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Seventy-fourth year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Ndong Mba	(Equatorial Guinea)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Germany	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia	Mr. Djani
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): 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. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Griffiths is joining the meeting via video-conference from Amman.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council.

Since I last talked to the Council a few weeks ago (see S/PV.8441), we have made some significant progress in the implementation of the agreements reached in Stockholm towards the latter part of last year. The parties have now confirmed to Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard and to me their agreement to the first phase of the Al-Hudaydah redeployment plan. Naturally, I welcome the agreement they have reached — and I hope the Council does — and the commitment it shows by the parties to implement the Stockholm Agreement and the promises made in that meeting in early December.

Under the leadership of Lieutenant General Lollesgaard, the parties agreed to redeploy from the ports of Saleef and Ras Isa in a first step, followed by a redeployment from Al-Hudaydah port itself and critical parts of Al-Hudaydah city associated with humanitarian facilities in the second step. That will facilitate humanitarian access to the Red Sea Mills, where, as we know, significant tonnage of grain has been waiting to be distributed to the people of Yemen. I am grateful to both parties, who have made concessions

to allow that to happen. Of course, I call upon them to immediately start the implementation of the agreement and agree on the details of the second phase of redeployments in Al-Hudaydah, which we hope will lead to the demilitarization of that city.

This agreement would not have been possible without the strong leadership of Lieutenant General Lollesgaard. He has led those negotiations with patience and persistence. I personally am very grateful to him for those qualities. It would not have been possible either without the strong commitments demonstrated by the parties. Despite deadlines being missed, the parties have constantly shown their commitment to implement the agreement and have consistently assured me of that commitment. I am under no illusion about the challenges that we face. But perhaps, for one day at least, we can be heartened rather than dismayed by challenges. I am heartened by both parties' current reminders to me and my colleagues that this is a unique opportunity.

Since I last briefed the Security Council I have had the privilege of meeting three times with His Excellency President Hadi on a wide variety of issues of concern to him and, of course, to us. I am grateful for the flexibility that he has shown and, perhaps more important, the guidance that he provided me and my colleagues with regard to negotiations on Al-Hudaydah. The progress that we announced today benefitted from those exchanges. I rely on him to continue to give me the benefit of his advice going forward. I should also add that the numerous, almost daily, meetings that we have held with the coalition continue to be invaluable to illuminate issues on the table and allow us to achieve progress towards their resolution.

There is momentum on Yemen. The Stockholm Agreement, reached by the parties in December 2018, was described — reasonably, I believe — as a breakthrough. It was a major shift and showed to the people of Yemen that something was indeed happening. As I have reported before, there have been signs of increased civilian activity in Al-Hudaydah, and the people of the city are already, at this very early stage, seeing some tangible benefits from the significant and consistent decrease in hostilities in that area as a result of the Stockholm Agreement. The Agreement reached on phase 1 is a sign that the parties are committed keeping up the momentum of which I speak. It demonstrates, to me at least, that the parties are able to deliver on their commitments to turn words into tangible progress on the ground. It reinforces trust,

which is an essential commodity, between the parties. Finally, most important, it shows political will.

With the beginning — possibly today or tomorrow — of the implementation of that part of the Al-Hudaydah agreement, we now have the opportunity to move from the promise made in Sweden to hope for Yemen. As I am sure Mark Lowcock will describe shortly, an agreement on redeployments is also important for the broader humanitarian effort in the country. In the past few days, both Mark and I have already underlined the parties' responsibility to give the World Food Programme access to the Red Sea Mills, grain tonnage which represents enough food to feed 3.7 million people for a month.

In recent weeks, in order to make progress on agreements made in Sweden, I have made many visits to Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah, meeting each time with Abdulmalik Al-Houthi and his colleagues in the Ansar Allah movement. I am glad to report to the Council that he has always engaged positively with me on all discussions that we had on Al-Hudaydah, the vital logistical issues necessary for the introduction of a United Nations mission in Al-Hudaydah, the release of specific individuals and the general release of prisoners. I am grateful for his commitment to support all our efforts. I was back from Sana'a just yesterday, and it is clear to me that the commitment found there with regard to the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement is genuine and, therefore, most welcome.

We have also been very busy these past weeks in seeking agreement for the release and exchange of prisoners. The Council will recall that a mechanism concerning the matter was in fact the first agreement between the parties, and was made before we went to Sweden in November 2018. We have held two substantial and substantive meetings between the parties here in Amman in recent weeks. I am very grateful to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and personally to the Foreign Minister, for allowing those meetings to take place. With the International Committee of the Red Cross—the co-Chair of the supervisory committee—we were able in those bilateral meetings and discussions with the parties to make progress towards what we hope will be the release of the first batch of prisoners. But I should stress here that, as was always the intention of that prisoner exchange agreement, to which I referred, the parties and their leaders — as they have expressed directly to me on more than one occasion — seek the release of all prisoners on both sides of this conflict.

As many of them remind us, “All for all” is the watchword for this process. That remains our commitment and responsibility as it is theirs. I would like to think that we are not far off from agreeing and realizing the release of a first batch, and I am very grateful to both parties for their prompt support for that move. We still have some work to do before it can be finalized, not least to ensure that it is clearly part of a larger process to provide for the release of those who remain in prison. I hope beyond hope that the parties can push those particular efforts forward to reunite thousands of families and relieve the humanitarian burden on those who have been detained in the conflict. I should like to express my gratitude to Peter Maurer, my good friend and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who took time out from his extraordinarily busy schedule to open the most recent of those two meetings in Amman. The involvement of his organization, as you read out earlier in your statement, Mr. President, guarantees the probity and professionalism of the process.

Both parties have once again reaffirmed to me their commitment to the statement of understanding on Taiz, agreed in Stockholm. Members will recall that I mentioned in my previous meeting how significant, and almost iconic, Taiz is in this conflict, and how essential it is that we improve freedom of access and movement of peoples in that area. I will focus all our efforts on meaningful steps to make a difference there, as well. We need to agree on small steps now, not big things later. No one is suggesting that the process will be straightforward. Taiz is a place that has witnessed some of the worst parts of the conflict, but we like to think that we have a good chance of seeing some tangible progress in the coming weeks.

I have said to the Council — on more than one occasion, I am afraid — that Al-Hudaydah is the centre of gravity of the war, and perhaps it is. In truth, our primary interest — and in that sense, the real centre of gravity of this conflict for us — has to be moving towards a political solution. The agreement concerning phase 1 of redeployment in Al-Hudaydah, as confirmed today, gives us permission, I like to think, to look ahead beyond the agreements made in Stockholm. While we need tangible progress very clearly before we may move forward, we can now imagine how we would begin to address those serious substantive difficulties. I believe that we have an obligation to focus our minds on finding that political solution. We need to start talking about

the future. The beginning of a discussion on political and security arrangements would constitute, in our view, a major step forward and an important statement of intent from the parties that they are determined, together with us and the support of the Council, to bring the conflict to an end.

The members of the Council will recall that the Stockholm Agreement was only ever intended to be a preliminary step — a humanitarian step — of great moment, but not the end of the story. Indeed, the parties, civil society, women's representatives and the international community have repeatedly reminded me, as the Council did when we last met on this subject, that a comprehensive solution is the only way to put an end to the conflict. I note in particular the growing support of southern groups to our efforts and their clear desire for a peaceful settlement to the conflict and their broader concerns regarding the future of the country.

We therefore have an overriding responsibility to build on the momentum created in Stockholm towards resolving the conflict. I say that without, I hope, being naïve about the difficulties that we will face, and continue to face, in implementing promises and agreements. There will be setbacks, but we need to look beyond those to the horizon that is before us.

Next week — as I am sure Mark Lowcock will tell us — we will be reminded in Geneva of the financial needs of the humanitarian programmes in Yemen and their extraordinary dimensions, as well as the courage of those colleagues who fulfil their responsibilities and obligations daily. That reminder in Geneva reminds us here, I would like to suggest, that the cost of the war, if our collective efforts fail, will continue to rise steeply, at the tragic expense of the people in Yemen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: Last week, my office released the *2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Yemen*. Agencies pooled data from more than 100 earlier assessments. We also collected new data from nearly 7,000 locations in 331 of Yemen's 333 districts, and we conducted more than 22,000 interviews. With a stronger evidence base than ever, the *2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview* represents an authoritative analysis of the scale, drivers and trajectory of Yemen's crisis, and it paints a bleak picture.

About 80 per cent of the population, 24 million people, need humanitarian assistance and protection. Some 20 million people need help securing food, including nearly 10 million who are just a step away from famine. Nearly 240,000 of those people are right now facing catastrophic levels of hunger. Almost 20 million people lack access to adequate health care, and nearly 18 million do not have enough clean water or access to adequate sanitation. More than 3 million people, including 2 million children, are acutely malnourished. Some 3.3 million remain displaced from their homes, including 685,000 who have fled fighting along the west coast since June 2018.

Those numbers are considerably worse than they were last year. Conflict and a failure to respect international humanitarian law, together with the economic collapse in mid-2018, are the driving forces behind that deterioration. The most severe needs are in areas of active hostilities or with large numbers of forcibly displaced people. Violence has declined in Al-Hudaydah following the Stockholm Agreement, but it has continued elsewhere and escalated in some front-line areas, particularly in Hajjah.

Amid the conflict, the economy continues to unravel. The Yemeni rial is again losing value. The exchange rate is around 600 rials to the dollar, down from about 400, which was the level it recovered to following substantial injections of foreign exchange into the Central Bank by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in late 2018. As the rate falls, so the price of food for ordinary people rises.

In short, things are very bad. Unfortunately, aid agencies are running out of money. Among the many challenges the aid operation faces, funding is quickly becoming the biggest. We expect current resources to be used up by the end of March, just six weeks from now.

The United Nations-coordinated humanitarian relief operation in Yemen is the biggest in the world. It has delivered impressive results. More than 250 humanitarian agencies, most of them Yemeni organizations, worked together in 2018 to assist nearly 8 million people across the country every month. We delivered a step-change in the operation last year. The World Food Programme reached more than 10 million people last December, which was a record achievement. Compared to 2017, the number of people who received health assistance increased by 40 per cent last year, to 12 million, and the number of people who were helped

with water, hygiene and sanitation needs rose by 20 per cent, to 11.5 million.

Of the many milestones achieved last year, three stand out in terms of impact, scale and efficiency. At the beginning of last year, 107 districts were facing extreme food insecurity. By the end of the year, 45 of those districts were no longer at the pre-famine stage, because of the massive, synchronized and rapid scale-up of all forms of humanitarian assistance.

Working through public institutions, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and non-governmental organizations stemmed the largest cholera outbreak in modern history, reducing the number of new cases from 1 million in 2017 to about 370,000 in 2018. UNICEF, WHO and nutrition partners, also working through public institutions, helped to identify and cure a higher percentage of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition than in any comparable operation globally. Nutrition programmes last year treated 310,000 children for severe malnutrition, about 20,000 more children than originally planned.

None of that would have been possible without the generous funding provided by all our donors in 2018: nearly \$2.6 billion, or 83 per cent of the humanitarian response plan requirements. The single-most important contribution was the \$930 million we received from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It was not just a large commitment; it was also transferred in a single payment early in the year. Without it, the scale-up I have described would not have been possible.

As the largest humanitarian operation in the world, agencies in Yemen face obstacles beyond funding. The operating environment is far from what it should be. Humanitarian agencies struggle every day with issues such as delays in the issuance of visas, restrictions on movements, delays in imports, bureaucratic impediments, restrictions on monitoring or interference with principled humanitarian action.

We are particularly concerned that the operating environment is becoming ever-more restrictive in northern Yemen. At the same time, we are concerned that Cabinet Decree 75, imposed by the Government of Yemen last year, continues to hinder commercial fuel imports, which are needed to pump water and keep hospital generators running, among other critical functions. As of yesterday, four vessels carrying the equivalent of half an average month's commercial fuel

imports were being denied entry by the Government of Yemen under Decree 75.

Many operational challenges faced by humanitarian agencies are eventually overcome through dialogue, and it is by resolving those challenges that we have been able to reach so many people in all 333 districts. As Martin Griffiths said, we are also hopeful that an assessment mission will finally be able to reach the Red Sea Mills in Al-Hudaydah in the next few days.

The operation in Yemen also faces risks of aid diversion that exist in all conflict settings. Those risks, too, can be mitigated. My office continues to coordinate an independent, impartial third-party monitoring programme that covers the entire humanitarian response plan. Early results have been positive, which indicates that the vast majority of assistance is going where it is supposed to go. It is therefore clear that, while daunting, the operational challenges in Yemen can be managed.

I cannot say the same of funding-related challenges. Let me explain the position clearly. The aid operation will grind to a halt without adequate resources, at a time when more people need more help than ever before. Humanitarian agencies aim to assist up to 19 million people across the country in 2019. That is more than half the population, including 12 million people who will receive emergency food assistance every month.

It will cost more than \$4 billion to deliver all the lifesaving and protection programmes set out in the 2019 United Nations-coordinated response plan, which was released today. The response plan lays out a clear, evidence-based and prioritized strategy to address hunger, roll back cholera and other diseases, improve conditions for displaced people and support critical institutions. It is a lifeline for millions of Yemenis.

As Mr. Griffiths reminded the Council, the Secretary-General will convene a high-level pledging conference in Geneva a week from today, to be co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland. That event will provide an important opportunity for the international community to make clear its continuing commitment to save the lives of the starving and vulnerable people of Yemen, as we continue to work in the way that Mr. Griffiths described towards political solutions. I urge Member States to attend the Geneva meeting at a senior level and to pledge generously. Together we can save millions more lives in Yemen, but only if we have the resources we need.

Let me make one last point, again similar to one Mr. Griffiths made. The year 2019 needs to be one not just of saving lives but also of recovery. I would like at the end of the year to be able to say that Yemen is no longer the world's worst humanitarian crisis. I would like to see a reduction in the number of people who need humanitarian assistance. The people of Yemen need a realistic chance of a better future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

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

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): Once again, we thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, as well as their teams, for all their work and dedication. We have heard what Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock said about the involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Food Programme in some of the things that have been happening on the ground. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those organizations and everything they are doing to try and make the lives of ordinary people in Yemen easier. We also welcome Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard to his new post and thank Major General Patrick Cammaert for his contribution. I will be brief, Mr. President, because we will have closed consultations later with Mr. Griffiths and General Lollesgaard.

We very much welcome the progress that has been made very recently over the weekend. There was particularly good news about the ports of Saleef and Ras Isa. We look forward to what will happen in the next phase involving Hudaydah port and parts of the city. As Mr. Lowcock's briefing emphasized, access to the Red Sea Mills is vital — we are running out of superlatives for the word critical — but it is obvious that we have to be able to have the humanitarian agencies obtain access to the food supplies there. Therefore, these steps towards ensuring that access are extremely welcome.

As Mr. Griffiths's briefing emphasized, we need meaningful implementation to begin. It is extremely welcome that the parties have been able to work closely with the Special Envoy, and the commitments they have given him are extremely necessary. But I think what both briefings emphasized is how important it is

that those commitments get translated into meaningful practice on the ground.

I want to say a word, if I may, about standing up the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement. It is obvious that the Mission has an important role to play in getting implementation under way and making sure that it is comprehensive. I know there have been some teething problems with some of the logistical arrangements for the Mission. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to call on the all the parties to do their utmost to ensure that Mission personnel can get into place and do their work.

Mr. Griffiths said some encouraging things about tackling the prisoner exchanges — we need to finalize those. I think we all know that that is a crucial confidence-building measure, as is a commitment to the next round of talks. But I would particularly like to echo what Mr. Griffiths said about the need — regarding Taiz — for taking small steps now, not big steps later. I think that is absolutely important. There is often in peace processes a feeling that one should always go for the biggest outcome possible. And, of course, in principle that is right. But the people of Yemen, as we heard very eloquently today from our briefers, need to see tangible results, and they need to see them fast. I therefore think that taking small steps now is absolutely the right approach.

Regarding the political process overall, taking careful, incremental steps forward is probably the way to go. Mr. Griffiths set out the difficulties, and we recognize that the peace and momentum that have been achieved so far remain fragile; nevertheless, if we are to try to bring peace and help to the people of Yemen, who have suffered for so long, we need to keep going no matter what the difficulty is.

Mr. Lowcock very eloquently described how the challenges on the humanitarian side remain dire. And I was very worried by what he had to say about operations grinding to a halt. The urgency of making progress cannot be overestimated. We hope that the pledging conference to be held in Geneva on 26 February will be able to give a boost to these important efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that longer-term progress towards a political settlement — towards a more representative settlement in Yemen — is absolutely vital for the peace, security and stability of the country and the health and well-being of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Delattre (France): First of all, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for their very informative briefings and their exemplary dedication and that of their teams. I would like to revisit briefly the following three points.

First, after the adoption of two resolutions and the deployment on the ground of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, the priority now is for the parties remain committed to the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. It is also essential that the parties ensure the safety and security of Mission personnel, as well as their free movement.

As we have been informed, tangible progress has already been made. In that regard, we welcome the agreement reached last weekend in the context of the Redeployment Coordination Committee chaired by Lieutenant General Lollesgaard, on the first phase of redeployment, as well as the ongoing discussions on the exchange of prisoners. These are encouraging steps that reduce the threat of a resumption of hostilities. Discussions should therefore continue so as to further bolster the progress made; the redeployment operations on the ground agreed this weekend should be launched; and we must move towards the second phase of the redeployment and exchange of prisoners. The goal is to strengthen trust among the parties and to make the process irreversible by creating a positive dynamic.

The situation in Al-Hudaydah, however, remains fragile, and military operations are continuing in the rest of the country. As we noted earlier, we remain concerned at these continuing operations as well as at the ongoing threat of ballistic transfers. The parties must continue to maintain an ever stronger engagement with the Special Envoy and with General Lollesgaard by playing a responsible and constructive role. Failing that, sanctions could be imposed against any individuals and entities obstructing the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement.

Secondly, as my British colleague reminded us, this progress should not make us forget to what extent the humanitarian situation remains worrisome. I can only echo what has just been stated so eloquently by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The Agreement reached in Stockholm must lead to full access and to the immediate, secure and unimpeded

delivery of humanitarian assistance and trade flows. The initial progress achieved with the lifting of bureaucratic obstacles must continue. It is urgent in particular to allow access to the Red Sea Mills, as has been mentioned, and to then reach as quickly as possible an agreement to ensure that the critically important route between Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah can be used by humanitarian actors.

The Stockholm Agreement must also make it possible to protect civilians — in particular women and children, who are often forced to leave their homes due to conflict, which makes them very vulnerable — as well as humanitarian personnel. Mark Lowcock underscored very clearly that it is vital to provide a financial response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. France will announce once again this year a contribution to the humanitarian response plan. France also has announced that it will provide a contribution to the peace support facility that was presented in January in Berlin.

The Geneva conference will be an opportunity for the Council, regional actors and, more broadly, the entire international community to send a very strong signal of support to the Yemeni people.

Thirdly, and lastly, we should bear in mind that the conclusion of a negotiated political settlement is the ultimate goal. That is why it is crucial that we remain collectively mobilized in the process of supporting the efforts of the Special Envoy. Indeed, everything is interconnected. Without significant progress on the ground, prospects for future negotiations will become more remote. Consistent messages must be conveyed to Yemeni and regional actors, and we therefore encourage the Special Representative to continue to reach out to all the parties in order to continue making progress in the dynamic under way.

Relaunching the discussions in a comprehensive political framework is the only path towards a lasting solution to the conflict in Yemen that will make it possible to ease the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people. We fully support the efforts of the Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, and call on all parties to perpetuate and translate into action the positive momentum created by the Stockholm negotiations.

On the demanding path towards peace in Yemen, the unity of the Security Council is our most valuable asset. This is not the case, as we know, in all crises — to put it very diplomatically — so let us take advantage of

this unity as leverage to help find a political solution, which today, in spite of the magnitude of the difficulties faced, is within reach.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, let me thank today's briefers for their valuable inputs into our discussion. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and to express our appreciation for the work done by United Nations personnel in Yemen.

I would like to make three comments.

First, I wish to address the current situation in Al-Hudaydah. I think that we are all united in the view that the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement is currently of the utmost importance. We strongly believe that consensus on the modalities of the redeployment of forces is a matter of urgency and that the protracted stalemate poses a growing risk to the holding of the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah and could lead to a further escalation of hostilities. We are therefore encouraged by the important progress made by the parties last weekend, and we commend the agreement they reached on the first phase of the mutual redeployment of forces.

We encourage the parties to build on this positive development and to finalize the agreement on the second phase of the process. At the same time, it is vital that the parties refrain from taking any action that could jeopardize the ceasefire or undermine efforts to build confidence. We are alarmed by the recent surge in violence across Yemen and condemn any acts of violence against the civilian population. We would also recall that all parties must respect international humanitarian law, in particular as it pertains to the protection of civilians, as well as international human rights law.

Secondly, Poland remains concerned at the fact that the Stockholm Agreement has not yet resulted in an improvement of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. There is still no access to the Red Sea Mills grain silos and their critical grain store, and the main road linking Al-Hudaydah port to Sana'a is still blocked. We urge the parties to prioritize the opening of humanitarian corridors and to allow access to all humanitarian facilities without further delay. We expect them to allow and facilitate the flow of humanitarian and commercial imports — including fuel — into Yemen and to ensure safe and unhindered access for

humanitarian assistance and personnel to all parts of the country.

Thirdly, it is also very important that the parties accelerate efforts to implement the other important steps to which they agreed in Stockholm, namely, the exchange of prisoners and the settlement of the situation in Taiz. We call upon the Government of Yemen and the Houthi to continue to cooperate closely and constructively with the Redeployment Coordination Committee, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement and the Special Envoy in that regard.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the parties' obligation to guarantee the safety and security of the advance team and all United Nations personnel and ensure their unrestricted access and freedom of movement. We strongly urge them to extend all possible support for United Nations personnel in Yemen, including through assistance in advancing the additional deployment of United Nations staff and equipment.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for their informative briefings. I will focus my statement on two main issues, namely, the status of implementing the Stockholm Agreement and the humanitarian developments.

On the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, nearly two months have passed since the Council's adoption of resolution 2451 (2018), which endorses the Stockholm Agreement between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis. That is an important and vital step for a political solution that ends the crisis and enables the alleviation of the human suffering of our brotherly Yemeni people. Regrettably, the lack of compliance with the Security Council resolutions on Yemen and their full implementation continues to be a salient characteristic of the situation, starting with resolution 2140 (2014) and ending with resolution 2452 (2019), including resolutions 2201 (2015) and 2216 (2015). If those resolutions had been implemented, we could have put an end to the political crisis in that brotherly country.

In the interim, we have not seen a constructive approach for the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement on Al-Hudaydah. Indeed, no tangible progress has been made in the redeployment of forces,

beginning with the ports and cities of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa. That is compounded by repeated obstacles hindering the work of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, which has not been able to carry out its tasks of monitoring the implementation as defined by Security Council resolutions.

However, we underscore the important role of the Committee in resuming its work, which ended two days before its fourth meeting and made possible an agreement on the implementation of the first phase of the redeployment plan through the withdrawal of forces from the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Ras Isa and Saleef as well as from certain areas in the city so that the second phase could be implemented according to a well-defined and agreed time frame, pursuant to the Stockholm Agreement, as endorsed by resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019).

The political will of the two parties is extremely important, as indicated by the Special Envoy, for achieving the desired progress. However, it is also crucial for words to be matched by deeds through the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, since that would enable the next phase of consultations to be resumed, encompassing all remaining aspects in order to put an end to the crisis on the basis of the relevant Council resolutions, notably resolution 2216 (2015), the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcome of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference.

On the humanitarian situation, which is increasingly critical, we would reaffirm the importance of the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement in order to alleviate human suffering through the opening up of safe corridors to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need in all affected areas. The United Nations and its specialized agencies would be able to access the Red Sea Mills, which contain significant grain stocks that would allow feeding nearly 3.7 million people for 30 days. We also welcome the call of the Yemeni Government to facilitate safe access to those mills and open up the roads for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The statistics put forward by Mr. Lowcock reflect the acute deterioration in the humanitarian situation, which needs 26 per cent more funding for the humanitarian response plan than was needed last year. The international community should redouble its efforts to finance the humanitarian response plan for this year,

by participating in the high-level pledging conference to be held on 26 February in Geneva. That contribution must be constructive in order to reflect the importance of addressing this crisis. In that regard, we recall the important role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Kuwait in financing 83 per cent of last year's response plan. The state of Kuwait looks forward to taking part in the conference within the context of its ongoing humanitarian approach to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

In conclusion, we reiterate our appeal to the parties in Yemen to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement on Al-Hudaydah and its three ports, as well as the prisoner-exchange agreement and the statement of understanding on the city of Taiz, so as to complement the efforts of the Special Envoy with a view to reaching a political solution based on the three agreed-upon political terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). That would put an end to this crisis and preserve the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen, as well as non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings.

The international community is currently paying close attention to the issue of Yemen and has high expectations for the restoration of peace and stability in the country. The Stockholm Agreement has brought about hope for peace among the Yemeni people. The Security Council must reach a timely understanding on the implementation of the agreement by all parties and on the challenges they are facing. It must also continue to play a positive role on the issue of Yemen.

At the moment, all Yemeni parties are abiding by the ceasefire agreement in general. The Redeployment Coordination Committee, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of all Yemeni parties, is conducting this work in an orderly fashion and arrived at a consensus on 17 February on arrangements for the first phase. The Yemeni parties are implementing the prisoner-exchange agreement and addressing the issue of the city of Taiz and the large-scale prisoner-exchange plan.

China welcomes those positive developments. At the same time, as indicated by the representative of Kuwait, we see that there are challenges remaining. The practical difficulties in implementing the agreement cannot be underestimated. There is still fighting in Al-Hudaydah and its surrounding areas. The two parties still have differences on the release of prisoners and the issue of Taiz. The humanitarian situation in Yemen is dire. Against that backdrop, I would like to share the following comments.

First, we should continue with the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. The Yemeni parties should effectively implement the Agreement, address their differences through dialogue and achieve broader consensus. Efforts should be made to accelerate the deployment of the United Nations mission in Yemen in order to assist and monitor the implementation of the Agreement. The Yemeni parties should also strengthen cooperation with the United Nations, provide assistance to and facilitate the Mission's deployment and effectively guarantee the security of international personnel in Yemen. The Security Council should take full account of and respect the opinions of the country in question and the countries in the region, and should remain united.

Secondly, we must intensify efforts to ease the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Yemeni parties must actively cooperate with United Nations humanitarian assistance efforts and facilitate its rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. The international community must provide food, medicine and funds in a targeted fashion in order to support the economic improvement and price stabilization in Yemen so as to meet the basic subsistence needs of the Yemeni people. China looks forward to the positive results of the high-level pledging conference on the Yemen humanitarian response plan, to be held on 26 February.

Thirdly, we should push the Yemeni parties to sustain effective political dialogue and negotiations. We must insist on the role of the United Nations as the main channel. The Yemeni parties should also strengthen cooperation with Special Envoy Griffiths and Lieutenant General Lollsgaard, and maintain contact with them in order to build mutual trust and narrow their differences. Under the leadership of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, political will must be translated into genuine action. We look forward to seeing the early launching of the next round of peace talks under the leadership of Special Envoy

Martin Griffiths so as to achieve a balanced settlement that takes into account the interests of all parties and helps to restore peace, stability and normalcy in Yemen.

Political means are the only way to resolve the Yemeni issue. All parties must safeguard the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Yemen and, based on resolution 2216 (2015) and other resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism, as well as the outcome document of the National Dialogue Conference, support efforts to reach a broad and inclusive political solution through dialogue and consultation. The international community should create favourable conditions for the Yemeni parties to implement the agreements towards a political solution.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that China is willing to work with all parties in a concerted effort to continue to play a constructive role in moving the political process in Yemen forward and improving the humanitarian situation.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Allow me to begin by thanking Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings, which provide valuable updates on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We affirm our full support for their efforts.

Like others, we are also deeply concerned about the slow progress of the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement given the inference that the required humanitarian assistance has not been fully delivered to the Yemeni people. However, we believe that the good faith is still there. We recognize that the Agreement is delicate and requires complicated technicalities to be agreed upon prior to its implementation. Nevertheless, the commitment has been made, and the parties should make all the efforts necessary to ensure that the Agreement is fulfilled. For both the Security Council and the parties, that is a matter of great urgency, as we are under the scrutiny of the international community. Having said that and in response to the briefings, Indonesia would like to emphasize three main points.

First, securing the corridor for humanitarian assistance should be the top priority of all the parties. They must make every effort to provide access by, among other things, demining the road and clearing the way to allow for the safe passage of the humanitarian convoy. It is essential for all parties to permit access for

humanitarian personnel to the Red Sea Mills compound and to ensure their safety and security during the delivery of aid. The world cannot afford to once again lose those important commodities, which can feed 3.5 million needy people. That is non-negotiable. Even as we speak in the Chamber, there are many people, in particular women and children, who are dying from hunger and malnutrition. We listened to Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock's briefing, which described the dire situation, the increasing risk of a pandemic, the presence of cholera and malnutrition, the ongoing operational and logistical challenges and, of course, the need for international funding. It is clear that the international community must assist in that effort.

That leads me to my second point, which is that the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement would provide a more stable, safer and more secure humanitarian corridor in the longer term. The implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement is also the gateway to a political process that could be replicated in other parts of Yemen. It is a building block for greater reconciliation in Yemen with the aim of ending the conflict. We are pleased to hear that the parties have reached agreement on phase 1 of the mutual redeployment of forces and have also agreed in principle on phase 2. Indonesia commends the parties that have shown their good faith in reaching agreement, in particular the Government of Yemen, which crossed the front line to attend the meeting. Special thanks should also be extended to General Cammaert, who set up the initial work, and Lieutenant General Lollesgaard for facilitating the agreement. That is a critical part of the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement, and we are hopeful that the redeployment of troops and the demilitarization of the city of Al-Hudaydah and the ports can soon be completed. That means the United Nations can now fully deploy the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, with only five months left to put in place its initial work in Al-Hudaydah. Indonesia is ready to contribute its personnel on the ground, if needed, in the quest for peace. We recognize that the steps that I have outlined above are not easy and require the trust that does not currently fully exist between the parties. We encourage Martin Griffiths to continue to build trust.

That links to my third point, namely, that all parties should exercise restraint and de-escalate tensions beyond Al-Hudaydah. Any military escalation or hostilities elsewhere may diminish trust and undermine not only

the prospect of peace but also the implementation of the commitments already agreed. However, in our view, exercising restraint and de-escalating tensions beyond Al-Hudaydah will significantly strengthen trust and gradually build the essential confidence among all the parties. That is the key to the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. We would like others to also strongly support the push for a second dialogue.

To sum up, Mr. Griffiths referred to the increasing political will and that there was a genuine commitment by the parties to the conflict. In our view, that must be tested. While we are pleased to hear about the progress that the Special Envoy mentioned, it needs to be tested through concrete action, among other measures, by all parties first, by the provision of access for all humanitarian efforts; secondly, the withdrawal of troops; and thirdly, the release of all prisoners — as Mr. Griffiths said, “all for all”. It is time for them to reunite with their families. Those are only a few points that would clearly demonstrate that there are tangible intentions and good faith. In short, that is needed to ensure the further opening up of the dialogue. Lastly, also to quote Mr. Griffiths, Al-Hudaydah is the centre of gravity in the conflict. Let us focus on Al-Hudaydah, while also not forgetting other areas that are part of Yemen.

In conclusion, I was also glad to hear the Special Envoy say that something was happening and people, in particular in Al-Hudaydah, had noted it. I hope that other Yemenis in different parts of the country can say the same: something is happening, and there is hope for our children.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their informative briefings. We also welcome the appointment of Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard and wish him every success as Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement.

We also join in congratulating the members of the Redeployment Coordination Committee on making progress in planning for the redeployment of forces, in line with the Al-Hudaydah agreement, during their fourth joint meeting, held in Al-Hudaydah city from 16 to 17 February. The meeting was a commendable

confidence-building measure by the parties, and we congratulate them on agreeing on phase 1 of the mutual redeployment of forces. We look forward to the Committee convening again within a week to finalize phase 2.

South Africa remains concerned about the serious humanitarian and security situation in Yemen. We reiterate that, in order to ensure a long-term solution to the crisis in Yemen, it is necessary for all parties to commit to a political process. We also welcome the proposal made by the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee to move forward in the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement. We hope that this commitment will result in tangible process that can bring peace and stability to the region. It is imperative that all parties make every effort to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah agreement. We want to reiterate that the conflict cannot be resolved through military might. The parties must engage constructively and in good faith in order to overcome the obstacles and find a political solution that can end the conflict. That includes the continued exchange of prisoners, which is an important confidence-building measure that could contribute to reaching a political solution.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains dire. We call on all parties to ensure that the necessary humanitarian aid can safely reach its intended destinations. Most of Yemen's imports, including food and humanitarian assistance, enter through Al-Hudaydah port, which the ongoing fighting has frequently put out of action. Any hindrance to the delivery of this vital humanitarian aid after agreement has been reached among all the parties concerned can only exacerbate an already severe crisis. We reiterate that the only sustainable solution is a Yemeni-led negotiated political settlement that is inclusive and fair and puts the interests and welfare of all the citizens of Yemen first.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock for keeping us informed about the situation in Yemen, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and Yemen's difficult humanitarian situation. We have taken note of the progress on the political front that Mr. Griffiths has described, and we commend his efforts to advance the implementation of the Agreement.

We firmly condemn the violent acts committed by both parties and call for an end to the hostilities and provocations that are jeopardizing the achievements that have been made, especially the ceasefire, which requires an absolute commitment on both sides. We are pleased with the efforts that the parties have made to participate in and agree on the first phase of the withdrawal of fighters from Al-Hudaydah governorate, which will enable the United Nations to monitor the ceasefire more effectively. We thank the parties for the progress they have made in finalizing a list of prisoners, which is a step forward in the implementation of the prisoner exchange agreement signed in Stockholm. We believe those actions will have a positive effect on the efforts to create trust between the parties, and we congratulate Mr. Griffiths and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their excellent work in that regard.

We should not forget that the ultimate goal of all the diplomatic efforts being made with regard to this conflict is to reach a political solution that will promote a sustainable ceasefire throughout the country. And while we understand that all the attention has been focused on implementing the Al-Hudaydah agreement, owing to the importance of the city's port, it is important to ensure that we do not lose sight of other parts of the country where the war has given the populations affected no let-up. In that regard, we emphatically urge the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and refrain from jeopardizing the lives and safety of civilians whose hopes of living in peace and rebuilding their lives are little by little being restored, thanks to the agreements that have been reached.

In his statement Mr. Lowcock discussed the most worrying aspect of this conflict, the terrible humanitarian situation, which after so many years of war and economic and institutional collapse is affecting millions of people. This must be the main point of reference for all of our actions. The parties must guarantee immediate access for humanitarian workers to the Red Sea Mills in Al-Hudaydah, for the lives of thousands depend on it. We cannot allow starvation to be used as a weapon of war, and we hope that the agreements arrived at this weekend can finally ensure that the people affected receive the food they need.

We have listened to Mr. Lowcock's call to secure sufficient funds for the humanitarian assistance and protection that Yemenis so desperately need, and in that regard, we echo his call to the donor conference to raise

funds to be held in Geneva on 26 February. We hope the conference will meet expectations and enable us to finance the national response plan for 2019 designed to supply assistance based on humanitarian principles and thereby mitigate the disastrous situation of the people of Yemen. We reiterate that the Dominican Republic remains committed to contributing to the Council's efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement through the Redeployment Coordination Committee and the United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement.

Lastly, after the signing of the Agreement, the Council has remained united with regard to the situation afflicting the people of Yemen. Only the express political will of the parties can enable us to put an end to this scourge, and the international community is waiting for it.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings.

In Belgium's view it is essential that the Stockholm Agreement be respected and implemented in a realistic space of time. In view of the urgency of the humanitarian situation, the agreement on the port of Al-Hudaydah is especially important. We welcome the agreement reached on the first phase of redeployment at the last meeting of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, and we hope that implementing it according to the agreed timetable will help build trust between the parties and enable them to advance the political process. It should also finally allow humanitarian actors access to the Red Sea Mills. The situation is still fragile, however, and we once again urge all the parties to show restraint, refrain from inflammatory rhetoric in the media and from mutual accusations of ceasefire violations and focus on implementing the Agreement in good faith. In that regard, we welcome the initiatives that the parties have taken regarding the exchange of prisoners. The implementation of the redeployment plan will make it even more important to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel. We are ready to support the measures necessary for that.

Besides this, the efforts to improve the disastrous humanitarian situation remain crucial. We note that the financial needs are estimated at around \$4 billion, half of it for food aid, and we hope to see strong commitments at next week's donor conference in

Geneva. We also urge the parties to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance.

The reports of the Group of Independent Eminent International and Regional Experts on the recruitment of children in conflict (A/HRC/39/43) are particularly worrying. Children are the primary victims of the conflict in Yemen. Their recruitment must stop. We call on all the parties to respect international humanitarian law and take effective and urgent measures to end the recruitment and use of children in the conflict. We ask Mr. Griffiths to ensure that the protection of children is central to the peace process, and that is something that we must also address in the framework of the sanctions regime.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their briefings, and for their and their teams' tireless efforts.

On 13 February, the United States joined the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in welcoming the adoption of resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019), and we reiterated our commitment to a comprehensive political solution to the conflict in Yemen. We are encouraged by the reconvening of the Redeployment Coordination Committee over the weekend and the parties' progress towards agreement on redeployment from Al-Hudaydah. We are also eager to see further progress on exchanges of prisoners and the return of the bodies of those killed in conflict. We urge all parties involved to cooperate with the Special Envoy's team as he works to finalize the terms of the exchange.

The United States is concerned about the fact that World Food Programme officials have not yet gained access to the Red Sea Mills. Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock had already warned us that the grain stocks there are at risk of rotting (see S/PV.8424), and we cannot waste any time assessing the condition of an emergency food supply that is meant to feed 3.7 million people. We again urge the parties to facilitate immediate access to the Mills and ensure that the surrounding area is safe.

The escalation of violence in Hajjah governorate in January has reminded us that while the Al-Hudaydah ceasefire is a promising first step, the broader conflict persists. The Yemeni people must know, and the parties to the conflict must understand, that the United States remains focused, as does the Council as a whole, on

achieving a comprehensive, credible and durable political settlement of the war. That will require compromise on all sides, so that we can start the long process of ensuring the country's recovery from this humanitarian catastrophe. Going forward, the United States will work with the United Nations and the members of the Security Council to ensure the success of all United Nations efforts in Yemen, both political and humanitarian.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes today's briefing on the latest developments in Yemen. We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their excellent briefings. My delegation would also like to warmly congratulate Lieutenant General Michael Anker Lollesgaard on his appointment as Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and Head of the United Nations Mission in support of the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA), and to wish him every success in carrying out his new duties. We also want to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to his predecessor, Major General Patrick Cammaert, whose commitment and methodical efforts have helped to advance the peace process in Yemen.

Côte d'Ivoire would once again like to commend the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts, which have helped to make it possible to achieve the ceasefire needed to launch an inclusive dialogue. We also welcome the adoption of resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019), which have established a framework for a sustainable way out of the crisis in Yemen. We believe that the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement on a ceasefire and of resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019) offers some hope for peace for the Yemeni people, on whom the years of war have inflicted so much suffering. That is why we deplore the recurring violations of the ceasefire, which seriously undermine the prospects for settling a crisis whose humanitarian consequences are the worst the world has seen in the past few decades, according to the United Nations.

In view of the situation, new initiatives, together with the right confidence-building measures, are desperately needed in order to enable the major players to effectively implement the Stockholm Agreement with the assistance of the United Nations. The Agreement specifically covers the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah city, the mutual redeployment of forces outside the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Issa, the declaration of

understanding on opening humanitarian corridors for the city of Taiz and the implementation of the agreement on the exchange of 15,000 prisoners. With respect to the last point, my delegation calls on the parties to finalize the provisions of the prisoner exchange mechanism as soon as possible in order to build confidence between them and facilitate the comprehensive implementation of the Agreement. In addition, we urge all stakeholders to honour their commitments and overcome the difficulties hindering its implementation.

Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the serious humanitarian crisis that continues to affect about three quarters of the Yemeni population, or nearly 22 million people, 14 million of whom are facing pre-famine conditions. We encourage the international community to respond as quickly as possible and to adapt its response to the scale of people's needs. We also urge Yemeni stakeholders to continue to work to remove obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid and to strengthen measures to restore activity in the country's ports with a view to resuming economic and trade activities. We also call on the warring parties to ensure the safety and security of UNMHA's personnel and to work with the specialized agencies of the United Nations to facilitate the unhindered entry and movement of food and basic supplies for the affected populations, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. My delegation also welcomes the Council's plan to hold a donors' conference in Geneva on 26 February under the auspices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as part of the funding of the 2019 humanitarian response plan, which will provide \$4 billion to meet the needs of approximately 15 million Yemenis.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the operationalization of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, which has resulted in a series of meetings among the parties concerned, in accordance with the Stockholm Agreement. We welcome the meetings' constructive discussions of the Committee's mandate and the main priorities of maintaining the ceasefire, redeploying the military forces and providing access to humanitarian aid. In view of those developments, we urge the parties to the conflict in Yemen to refrain from any action that could result in a resumption of hostilities in Al-Hudaydah or other areas considered critical, and to continue their cooperation in good faith with both the Special Envoy and the Head of UNMHA.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its support for Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and his commitment to a definitive and lasting solution to the crisis in Yemen, as well as for Lieutenant General Lollesgaard and his observation team, whose rapid deployment to the cities of Aden, Sana'a, Al-Hudaydah and Taiz attests to the international community's commitment to advancing the peace process. We reiterate our support for Mr. Mark Lowcock in his commitment to mobilizing all of his energies for a successful resolution to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Lastly, my country reiterates its call to the parties to the conflict to show restraint and to respect their commitments in the context of the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement in order to give peace and stability in Yemen a chance.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their comprehensive survey of the military, political and humanitarian situations in Yemen. We welcome the progress that the parties made during the fourth joint meeting of the Redeployment Coordination Committee under the leadership of Lieutenant General Lollesgaard. We would also like to note the efforts to deploy the United Nations Mission in support of the Hudaydah Agreement, aimed at helping to strengthen the intra-Yemeni agreements reached in Stockholm and to speed up the process of disengaging and redeploying the warring parties. That will unquestionably make a significant contribution to reducing the violence, not just in Al-Hudaydah but also outside the city.

We realize that we should not expect or demand instant results. But while we have to be patient and persistent, we want to believe that we are now entering a new phase in the resolution of the Yemeni conflict. In that regard, we very much appreciate the efforts of the United Nations to advance the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, especially the mediation work of Mr. Griffiths and Lieutenant General Lollesgaard. We hope that they will help the parties realize the futility and uselessness of attempts to resolve the conflict militarily. From the very beginning of the conflict in Yemen, Russia has advocated for an exclusively political and diplomatic solution through a dialogue that includes all the Yemeni parties. We have continued to provide assistance, including through our contacts with all of the country's political forces and the parties concerned, encouraging them to take a constructive approach and refrain from violence.

Regrettably, however, we have been forced to acknowledge that despite the fact that the fragile de-escalation in Al-Hudaydah has been maintained, with every passing day the conflict in Yemen is increasingly taking on the appearance of a full-on humanitarian disaster. Millions of Yemenis are starving, with no way of getting essential medicines and services, and are in need of one kind of assistance or another. The country's civilian infrastructure is in ruins and the cost of restoring its shattered economy is increasing exponentially.

We call on Council members to continue their collective efforts to shift the conflict onto a political track, achieve a nationwide ceasefire and provide the people of Yemen with the assistance they need. Emergency humanitarian assistance for Yemenis is a top priority. Like many other Member States, including Yemen's immediate neighbours, Russia will continue to contribute to assisting the country's inhabitants. In our view, foreign humanitarian aid should be provided to all Yemeni citizens, regardless of who controls the area where they live. We believe in ensuring strict adherence to the provisions of international humanitarian law and unhindered humanitarian access to all areas of the country. It will also be important to finally allow humanitarian and commercial goods traffic along the main Al-Hudaydah-Sana'a route linking the coast to the north of the country, where most of the population lives.

In conclusion, we want to stress once again that establishing a political process in Yemen would contribute significantly to stabilizing the situation in the entire region. We would like to remind the Council of our proposal to launch a process to develop a package of security- and confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf and ultimately the entire Middle East. That architecture, in which all the key countries of the region should participate, including the Gulf States and Iran, would not only help to strengthen a comprehensive and indivisible system of security in that part of the world but also to resolve its old and new crisis situations, including the conflict in Yemen. Threats and clashes must give way to dialogue and interaction. We must get to work together immediately to improve the overall atmosphere, which, incidentally, will be a primary factor contributing to the success of Mr. Griffiths' efforts.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting, and to Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Lowcock for their comprehensive

briefings, in which they described to us a situation that requires the special attention of the Security Council. We would like to acknowledge the valuable efforts that they and their teams are making to end the devastating conflict in Yemen and alleviate human suffering.

Implementing the important and concrete agreements reached in Sweden will clearly be very complex, considering that the acute distrust between the parties is the major stumbling block to that end. In that regard, we are encouraged by the recent developments in the Redeployment Coordination Committee under the able leadership of General Lollesgaard, aimed at redeploying the military presences in the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Issa. We welcome the willingness and commitment shown by the Yemeni parties with regard to that critical aspect of the political process launched by the United Nations and which, if implemented, will lay the foundations for effectively extending the ceasefire to other problem areas of Yemen. We look forward to further and sustained progress with regard to that issue, particularly as it pertains to the second phase of the agreement, on which there are already preliminary understandings.

We also urge the Houthi authorities to provide the facilities needed for deploying the United Nations Mission in support of the Hudaydah Agreement, including, among other things, the speedy issuance of visas for its personnel and guarantees for their security. In that regard, it is essential that the Yemeni parties continue to develop confidence-building measures, particularly for the exchange of prisoners, with the valuable assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross. We also encourage them to abandon the notion of a military response and to work to address all differences through diplomatic dialogue. The confrontational rhetoric and mutual accusations of each side's authorities and other actors involved in the conflict must cease.

The emphasis on developing the political process in Yemen should not overshadow the urgent need to deal immediately and simultaneously with the country's humanitarian crisis, especially since it appears to be worsening on the ground. Mr. Lowcock's statistics on the numbers of people suffering from food insecurity and famine are alarming. The population's extreme vulnerability, which has been exacerbated by the collapse of the country's public services and economy, has resulted in greater losses of life than the military campaigns, and helps to lay the groundwork for violent

extremism, which in turn leads to terrorism. In such tragic circumstances, we fully support the humanitarian work of the United Nations and other agencies in Yemen and emphasize the moral and legal duty of all parties to allow them full access to the people in need.

The Yemeni parties must ensure the unrestricted flow of commercial goods, especially food, medicine and fuel, which among other things requires the full opening of the ports of Aden, Al-Hudaydah and Saleef. Priority must be given to the situation of women and children, owing to their greater vulnerability to psychological, physical and sexual violence, which is a particular problem in the camps for internally displaced persons. It is also vital to ensure that the international community increases its contributions aimed at stabilizing the local economy, since factors such as the devaluation of the currency, inflation and the failure to pay civil servants are significantly increasing the risk of famine. The Geneva pledging conference is an ideal venue for that purpose.

Lastly, we must also underscore that it is important to ensure that the Council remains united in fulfilling its responsibility to protect Yemen's civilian population, while demanding that the parties strictly abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law for the protection of civilians, and that they commit in good faith and without preconditions to the inclusive political solution that Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Martin Griffiths has proposed, which is the only viable way we can end the conflict and achieve reconciliation for the people of Yemen.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): Having listened to everyone's statements, I believe we really have a consensus around the table, which is a very positive thing. I too would like to thank Mr. Lowcock, Mr. Griffiths and General Lollesgaard for their untiring engagement, and we welcome the progress that has been made, including with regard to the exchange of prisoners. While of course we are not there yet, those efforts must continue in order to make this process irreversible, as our French colleague just said. We must move towards the next round and work to ensure that all the remaining bureaucratic obstacles are overcome. Mr. Lowcock cited several concrete examples as to how that could be done. Demining must also be stepped up so that we can actually access the food that is in the Red Sea Mills.

As Mr. Griffiths underscored in his briefing, I also welcome the need and objective of engaging in the political process, which is extremely important; we must move in that direction. It is essential for the political process to produce a comprehensive solution. What does that mean? We must ensure that all groups are included in the process. I believe that Mr. Griffiths mentioned that the southern groups have already expressed interest in such a process. In this very complicated country, we must consider all those groups. Some have mentioned that there is a flare-up of some conflict in the Hajjah governorate. I believe that it is paramount for all underrepresented groups to be part and parcel of the political process, and that their interests be taken into consideration.

Moreover, with regard to not just this peace process but all processes, I want to again repeat what I said the last time (see S/PV.8441), it is very important that the interests of women, youth and underrepresented groups be addressed, especially children. I would like to echo and again support what Mr. Lowcock said about the recruitment of youth: what is happening there is unacceptable, and that should also be a criterion for our sanctions work.

Everyone around the table has said that there is no alternative but to move towards a political process. That also means that everyone around the table agrees that there is no military solution to the problem, and therefore, instead of investing in arms, we should invest more in responding to the plea by Mr. Lowcock for humanitarian support.

Lastly, with respect to the humanitarian situation, the figures remain horrendous, with 20 million people suffering from malnourishment and 250,000 people's lives endangered, as Mr. Lowcock said. That must change. I also agree with Mr. Meza-Cuadra that, in our work on the humanitarian situation, we must concentrate on women and children and ensure that sexual violence against women be placed high on the agenda.

In terms of Geneva, Germany will again pledge substantially, and we call on all partners to do the same. At this stage, I want to join my French colleague in highlighting the peace support facility, to which Germany has already contributed. Beyond the humanitarian aid, the people must see that the political process will bear fruit, that there will be stabilization in the country and that there will be funds for getting it back on its feet.

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

With the same interest as always, we have listened to the briefings by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, on the implementation of resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019). In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomed the dialogue initiated between the Government of Yemen and the representatives of the Houthis — a dialogue that took shape with the signing of the Stockholm Agreement and that is being implemented relatively well on the ground.

Our delegation would once again like to emphasize here that any solution to the conflict must come from the negotiating table. The latest indications from the parties to the conflict of a willingness to negotiate are therefore very encouraging and deserve the full support of the international community. The Stockholm Agreement has indeed given the Yemeni people an initial spark of hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict after several years without any sign of a possible way out. In fact, there has been a significant decrease in hostilities in some areas affected for years, which we are certain is a positive sign that boosts the confidence of all involved with respect to the likelihood of finding a solution to the conflict.

However, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea understands that the process of implementing resolutions 2451 (2018) and 2452 (2019) is neither easy nor quick; but we believe that it is essential that every effort in that process should be firmly supported in order to alleviate the enormous suffering that the Yemeni people are enduring. In that regard, we urge all parties to fulfil all the commitments made in Stockholm and to cooperate closely in a constructive manner and in good faith with Special Envoy Griffiths.

As we have just pointed out and Mr. Griffiths mentioned in his briefing, although the overall situation in Yemen is moving in a positive direction, we must nevertheless acknowledge that we are still a long way from the kind of stability that is required. The focus that we have rightly placed in recent agreements must not diminish our commitment and efforts to make progress towards resolving the conflict throughout Yemeni territory, including in regions that are not yet covered

by the agreements. We invite all parties to demonstrate goodwill in actions taken outside the already agreed upon framework. Only in that way will more areas be able to experience a decrease in violence. More than ever, peace is needed in Yemen, and for that reason political will is key to achieving it.

Strong emphasis should continue to be placed on alleviating the humanitarian crisis. The humanitarian situation continues to be catastrophic, and the flow of humanitarian assistance and its access to all areas where such assistance is needed is a high priority. The human suffering being experienced in Yemen, as Mr. Lowcock described in his briefing, is one of the worst of our time. Tens of millions of people are in need of humanitarian aid, including 11 million children. Almost 3.5 million people are displaced, and more than 10 million people are at a real risk of starvation. That sad and worrisome situation must move the international community and all parties directly and indirectly involved in the conflict to deploy all the necessary efforts to find a rapid solution to the crisis.

I will conclude my remarks by congratulating Major General Michael Lollesgaard on assuming the leadership of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement. We wish him every success in that new role, especially on effectively implementing the Al-Hudaydah agreement to achieve concrete results, following the excellent work he carried out in his previous role as Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. I also extend our long-standing appreciation to Mr. Griffiths for his commendable work as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, particularly for achieving the Stockholm Agreement, and we encourage him to continue its implementation in its three phases, including the release of all prisoners, with enthusiasm and his usual diplomacy.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council for this opportunity to address the Council. I would like to wish the Ambassador and the delegation of Equatorial Guinea every success at the helm of the Council for this month. I would also like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, as well as General Lollesgaard,

Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, for the efforts that they have made to support the Stockholm Agreement. I thank also Mr. Mark Lowcock and his team for working to ease the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people in the wake of the Houthi coup, which was supported by the Iranian regime with a view to destabilizing the region by supporting armed militias and fomenting hatred, triggering conflict and stoking intercommunal tensions by sowing hatred, chaos and violence.

The Yemeni Government aspires to peace given its full responsibility for all the Yemeni people. We support United Nations efforts, as represented by the Special Envoy for Yemen, to achieve peace according to the three agreed terms of reference: the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its implementation mechanism; the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference; and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

The Yemeni Government is committed to achieving peace and to putting an end to the coup and to the suffering of the Yemeni people, as well as rebuilding State institutions and a new federal Yemen. In that regard, the Yemeni Government has participated in all relevant talks and made many concessions in order to reach a political solution that meets the aspirations of the Yemeni people in terms of security, stability and peace.

However, the coup party has not shown a real desire for peace or faith in dialogue. Today we are seeing obstruction by the militias, which is clear evidence of the fact that they are ignoring the need for peace and the demands of the international community and the United Nations to implement what was agreed in Stockholm and to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Yemeni Government reiterates its full commitment to implementing the Stockholm Agreement and also approved the first stage of the redeployment in Saleef, Ras Isa and Al-Hudaydah. The second phase involves measures concerning the return of the security and administrative authority, the coast guard and the Red Sea Port Authority to manage ports and cities under Yemeni law, as well as implementing the spirit and the letter of the Stockholm Agreement itself. The Yemeni Government is willing to assist in facilitating access to the Red Sea Mills and to open routes for humanitarian assistance because it wishes to alleviate the human

suffering of the Yemeni people. Indeed, we welcome all efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement so as to achieve a lasting and comprehensive solution based on the aforementioned three terms of reference, which constitute a solid foundation for a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict in Yemen.

Although the Yemeni Government is committed to implementing the Al-Hudaydah Agreement and remains positive towards all proposals submitted by the United Nations to implement it since it was announced, the Houthi coup militias, for their part, continue to violate the ceasefire and to deliberately carry out even more attacks and violent acts to ensure the failure of the Agreement and peace efforts, which would have promoted opportunities for building confidence. From 18 December 2018 to 12 February 2019, we saw 1,177 violations of the ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah, and 80 civilians were killed and 503 wounded. The militias are continuing to use weapons of all kinds to target houses, public spaces, companies and army barracks. They are redeploying in cities, laying mines, trenching and building blockades so as to provoke the national army and coalition forces with a view to undermining the Stockholm Agreement.

The Houthi militias are also using mortar shells against the Red Sea Mills as barbaric tactics to exacerbate the suffering of the Yemeni people, while ignoring the efforts of the United Nations.

The Yemeni Government shares the grave concern of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs with regard to the inability of the United Nations to access the Red Sea Mills since September 2018. There are significant stocks there that could feed 3.7 million people for a month, but the Houthi militias are not allowing the United Nations to go beyond the front lines to get to the Mills. This has been going on for five months, which means that the stocks are now in danger of spoiling. In addition, 20 per cent of the stocks have been burnt by fires started by Houthi shells, according to the former Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, Mr. Cammaert. We therefore call on the Security Council and the international community to ensure that the responsibility is met to save the Al-Hudaydah Agreement and put pressure on the Houthi militias so as to make sure that the Agreement is fully implemented within a clear, agreed time frame. We also call on them to identify those who are hindering the Agreement and to ensure the delivery of

humanitarian aid to all regions now under the control of Houthi militias.

The Yemeni Government also stresses the need to free all prisoners, locate all missing persons, release victims of arbitrary detention and house arrest and find those who were subject to forced disappearance. We will leave no stone unturned in our attempts to achieve this humanitarian goal. We also need to put an end to the arrests of civilians carried out by militias. Even some Yemeni women have been arrested, which is unprecedented in our history. We call on those militias to lift the blockade in Taiz so as to let citizens move freely and to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance in order to alleviate the suffering of the people. We hope that the meeting of the special committee on the Taiz declaration of understanding, to be held at the end of this month, will lead to the hoped-for results.

Our families in the Hajour regions are suffering barbaric and savage attacks by Houthi militias. All kinds of weapons are being used against them. These regions are suffering under siege, and the aim is to get the militias' hands on the property of civilians. This is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Such attacks must cease; the areas must be liberated; and civilians, including women and children, must be saved.

Yemeni banks recently witnessed a campaign in which bank executives were arrested because they had opened lines of credit for traders at the Yemeni Central Bank in Aden in order to import commodities. The Houthi militias were compelling bank executives not to provide any amount of money to the Central Bank in Aden, but were instead asking them for profits, which, according to their estimate, would reach 30 per cent. One of the largest banks had to cease its activities in Sana'a and in all other branches located in areas under the control of Houthi militias. This is therefore a stumbling block for regular banking and trading activities, as well as a factor further deteriorating the national economy.

According to the directives of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, the Yemeni Government is prioritizing the improvement of the economic and humanitarian situation of civilians throughout Yemen. The Government has made efforts and taken measures in that connection, notwithstanding the militias, which are exploiting the resources of our national economy in regions they control in order

to finance their destructive activities, prolong the suffering of the Yemeni people and further degrade the situation in those regions.

Government efforts have led to positive results, such as the payment of monthly pensions to retirees and salaries to civil servants in Al-Hudaydah governorate, as well as to those working in the education and health sectors. The prices for commodities, such as oil and fuel, have stabilized in regions under the control of the Yemeni Government, in addition to improvements in health, educational and electricity services. The Yemeni Government intends to adopt this year's budget, finance the deficit and pay the wages of all civil servants as soon as Government revenues have been collected, including in the regions under the control of the Houthi militias.

We are working to find ways to finance the deficit. We hope that the international community will help us in that endeavour so that we can honour our obligations to our citizens. We call on the international community to support our efforts to stabilize the exchange rate and improve the economic situation so that we can alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni Government also welcomes the holding of the high-level conference to finance the 2019

humanitarian response plan for Yemen, to be held in Geneva on 26 February. We once again call on sisterly and friendly donor countries, as well as international organizations, to provide greater support and honour their obligations. In that regard, we would like to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Kuwait, the United States and the United Kingdom for their generous support, which is helping to alleviate human suffering in Yemen in the wake of the armed Houthi militias' coup.

Today we are at a critical juncture that requires the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in order to preserve the significant momentum created in Stockholm and to condemn the party that wants only to see our efforts fail. The momentum we have achieved is a positive step forward on the path towards attaining comprehensive and lasting peace in Yemen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on my list.

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

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.