that process, under the leadership of Special Envoy Grundberg.

In conclusion, the A3 underscores the need for the parties to prioritize the interests of the people of Yemen over and above any other interests. As we have said

before, attempts to re-arm during this period of relative calm would not serve the cause of peace. Continuous fighting is neither beneficial to the parties nor in the interests of the people of Yemen. The eventual solution to the crisis is political, so we encourage the parties to be flexible and negotiate directly in good faith. They need 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.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg. My thanks also go to the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Ms. Edem Wosornu, and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj of the Abductees' Mothers Association. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber today of the representatives of Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

I commend the teams on the ground for their work in completing the first phase of the transfer of oil from the *FSO SAFER* to the *Yemen*. The swift mobilization of United Nations funds and the commitment of donors have been crucial in that stage of this operation, which will free Yemen and the region from an environmental threat of major proportions.

Nevertheless, my delegation is concerned that the promising prospects for a resolution of the political situation in Yemen could be diluted in the absence of concrete political agreements leading to the establishment of a road map for overcoming the conflict, resolving humanitarian needs and achieving economic and social stability. The political momentum achieved in recent months cannot go to waste. We encourage the parties to return to the path of dialogue and consultation, as we believe that only by supporting the consolidation of an intra-Yemeni political process, under the auspices of the United Nations and other regional actors, can sustainable peace be achieved in the short term. It is imperative to create an environment of peace and trust in order to advance the development and implementation of interlinked strategies on economic recovery and the rebuilding of institutions in order to overcome the multidimensional crisis facing Yemen.

We condemn the assassination in July of a World Food Programme official, Moayad Hameidi, and

emphasize the urgency of maintaining the truce agreements in order to prevent the loss of civilian lives.

Eight years of conflict have had devastating humanitarian consequences for the Yemeni people. Figures from OCHA warn that 21.6 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance and show a growing trend of undernourishment, malnutrition and food insecurity.

We emphasize the need to guarantee freedom of movement and the reduction of bureaucratic obstacles that limit the work of United Nations mission personnel and female humanitarian assistance personnel. While we welcome the release of the five United Nations staff members who were kidnapped in February 2022, we also reject the requirement that female staff members must be accompanied by male guardians in order to carry out their work.

We are also concerned about the vulnerability of the 4.5 million displaced persons and the lack of progress on the removal of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, one of the main obstacles to encouraging the voluntary return of displaced persons.

Finally, Ecuador expresses its support to Special Envoy Grundberg's team and hopes for a return to the path towards a Yemeni-led peaceful and inclusive political transition, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2140 (2014), with the meaningful participation of women, young people and all social and political segments.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Director Wosornu and Ms. Al-Hajj for their briefings.

We welcome the Special Envoy's sustained engagement and mediation efforts with the parties and the actors in the region. We also commend the efforts of Oman and Saudi Arabia in that regard. In our view, the parties should work towards a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire and an inclusive and peaceful political solution under United Nations auspices.

Resuming an inclusive Yemeni-owned political process remains a priority. The support of the Security Council for the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy is crucial for the way forward. We commend the further steps undertaken by his Office towards enhancing confidence-building measures and reiterate our support for an all-for-all principle for the release of conflict-related detainees.

While we welcome all positive steps, concerns about the volatile security situation in the country persist. Insecurity and life risks are also affecting the lives of humanitarian workers and staff of United Nations agencies on the ground. Albania condemns the cruel murder of the World Food Programme staff member in Taiz last month. Aid workers should never be a target, and those responsible must be held accountable. We are concerned by the continued restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers. Insecurity and movement constraints for all those working on the ground is having an impact on the delivery of aid to the most vulnerable, including women and children. We condemn all restrictions on female relief workers and on the freedom of movement in general.

We deplore the mistreatment of religious minorities in the country and call on the Houthis to immediately release the Baha'i abductees. We further reiterate our call for the unconditional and immediate release of the Yemenis employed by the United States and by the United Nations in Sana'a. We also welcome the release of the five United Nations staff members and appreciate the efforts of all those involved to achieve that.

Ms. Al-Hajj's statement is a clear testimony to the need for the full integration of accountability and transitional justice in the peace process in Yemen. It is also a vivid call for the meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution, peacemaking and decision-making.

We fully support the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, call on the parties to fully implement international humanitarian law for all civilians, detainees, abductees and forcibly disappeared persons and call for their release.

While the economic situation in Yemen continues to be a concern, the reports of Houthis blocking the flow of oil and essential goods from south to north, worsening the humanitarian crisis, are still ongoing. We call on the Houthi to end the economic war and focus on a peaceful future for Yemen.

In conclusion, we would like to welcome the offloading of more than a million barrels of crude oil from the *FSO SAFER* and commend the excellent work of everyone involved.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Hans Grundberg and Ms. Wosornu for their valuable briefings

on the developments in the situation in Yemen, as well as Ms. Amat Al-Hajj for her intervention. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Republic of Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this meeting.

The Yemen file has experienced positive developments over the past week. As we have heard, the five United Nations staff members kidnapped in Abyan governorate in February 2022 were released. Additionally, the process of offloading the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker was completed, preventing an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. In that context, we appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen that have contributed to the success of that operation.

Despite those positive developments, we express our sincere condolences and warm sympathy to the family of Mr. Moayad Hameidi, head of the World Food Programme office, and to the Government and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The United Arab Emirates reiterates its condemnation of his killing in Taiz governorate.

Despite the fragile calm observed in Yemen, we are deeply concerned about the Houthis' continued attacks along the front lines in several governorates. We renew our call for an immediate cessation of those provocative attacks. All parties should refrain from impeding the efforts of the international and regional mediators working to reach a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis.

Achieving peace requires a comprehensive ceasefire and taking practical measures in that regard. Such measures include the release of all prisoners and detainees on the basis of an all-for-all principle, the opening of roads and the lifting of the siege on the city of Taiz to end the suffering of its residents, which has persisted for more than eight years. My country therefore regrets the actions and statements by the Houthis, which have failed to contribute to the confidence-building necessary for resuming the political process.

On the other hand, the deterioration of the humanitarian and economic conditions in Yemen as a result of the restrictions imposed by the Houthis on humanitarian organizations, which have also affected private sector companies, demonstrate that the Houthis continue to ignore their responsibilities to the Yemeni people, including the provision of necessary services

and the disbursement of salaries. Therefore, the Houthis must first think of the interests of the Yemeni people, devoid of any other agendas, and refrain from taking arbitrary measures that could exacerbate the suffering of the population throughout the country.

In the light of the challenges affecting services in Yemen, the United Arab Emirates has focused on supporting service projects for the Yemeni people. The cost of the projects that have been planned and implemented this year has exceeded \$300 million. That encompasses strategic projects in the field of clean and renewable energy, such as the Aden solar power plant, which has a capacity of 120 megawatts, and the Mokha solar power plant, which has a capacity of 15 megawatts, with the aim of reducing the energy deficit and carbon emissions.

The United Arab Emirates has also supported the health sector in Yemen by rehabilitating 14 hospitals and health centres in Shabwah and allocating \$27 million to support the health sector in Sana'a. Additionally, we supported Yemen's water and agriculture sector through a project establishing the Hassan Dam in Abyan. In that context, we highly appreciate the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in continued support for humanitarian efforts in Yemen, including a new allocation of a \$1.2 billion support package and its relentless efforts to renew the truce and launch a comprehensive political process under the auspices of the United Nations.

Finally, we affirm that attempts to reignite the war in Yemen do not serve the interests of any party and would have severe consequences for the fraternal Yemeni people, who have endured immense suffering for many years. Prolonging the war by the Houthis exacerbates the threat posed by terrorism to Yemen's security and stability, especially as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula continues to launch terrorist attacks.

We reiterate that reaching a comprehensive and lasting solution can be realized only through an inclusive national dialogue among all Yemeni stakeholders. We reiterate our full support for the efforts of the United Nations and its Special Envoy to achieve security, stability and prosperity for Yemen and its fraternal people.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): We extend our gratitude to Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,

for their comprehensive briefings and their dedication to the people of Yemen on behalf of the international community. I thank Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj for her compelling testimony. We also welcome the delegations of Yemen and Saudi Arabia and look forward to hearing their insights.

Brazil deeply regrets yet another tragic death of a United Nations worker in carrying out his humanitarian duty in Yemen. The cowardly assassination of Mr. Moayad Hameidi affects us all and cannot go unpunished.

Brazil reiterates its view that Yemen's current state of no war and no peace is detrimental to the country's future. The stalemate threatens to become a way of life, but we must collectively redouble our efforts to prevent such a grim reality from taking hold.

We believe that a Yemeni-Yemeni agreement is the cornerstone for broader peace across Yemen. We urge all parties to exercise restraint, cultivate moderate positions rooted in realism and work towards a common understanding that transcends short-sighted individual interests. Such an understanding would likely pave the way for additional agreements on vital issues, such as the equitable sharing of natural resources, including oil reserves and exports, central bank policies and assets, and the resumption of freedom of movement across Yemeni roads in and out of the country's vital ports.

While the Yemenis must ultimately decide their political future, we must not underestimate the importance of the Council's unified — and I emphasize, unified — support for the work undertaken by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg. Similarly, broad consultations with women, youth and civil society are essential to foster the conditions necessary for an inclusive intra-Yemeni political dialogue. The current momentum, galvanized by such positive geopolitical trends as the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement and recent confidence-building measures, must be effectively used to Yemen's advantage. The exchange of prisoners and bodies of deceased fighters and the increase in flights and destinations out of Sana'a airport are promising signs and must be built upon. However, we must not lose sight of the 21.6 million Yemenis in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. The alarming lack of funding, which has led the World Food Programme to halt aid in several nations, including Yemen, is of particular concern to us. We are also concerned about the reports regarding the situation of members of the

Baha'i religious community who remain detained in Yemen. We recall the importance of fully respecting the rights of religious minorities.

Bolstering the country's economy and strengthening the ability of the local authorities to provide essential services is a sustainable way to address urgent needs. Brazil welcomes the recent offer by Saudi Arabia of a substantial package of economic aid to help boost Yemen's struggling economy, pay salaries and improve food security. We also commend United Nations partners and donors for the remarkable progress in the operation to salvage the dilapidated *FSO SAFER* oil supertanker. The successful transfer of the equivalent of 1.14 million barrels of oil to the replacement vessel was a significant achievement that averted a combined humanitarian and environmental disaster in the Red Sea. Brazil expresses its hope that the next stages are safely concluded. Achievements such as that one should inspire us all when dealing with crises.

The current state of affairs in Yemen is not sustainable, as it provides no real solution to the protracted suffering of millions of Yemenis, especially women and children. Let us renew our commitment to a nationwide political settlement and a Yemen that is peaceful, stable and prosperous.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Director Wosornu of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Ms. Al-Hajj for their briefings.

Japan welcomes the successful implementation of the *FSO SAFER* rescue project. We are encouraged to learn that the risk of a massive oil spill in the Red Sea has now been averted, thanks to the concerted efforts to address that potentially unprecedented crisis. Japan highly values the endeavour and perseverance of United Nations bodies and the persons involved in navigating the difficulties and achieving that milestone, especially the United Nations Development Programme.

However, a substantial financial shortfall still exists. We need to fill the gap to pay back and ensure the stability of the Central Emergency Response Fund. In that regard, we appreciate the recent additional funding commitments made by many donors, including a timely announcement from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Japan also remains committed to further helping to fill the financial gap, in addition to its previous contribution, given the significance of preserving the international crisis response capability of the United Nations.

While we witnessed progress on the *FSO SAFER* issue, the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen persists. The briefing given by Ms. Al-Hajj on the situation concerning abductions is simply terrifying. That situation should end right away, and they should be returned to their families and friends. It is distressing to learn that some of the humanitarian programmes have been suspended due to critical funding shortfalls. The safety of humanitarian officers remains of concern. Japan is deeply saddened by the recent tragic killing of a World Food Programme staff member, for which we express our deepest condolences and sympathies. Any attacks against humanitarian service providers are unacceptable, violate international humanitarian law and should be condemned. In that regard, we welcome the release of five United Nations staff members from their detention.

Japan would like to stress that intra-Yemeni dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations remains key to bringing peace to the country. The Special Assistant to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Yemeni Issue, Ambassador Hayashi, visited the region last month and stressed that point, urging all parties to the conflict to join the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to pave the way for inclusive Yemeni-led talks.

In order to build on the ongoing communication between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, it is also vital to seize the opportunity created by the current calm to foster dialogue among various groups of Yemenis, including civil society. The role of the United Nations Special Envoy in coordinating that dialogue is indispensable. In that regard, we call on the Houthis to refrain from making attempts to degrade the situation on the ground, including by disrupting the economic capacity of the Government of Yemen. All parties to the conflict in Yemen must engage more constructively to achieve national stability and safeguard the interests of all Yemeni people. Japan would appreciate coordination and support among countries in the region in that regard. Before concluding, I would like to say that we fully align with the point made by Ms. Wosornu, that political solutions should go hand in hand with the provision of essential services.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Ms. Eden Wosornu and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Abdullah Abdo Al-Hajj for their presentations.

France reiterates its full support for the work of the Special Envoy, and we commend his efforts to facilitate discussions between the parties. France also welcomes the diplomatic efforts of various regional stakeholders, in particular Oman and Saudi Arabia. Only a comprehensive and inclusive political solution that takes into account the concerns and interests of all Yemenis will bring the conflict to an end. The participation of Yemeni women in all discussions is essential, as is the unity of the Presidential Leadership Council.

While the relative calm on the ground is positive, efforts to reach an agreement between the parties must be sustained. The negotiations, which have been under way for months, must yield concrete results. We call on the Houthis to make the necessary efforts to achieve a lasting nationwide ceasefire. Such an agreement is essential to launch an intra-Yemeni political process under United Nations auspices.

France reiterates its full support for the Yemeni Government. It is essential for all political actors to respect institutions and support the Government's work to restore essential public services. We welcome Saudi Arabia's financial support for the Government, which will help to bolster the fragile Yemeni economy. France is also providing support to Yemeni institutions, in particular the country's central bank. France will continue its engagement, alongside its partners, to ensure compliance with the arms embargo established by the Security Council. We reiterate our full support for the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism, which is crucial to facilitating the continued import of basic goods. The Mechanism must continue to be funded.

On the humanitarian front, funds are still lacking, particularly for the World Food Programme, and the working and safety conditions of humanitarian actors remain alarming. We once again call on the Houthis to put an end to the restrictions imposed on them, including those targeting female aid workers.

France reiterates its strongest condemnation for the murder of a World Food Programme aid worker in Yemen. It recalls the obligation to protect humanitarian workers and calls on the Yemeni authorities to shed full light on this crime. There can be no impunity for crimes committed against humanitarian workers.

The protection of Yemeni children also remains a priority. We call on the Houthis to implement the commitments they have made to the United Nations.

They must stop recruiting children for combat and stop indoctrinating them in so-called summer camps.

France reiterates its call for the immediate release of the 11 Baha'i community members detained by the Houthis. It reiterates its commitment to the freedom of religion or belief on an equal footing with all other fundamental freedoms.

The town of Taiz remains largely under blockade, a situation that is neither acceptable nor tenable for the civilian population. France reiterates its call for the roads to Taiz be opened so as to unblock the city.

Allow me to conclude on a positive note. First of all, we welcome the release of the five United Nations staff members detained since February 2022. The perpetrators of these acts must be brought to justice. Finally, we welcome the completion of the transfer of oil from the *FSO SAFER* tanker to the replacement vessel *Yemen*. France, which contributed to the financing of this operation, salutes the efforts of the United Nations and of numerous countries to bring this complex rescue plan to a successful conclusion, thereby averting an ecological, humanitarian and economic disaster in the Red Sea. We call on States Members of the United Nations and the private sector to redouble their efforts to fill the budget gap, as several French companies have done, in order to put a definitive end to the residual environmental risk.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I also thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Director Wosornu, and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj for their briefings.

Malta remains encouraged that the people of Yemen continue to benefit from the longest period of relative calm since the beginning of the conflict. However, as we have heard again today, this calm remains fragile.

We reiterate our call on parties to the conflict to maintain this positive momentum. We hope that they will engage constructively in peace talks to achieve a formalized and permanent ceasefire and pave a path towards a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process under United Nations auspices. This crucial window of opportunity will not remain open forever, and it must be seized without delay.

Malta remains gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Yemen, where civilians, including women, children and other vulnerable groups, continue to bear the brunt of the protracted conflict. Nearly 22 million Yemenis are in need of humanitarian

assistance; some 17 million are food insecure. This is inexcusable. Children continue to suffer from the horrors of protracted conflict. Many have never experienced anything different. Over 11 million of them are in need of humanitarian assistance, 2.3 million are internally displaced, and more than half a million are acutely malnourished.

Humanitarian aid workers continue to operate under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. Malta strongly condemns the murder on 21 July of Moayad Hameidi, who served for nearly two decades with the World Food Programme. We convey our deepest condolences to his family and the humanitarian community and call on the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The lack of funding for Yemen's humanitarian response plan is also troubling. Almost eight months into 2023, the plan remains less than one third funded, preventing the delivery of essential aid to those in need. Despite many warnings, the lack of financing has led the World Food Programme to cut its assistance. At this delicate juncture, the international community must redouble its efforts to rectify this desperate situation.

Furthermore, as we continue to see no improvement in chronic access impediments faced by humanitarian workers, we remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law. Restrictions of movement for women aid workers further exacerbate the suffering of Yemen's most vulnerable and must be lifted immediately.

On a positive note, we welcome the release on 11 August of five United Nations staff members who had spent 19 months in detention. We call on the parties to continue the dialogue on prisoner exchanges and reiterate our call for children, humanitarian workers and other detainees, including those from the Baha'i community, to be released.

Malta is also concerned by the campaigns of disinformation and misinformation on vaccines in Yemen, which are causing needless and preventable long-term suffering. We emphasize that vaccines are crucial, particularly for children, and strongly encourage authorities to counter such callous acts in a decisive manner. We also call for greater mine-clearance efforts and increased explosive-ordnance-risk education across Yemen, to eliminate the indiscriminate threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war.

In conclusion, Malta commends the completion of the ship-to-ship transfer of oil from the *FSO SAFER*. Thanks to donors and the dedicated work of United Nations staff, a monumental environmental and humanitarian catastrophe has been avoided. We hope the remaining funding will be made available to ensure the timely completion of the project.

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

Let me start by thanking Special Envoy Grunberg and Director Wosornu for their briefings. Their briefings highlight the intensive United Nations efforts undertaken to address the challenges facing the Yemeni people, and I am grateful for the opportunity to hear from Ms. Amat Al-Salam, Al-Hajj, founder of the Abductees' Mothers Association, which advocates the unconditional and immediate release of unjustly detained persons in Yemen.

I would also like to express my profound condolences to the family of the World Food Programme staff member, Moayad Hameidi. Those who attack and kill humanitarian workers must be held accountable.

The United States also welcomes the release of the five United Nations personnel who were kidnapped in the southern governorate of Abyan last year. Too many innocent people are still in detention, including wrongfully targeted individuals and religious minorities, as well as members of the United States locally employed staff who have been detained in Sana'a for over a year and a half. We call for the release of all those who have been unjustly detained, including the 11 Yemeni members of the Baha'i community and Levi Marhabi.

Today I am pleased to highlight a bright spot for Yemen. The continued success of the United Nations-led *FSO SAFER* operation. All the oil from the decaying vessel, as we have heard, has now been transferred onto a new vessel, the *Yemen*. The completion of the United Nations operation's emergency phase was an enormous effort undertaken by the United Nations system, the international community and private sector donors. We are grateful to Mr. David Gressly and his team, the United Nations Development Programme and the ship's crew.

However, this operation is not yet finished, and we need continued coordination and funding to see

it through to completion and eliminate any residual threats. The United Nations needs \$22 million to finish the job, and we urge Member States, the private sector and environmental groups to step up without delay.

The *FSO SAFER* operation is a model example of international cooperation. It shows what we can accomplish when we work together. We must use it as a blueprint as we work to meet the immense humanitarian needs of Yemen.

The United States welcomes Saudi Arabia's recent announcement of \$1.2 billion in budget support for the Government of the Republic of Yemen, which can help mitigate the worst consequences of the dire economic situation. But more attention and financial support are needed to address Yemen's economic and humanitarian crisis, especially at a time when the United Nations response effort in Yemen remains grossly underfunded.

Houthi attacks on maritime shipping are also exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. We strongly condemn these senseless attacks, which impede much-needed oil-export revenues that fund basic services.

Ultimately, as we have heard from our briefers, only a durable and inclusive political resolution between the parties can ease the suffering of the Yemeni people. And advancing justice and accountability is key to peacebuilding efforts. To that end, the United States welcomes the launch of the Yemen Declaration for Justice and Reconciliation — an impressive initiative of over 40 Yemeni civil society organizations and survivor associations to achieve justice and reconciliation for post-conflict Yemen.

We also commend Ms. Amat Al-Hajj's advocacy for women's rights and civil freedom and condemn the worrisome trend of gender-based violence in Yemen. The United Nations Population Fund estimates 7.1 million women and girls require services to prevent and address gender-based violence. We know women's shelters and other services remain overstretched or completely absent. And we know women detainees and migrants in Yemen face an increased risk of sexual violence and extortion. That is deeply disturbing and wholly unacceptable.

We must all do everything possible to stamp out gender-based violence, support the United Nations peacebuilding efforts and address Yemen's security, economic and humanitarian challenges. The Yemeni people have endured nearly a decade of fighting, and

they are crying out for peace and justice. We must not let them down.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Ms. Edem Wosornu and Ms. Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj for their briefings.

At the outset, I would like to express our sincere condolences to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the family of the deceased Moayad Hameidi, the World Food Programme and the international community as a whole. My country's Government reiterates its condemnation and rejection of those criminal acts which run counter to all human values and principles. We reaffirm our commitment to take all necessary legal measures to ensure that justice is served, to prosecute the perpetrators, guarantee safety for humanitarian personnel and facilitate humanitarian work so that aid can reach all those in need throughout our country.

The Presidential Leadership Council would like to emphasize its full commitment to comprehensive, sustainable and just peace on the basis of the agreed terms of reference for a political solution, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and relevant Security Council resolutions on Yemen, notably resolution 2216 (2015). We reiterate our support to the good offices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and all regional and international efforts aimed at renewing the truce and resuming the global political process under the auspices of the United Nations with Yemeni ownership and leadership. In that context, we underscore the importance of the complementarity of various efforts and the sincere endeavours by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman to revive the peace process and relieve the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni Government has always welcomed and respected all regional and international initiatives to bring an end to the war launched by the terrorist Houthi militias and to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people to fulfil their aspirations for peace. Despite all the concessions and facilitations that the Yemeni Government has always made and all the efforts deployed to turn the page on this conflict, it continues

to face the persistent aggressive behaviour of those militias. Their inhumane economic war, even during the truce, proves to the whole world, without a shadow of a doubt, that those militias have no true desire to achieve peace and do not recognize political solutions or care about the catastrophic humanitarian economic situation in the country.

Those militias, since the beginning of the official end of the truce last October, have continued their economic and military escalations. They are targeting ports and vital economic and strategic infrastructure. They are continuing their serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and are compromising the interests of the Yemeni people and their national gains. They have recently stepped up their threats against maritime lines in the Red Sea, the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden, and they consider those to be military zones. They have even threatened to attempt to try out new weapons in the Yemeni islands. They have threatened to target the commercial ships and oil carriers in universal trade corridors. Once again, those militias, backed by the Iranian regime, are trying to destabilize the security and stability of the region and threaten international maritime shipping lines and global energy security. They are thereby undermining any peaceful resolution to the Yemeni crisis.

The Houthi militias' opportunistic behaviour in their approach to peace and their continued intransigence requires a closer look by the Security Council and the international community. Everything has shown us that the Houthis and their leaders are living off this war and gaining wealth from it, while the human suffering of the Yemeni people is only increasing. That must be taken into account by all Council members and the stakeholders of the international community as a whole, as well as by any party that supports restoring peace in Yemen.

The Houthi militias are using the judicial system as a tool to settle differences with all those who are against their coup objectives. They are trying to suppress the freedom of expression, to pillage and to seize goods and property from citizens in areas under their control. They are attempting to legitimize their criminal practices against the Yemeni people. The most recent attempts are the imposition of sectarian criteria for joining the Supreme Judicial Council and the substitution of hundreds of judicial personnel by their

own elements to drain State institutions and exploit them for their own coup practices and activities.

Against a similar backdrop, the Houthi militias have imposed still further restrictions and measures against Yemeni women in the areas under their control, restricting their movement and depriving them of their most fundamental rights. They have prohibited travel and the movement of women without guardians between the governorates and towns, and they have recently separated girls and boys in all educational establishments and Government institutions, thereby depriving women of their right to education and to work outside the house and their right to political and social participation and to contribute to building the society. They have imposed restrictions on all fundamental freedoms, including coercive measures against girls in educational institutions. That is a measure that threatens social peace, coexistence and tolerance among the Yemeni people who have enjoyed those things for many centuries.

All of that comes on top of the unjust besieging of the city of Taiz and the closure of all roads. The international community has remained silent in the face of the siege of millions of civilians in that overcrowded city. The Houthi militias continue to randomly place thousands of explosive devices and mines in farms and along roads. Therefore, we call on the United Nations through the United Nations Development Programme to continue its support for our national anti-mine programme to ensure that mine clearance activities continue and that the lives of thousands of civilians, including those of women and children, are saved.

My country's Government warns that the escalation of the Houthi activities can only exacerbate humanitarian suffering and could lead to an erosion of the economic situation as well. They are imposing high taxes on the movement of goods and commodities at important crossing points between the free zones and the zones under their control. That constitutes an economic war against the Government and the Yemeni people.

My Government emphasizes that it will not sit idle in the face of that grave escalation. We will revisit the facilitation of the operationalization of the port of Al-Hudaydah, and we will take all necessary measures to safeguard the interests of the Yemeni people. We call on the Security Council and the international community to reconsider their response to the Houthi

militias. They must put pressure on them to commit seriously to achieving peace and calm, honouring their commitments — first and foremost, to lifting the unjust sieges of Taiz and other cities — enabling the unhindered movement and circulation of goods and people, releasing all prisoners and abductees based on the all-for-all principle and ending their systematic economic war, which threatens the prospects for peace and could lead to further complications.

My Government commends the continued political, economic and development support provided by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman, which reflects the depth and persistence of the exceptional relations between our two brother countries and peoples. The latest example of that support is the \$1.2 billion allocated to the Presidential Leadership Council and the Yemeni Government to fill the budget gap and enable the Government to carry out a series of economic, financial and monetary reforms ensuring that it can continue to fulfil its responsibilities, provide services and ensure food security and the stability of the national currency. We also appreciate the support from our sister country of the United Arab Emirates for implementing various development and humanitarian projects.

The Yemeni Government welcomed the successful efforts of the United Nations in salvaging the *FSO SAFER* through the transfer of its oil to another tanker, thereby avoiding an environmental, economic and humanitarian disaster that threatened maritime security and the global economy in the Red Sea. In that context, we would also like to commend the efforts by Secretary-General Guterres, Mr. Gressly, the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Yemen, and his team and the United Nations Development Programme, with all of them sparing no effort to resolve the problem. For its part, the Yemeni Government never wavered in providing all the help needed while demonstrating the greatest possible flexibility in support of the salvage operation. Without the Government's support and cooperation it could never have been done. In that regard, we would like to underscore the generous financial assistance provided by brotherly and friendly countries and the private sector with a view to preventing a potential environmental disaster.

In conclusion, we have an opportunity to end the conflict in Yemen, but above all that requires genuine

resolve to end the war, achieve peace, accept others, abandon the principle of a divine right to power and enable unilateral control of the country. That also requires synergies and joint regional and international efforts aimed at resolving the Yemeni crisis and returning to the political process.

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

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (spoke in Arabic): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Hans Grundberg, for his briefing and his exemplary and tireless efforts to achieve peace in Yemen. I would also like to thank Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for her valuable briefing. We greatly appreciate OCHA's continued efforts, which are helping to alleviate the suffering of our brother people of Yemen. And I welcome Ms. Amat Al-Hajj, Founder and President of the Abductees' Mothers Association, and thank her for her briefing. We wish her every success in her noble mission. On behalf of my country's Government, I would also like to express our sincere condolences to the family of World Food Programme staff member Moayad Hameidi, who was killed in Taiz. We firmly condemn that act of treachery.

We recently witnessed an excellent example of international cooperation, with positive and significant results with regard to the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which ultimately prevented an environmental catastrophe for Yemen, its neighbours and the entire world that could have resulted from the wreck of *FSO SAFER*, which was carrying more than 1 million barrels of crude oil near the port of Al-Hudaydah. In that context, we can say without doubt that the international community marshalled its resolve and ensured a salvage operation in which a tremendous quantity of oil was successfully transferred from the *FSO SAFER* to the oil tanker *Yemen*. We cannot imagine the scale of the economic and environmental catastrophe that would have resulted had an oil spill occurred, and we appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), OCHA and the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen in that regard.

I would like to note in that regard that Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to call the

international community's attention to the catastrophe that could have ensued had we failed to take action on the tanker. My Government had repeatedly warned of the consequences of such a catastrophe and called for years for pooling regional and international efforts to establish a clear international plan aimed at dealing with such a crisis. We are also among the largest donors funding the salvage operation, having so far provided \$10 million to the United Nations agencies involved in the rescue operation, and we will continue to provide every kind of support to UNDP and OCHA until the operation is completed. We would like to take this opportunity to call for completing the measures related to the tanker that were agreed to with the Yemeni parties concerned before the rescue operation began, so that all the Yemeni people will be able to benefit from the oil revenue, in accordance with the initial United Nations plan.

Finally, Yemen is currently enjoying an unprecedented period of calm and stability that has been significantly reflected in the humanitarian and security situation throughout Yemen. That is a result of the tireless mediation efforts for peace in Yemen, which have continued to call for prioritizing the country's national interests over all others, finding common ground among the parties in order to address the outstanding political and economic problems hindering the improvement of the Yemeni people's economic welfare and halting all provocative military operations

that could prevent a permanent political solution in Yemen. Saudi Arabia has announced the allocation of \$1.2 billion in support of economic stability in Yemen and has deposited \$1 billion at the Central Bank of Yemen in a demonstration of our continuing interest in supporting our brother people of Yemen, and we reiterate our interest in achieving stability and security in Yemen and the entire region. We call on all the Yemeni parties to accept political solutions in order to restore security and stability in Yemen and ward off threats in the region.

We reiterate our strategic initiative to end the war in Yemen and reach a comprehensive political solution. We emphasize our support for United Nations and international efforts to achieve a political solution in line with resolution 2216 (2015). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also reiterates our firm position in support of the Presidential Leadership Council in Yemen and hopes that the ongoing efforts will achieve a comprehensive political solution. We continue to call on the Houthis to prioritize wisdom, reason and the interests of the honourable Yemeni people over everything else.

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

The meeting rose at noon.