



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8598**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 20 August 2019, 10.10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Ms. Wronecka . . . . . (Poland)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Adom
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Ndong Mba
France . . . . .	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
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South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Hickey
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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19-25779 (E)



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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the 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 Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Griffiths is joining today's 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:** One month ago, I stated to the Security Council that we are facing a crucial moment in the destiny of the conflict in Yemen (see S/PV.8578). Events since then have, if anything, made this moment even more crucial. As we have seen in Aden and Abyan, questions regarding Yemen's future are being posed more forcefully than before. The fragmentation of Yemen is becoming a stronger and more pressing threat, which of course makes our efforts in the Yemeni peace process more urgent than ever. There is no time to lose. The stakes are becoming too high for the future of Yemen, the Yemeni people and, indeed, the wider region.

I remember vividly one senior Yemeni leader saying to me some months ago:

“What we want — all that we want — is the return of civility in our lives, to return Yemen to the social fabric that has nurtured its people for centuries”.

He was right. The immediate tragedy of death, injury, disease and hunger happens within a context of the destruction of the State and of society. A civil war is a curse upon a country's people. The conflict is fought out in the streets and in the countryside where live the civilians, and their lives are changed, damaged and

destroyed. This is sometimes the case for a generation, as the time needed for that rekindling of community so central to a living country is no small thing.

Yemen cannot wait. Since the previous briefing, I had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the Yemeni parties and the international community, and the parties continue to assure me of their strong desire for a political solution. I believe that they and the international community also share my sense of urgency to move forward with the discussions on a solution to end the conflict and resume the political transition.

This sense of urgency is in painful contrast to our efforts so far to resolve the conflict. Every single step that we have discussed in the Security Council Chamber these many months has been fought over, negotiated, stressed and delayed. Nothing comes easily in Yemen. For example, when I started this assignment, in the early months of 2018, I was given clear assurances that the opening of Sana'a airport was imminent. We are still waiting. Even the mercy flights, painfully negotiated over many months by my colleague Lise Grande and the World Health Organization, have yet to begin. And the Stockholm Agreement, a confidence-building measure with a simple humanitarian purpose, has demonstrated how vulnerable such agreements are when commitment to a peaceful solution wavers. The list of frustrations is long, and it must not grow longer.

Before I turn to the situation on the front lines and in Aden, I would like to provide a few updates on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and other developments in Yemen. The core of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement is the governorate-wide ceasefire and the humanitarian imperative of maintaining the flow of life-saving assistance through its three ports. To this day, eight months later, there have been no major military operations in the city of Al-Hudaydah or in the surrounding area, and there has been a sustained reduction in violence, as we have so often observed in the Security Council. Aid continues to move through the ports, which is, by itself, a major achievement, that continues to benefit the civilian population in Al-Hudaydah, first, but also elsewhere in Yemen, who rely on that humanitarian pipeline.

Implementing the remaining parts of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement will be an important step on the way towards resuming the political process to which I have just referred. I am encouraged by the ongoing communication with both parties and their

commitment to an enhanced ceasefire mechanism under the leadership of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which has recently been discussed in the Redeployment Coordination Committee under auspices of UNMHA. Together with my colleagues in the Mission, we are continuing our efforts to drive the process for the redeployment of forces and the establishment and operation of a tripartite monitoring mechanism. Since the previous briefing, we have presented a proposal to the parties to make further progress on implementing the first phase of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. I expect a final official response from both by 25 August; I am confident that it will be forthcoming. It is clear from my discussions with the parties that they are considering the proposal very carefully.

I would like to add that the Al-Hudaydah Agreement was only ever intended to be a temporary measure to avert further conflict. It was intended to be a humanitarian stop-gap. It was not designed, as some might think, to set a precedent for addressing the underlying issues of the conflict, the most central of which, of course, is the issue of sovereignty. Following many months of negotiations, both parties are fully aware of what the other is able to accept, and I hope, based on that knowledge, their responses to me by the beginning of next week will be constructive and practical on the way forward.

I am very encouraged that we now have an agreement — to which I think my colleague Ursula Mueller will also refer, and I hope there is no overlap on this point in our briefings — on facilitating access for a United Nations assessment mission scheduled to be deployed, I think, on 27 August, to assess the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, the dilapidated vessel near the port of Ras Isa, with its cargo of oil. The assessment mission, under the auspices of the United Nations Office for Project Services, is critical to mitigating the risk of severe environmental consequences along the Yemeni shore of the Red Sea, as we have discussed here in the Chamber.

Negotiations on the implementation of the exchanges of prisoners and detainees are ongoing. It is a fundamentally humanitarian gesture, which numerous civil society groups, particularly women's groups, have vocally advocated, publicly and privately. The parties sat for several days in Stockholm, and in subsequent months held detailed technical discussions here in Amman. The slow pace of those negotiations

is prolonging the suffering of the prisoners and their families. I believe that we should be able to address the concerns of both parties to the proposal that I have put on the table in front of them, to which I referred before. I hope that it receives a positive response.

Like everyone, I am frustrated that progress on Al-Hudaydah has not been quicker, that I am not able to announce more dramatic developments on the Agreement and that there has been no tangible implementation of the agreements on Taiz or on the exchanges of prisoners and detainees to which I have just referred. The Stockholm Agreement is a key milestone in Yemen's peace process, and it would be of considerable benefit to the parties and the Yemeni people were it to be fully implemented. But it is also clear that we must not allow the implementation of it to override our broader imperative to bring the conflict to an end; indeed, again, Yemen cannot wait.

Military operations have continued in several governorates, including Sana'a, Sa'dah, Taiz, Al-Jawf, Al-Baydah, Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e, as well as on Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia. The continued impact of the military operation on civilians, as I am sure we will hear from my colleague, is horrifying, including the attack on a market in Sa'dah, in late July, and I also, of course, condemn the continued attacks by Ansar Allah targeting civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, including the recent extension of that targeting to civilian facilities in the eastern part of the country.

Further threats to civilian life, further events of this kind and acts of military provocation only inevitably deepen the divide between the parties, increase the impact of the conflict beyond Yemen's borders and postpone the attention that we all believe is required to the efforts to bring a resolution to the conflict.

I turn now to events in Aden and Abyan. These events show us the complexity and volatility of the challenge that we face in achieving peace and the dangers should we not succeed. We certainly cannot underestimate the risks that these events pose for the future of Yemen.

On 7 August, following attacks in Aden a few days before, clashes broke out between presidential protection brigades and forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council. Subsequently, the Southern Transitional Council took control of military camps and surrounded key State institutions in Aden by force. Last night forces affiliated with the Southern

Transitional Council also took further steps to increase their military control in the neighbouring governorate of Abyan. That violence has led to the deaths of dozens of civilians and injury to hundreds more. I am alarmed by that violence, as, I am sure, will be the members of the Security Council. I condemn the unacceptable efforts by the Southern Transitional Council to take control of State institutions by force.

I also deplore the harassment of Yemenis of northern origin in Aden that preceded these recent events, such as through physical violence, forced displacement and denial of freedom of movement, including the targeting of Government officials and their supporters.

Simply stated, a continuation of this current situation is simply untenable. The functioning of State institutions will almost certainly break down further, and daily life for the people will become even more difficult than is already the case. There is indeed a grave and present risk of further damage to Yemen's social fabric and of the spread of violence to other southern governorates. At this time, it is frankly difficult to know where these events will lead us.

I am grateful to all those Member States, including members of the Council, that have called for restraint and dialogue. In particular, I welcome the efforts of the coalition to restore calm and the efforts exerted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular to convene a dialogue in Jeddah to discuss the situation and resolve its difficulties.

I believe it essential that that meeting take place in the very near future so as to prevent a further deterioration of the security and safety of Yemen's citizens in the south and to ensure the continuity of governance, security and basic service provision in Aden and other relevant areas, under the exclusive authority of the State.

In this context, and with these events in mind, we must also be alive to the danger of the resurgence of the activities of violent extremist groups. The Council will recall that Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has taken control of the capitals of Abyan and Hadramaut for significant periods of time in recent years. During the past month alone, we have seen attacks by Al-Qaida and by the so-called Islamic State in Aden, Abyan and Al-Baydah governorates. The further fragmentation of the security situation in Aden and other areas almost certainly will allow those activities to expand and gather momentum once again, as we have seen

before, with a terrible impact on the civilian population and on prospects for future stability in this key strategic location.

The situation on the ground is changing with great speed. We need to seize any opportunities for progress, and the United Nations remains committed to inclusive dialogue to resolve differences and to address the legitimate concerns of all Yemenis, including southern groups, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference.

As recent events remind us, long-term questions about Yemen's future remain unresolved. I believe that these can be resolved only through peaceful political means. That is why I have always talked with numerous groups from southern governorates as well as elsewhere in Yemen and have long advocated for their inclusion in the peace process. There is a range of views to be taken into account in any dialogue on the future of Yemen, and we need all of its citizens to assist us in making sure that future is stable and secure. This is of vital importance to the efforts to end the conflict and to ensure the resumption of the political transition that has been interrupted in recent years.

I hope that all Yemeni stakeholders from all parts of the country take the events in Aden as a clear sign that the current conflict must be brought to an end swiftly and peacefully and in a manner that addresses the needs of Yemenis across the country. The implementation of the Stockholm Agreement is politically significant and has had tangible benefit on the ground, but surely that cannot be a precondition for achieving peace in all of Yemen. Every additional day of this conflict adds to the tragedy and the misery; no country can tolerate these stresses and the stresses of internal conflict indefinitely.

And, finally, Yemen cannot wait.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Mueller.

**Ms. Mueller:** Events in Yemen over the past several weeks have shown yet again just how volatile and devastating this war is. Its impact is seen most clearly in the suffering and injustice inflicted on millions of civilians. For months now we have advocated progress on five key priorities to reduce the suffering in Yemen. The Security Council endorsed those priorities in its resolution 2451 (2018).

I would like to review where these five priorities stand today, specifically: first, respect for international humanitarian law; secondly, unhindered humanitarian access; thirdly, funding for the United Nations response plan; fourthly, the economy; and, fifthly, the urgent need for peace.

First, with regard to respect for international humanitarian law, unfortunately, the conduct of hostilities in Yemen continues to have devastating consequences for civilians and civilian infrastructure. As we heard, fighting in Aden earlier this month between Government forces and forces affiliated with the Southern Transitional Council resulted in 300 killed or injured, civilians among them. For days, residents were trapped in their homes as clashes, including using heavy weapons, raged in densely populated neighbourhoods. Houses were damaged or destroyed, and the pipes of a major water system were damaged, temporarily restricting the water supply to 200,000 people.

Violence has since subsided in Aden, although tensions remain, but fierce fighting continues elsewhere, including in Abyan last night. Last week, strikes on a family home in Hajjah killed 12 civilians, including six children; another 16 were wounded. The week before that, an attack on a market in Sa'ada killed or injured 40 people as they shopped for food and other necessities. Eighteen children were among the victims.

The images from those and similar incidents are the stuff of nightmares. De-escalation across Yemen is urgently needed, ideally through a nationwide ceasefire that would end all violence.

But ceasefire or not, all parties must uphold international humanitarian law. All feasible steps must be taken to avoid harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. Such steps include verifying targets, taking precautions in the choice of weapons and cancelling an attack if it is expected to cause disproportionate civilian harm.

The second point relates to humanitarian access. Let me begin with some good news. After months of discussion, the World Food Programme (WFP) and Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities have now signed an agreement that includes detailed technical procedures to protect food aid from being diverted. The agreement will also strengthen the methods used to identify the people who need food assistance. Delays in finalizing the agreement have meant that the WFP had to, as a

last resort, suspend food assistance to 850,000 people in Sana'a city two months ago. Distributions are now restarting.

As mentioned by the Special Envoy, Ansar Allah authorities have also approved plans for a United Nations assessment of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. After years without maintenance, the tanker is at risk of rupturing. It is storing an estimated 1.1 million barrels of oil, and a spill would create a major environmental and humanitarian disaster. The United Nations assessment team arrived in Djibouti today and is scheduled to travel to the tanker next week. Cooperation and support from all stakeholders are key to this work.

While we welcome these steps forward, we must also emphasize that many problems remain unresolved. Humanitarian agencies continue to face severe restrictions. In the north, Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities have imposed more than 50 formal directives and dozens of informal directives in recent months. These directives at times overlap or contradict each other. They are further complicated by a continuous stream of unofficial changes and new policies. Currently, more than 100 humanitarian projects are awaiting agreement by Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities in the north.

In Government-controlled areas, official regulations are less heavy, but delays persist in getting humanitarian projects up and running. Allow me to cite a specific example. The multi-donor Yemen Humanitarian Fund currently has 39 projects awaiting clearance. Those projects are ready to assist 2.5 million people across the country through cholera programmes, emergency food, nutrition and protection services. Thirty-two of the 39 projects are stuck with Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities in the north, while the rest are awaiting approval by the Government of Yemen. On average, they have been stalled for more than 90 days.

It is difficult to understand why such lengthy delays are necessary in a severe emergency. International humanitarian law requires all parties to take steps to facilitate humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

Beyond bureaucratic impediments, agencies also continue to face movement restrictions, interference and harassment, as well as insecurity.

However, despite these challenges, the United Nations and partners are staying and delivering. As tensions rose in Aden in early August, the World Health Organization and UNICEF, working with health

authorities, vaccinated nearly 400,000 people against cholera. When clashes erupted the following week, more than 300 United Nations staff remained in Aden, and they will continue to do so. A regular United Nations flight arrived in Aden yesterday, bringing in additional humanitarian workers.

Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian operation, with food, water, health care and other services being provided across the country. Humanitarian agencies working through the United Nations response plan are assisting an average of 12 million people every month. But much of this is about to stop.

That brings me to my third point, namely, funding for the aid operation. Since last month's briefing (see S/PV.8578), there has been no major increase in funding for the 2019 response plan. Only 34 per cent of plan requirements have been met. At this time last year, the humanitarian response plan was 65 per cent funded, thanks to generous contributions from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as many other donors. That funding saved millions of lives. Since the pledging conference six months ago, nearly all donors have paid most or all of their 2019 pledges. Some have paid even more. But the largest donors, Yemen's neighbours in the coalition, have so far paid only a modest share of what they promised.

Essential programmes are now closing down. The Council heard last month about the cancellation of vaccination campaigns, supplies for health facilities and cholera prevention programmes. The cuts are now much deeper. In the next few days, water and sanitation programmes will stop in four governorates, leaving 300,000 displaced people at extreme risk of cholera. By the end of September, such programmes for a further 1 million people will also stop. In September, we will be forced to shut down life-saving programmes for 2.5 million malnourished children. As an immediate consequence, more than 23,000 babies suffering from severe malnutrition — babies whose lives could otherwise be saved — will risk death.

This is a tragedy because we know that, with adequate resources, we can save millions of lives and reduce people's suffering. We know that we can roll back cholera because we did it last year. A smart, highly effective cholera response saw new cases plummet from 1 million in 2017 to 380,000 in 2018. But new cases have already exceeded half a million this year. We have

also recorded more than 800 deaths, more than five times as many as we saw in the same period last year.

We also know we can prevent famine, because we are doing it right now. A new assessment has found that the risk of famine, although still very serious, might be receding in some places. This comes after we doubled food aid in areas with the worst hunger and expanded other programmes. Without funding, we will lose this initial progress and the risk of famine will again intensify.

And we also know that the United Nations and our partners are uniquely placed to deliver positive results. Our programmes reach all 333 districts across Yemen. Our nationwide presence and relationships enable us to assist people in all locations based strictly on their needs.

Independent third-party monitoring confirms that the overwhelming majority of our aid goes where it is supposed to. When concerns emerge, we act. The Council saw this in June when the WFP suspended food aid in Sana'a over diversion concerns, which have now been addressed. Individual agencies also maintain rigorous internal controls. United Nations agencies commissioned eight internal audits this year, and three more are planned.

The fourth point is the economy — a key driver of humanitarian needs that is getting worse. Yemen's currency is again losing value, sinking to YRI600 to the dollar, versus YRI215 before the crisis. A recent report by the International Monetary Fund predicts further depreciation, with inflation rates up to 45 per cent. That means prices of food, fuel and other essentials — almost all of which must be imported — will rise even higher for ordinary Yemenis. Many people already cannot afford current prices.

In the past, substantial injections of foreign exchange through the Central Bank of Yemen have stabilized the exchange rate. We hope Yemen's partners will again provide that support. At the same time, we understand that the Government is considering new regulations on commercial fuel imports. Fuel is essential to running generators, distributing food to markets and carrying out many other activities. Its availability is also a key determinant for the prices of food, water and other essentials. The use of any mechanism to regulate those imports risks worsening the humanitarian situation.

The final point is peace. Only a political solution in Yemen can sustainably address the country's enormous humanitarian crisis. The Council recognized that important link in resolution 2451 (2018). We call on all stakeholders to support the Special Envoy's efforts to end the conflict as swiftly as possible. Peace is needed now more than ever.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Mueller for her briefing.

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

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings.

I will focus in my statement on two issues, namely, political and security developments and humanitarian developments.

With regard to the former, it has been eight months since the Stockholm Agreement entered into force — a period characterized by stalemate and failure to make any concrete progress. That runs counter to the wishes of the Security Council, in particular on the need to advance towards a political solution based on a United Nations-sponsored dialogue and resolutions 2451 (2018), 2452 (2019) and 2481 (2019), as well as a number of press statements that stress the need to implement the Al-Hudaydah Agreement in full.

The Stockholm Agreement has not been the subject of any constructive measures to achieve its goals. The blockade on Taiz started four years ago and continues to this day. There has not been any progress on implementing the memorandum of understanding on Taiz or the agreement to exchange prisoners and detainees. Parties continue to struggle to implement the Al-Hudaydah Agreement and to complete the first phase, but that will be impossible without respecting the understandings and agreements reached through the Redeployment Coordination Committee, especially those regarding the concept of operations.

We welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy and his proposals to end the deadlock on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. We stress the need for such efforts to be based on understandings that would ensure that the Yemeni Government can exercise full sovereignty across its territory.

We reiterate our established position that there is no military solution to the crisis in Yemen. We stress the need to ensure military de-escalation, as noted by the Special Envoy a while ago. It is extremely important to fully and concretely implement the three elements of the Stockholm Agreement as the optimal path towards resuming the next round of consultations, which would focus on the broader aspects of ending the crisis.

With regard to security developments, the State of Kuwait condemns, in the strongest terms, the continued attacks against civilian and vital infrastructure in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The most recent attack was on the Shaybah oilfield. We fully support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the measures it is taking to ensure its security, stability and territorial integrity. The Houthis' continued and escalated attacks against Saudi territories are a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and a clear and direct threat to regional security and stability. In that regard, we stress the need to fully implement the arms embargo as per relevant Security Council resolutions.

We are concerned about recent developments in Aden and look forward to the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to host a dialogue in Jeddah between the Yemeni Government and representatives of the Southern Transitional Council. We hope that the dialogue will lead to the return of security and stability to Aden, while ensuring the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Pertaining to the humanitarian situation, it is still difficult in Yemen due to the ongoing crisis and increased challenges of lack of food, the spread of diseases and obstacles to humanitarian efforts. The World Food Programme had to suspend its operations in Sana'a for two months before resuming them few days ago after receiving certain assurances, including to not divert humanitarian assistance from its main destination.

We once again call on all parties to cooperate with humanitarian and relief agencies, not obstruct their work and ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers, whom we thank and commend for their tireless efforts to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need, despite the difficulties they are facing.

In conclusion, we renew our call on all Yemeni parties to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement on Al-Hudaydah and its three ports, as well as the exchange of prisoners and the understandings on Taiz. That would

complement the efforts made by the Special Envoy to reach a political solution based on the agreed three terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015). That would end the crisis in Yemen and safeguard its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs.

**Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, for his detailed briefing. We are also grateful to the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller, for her equally thorough, concise and clear briefing.

I would like to begin my statement today by expressing our deep concern about the escalation of attacks and clashes in Yemen this month, first in Aden and, until recently, in Sana'a. All those clashes kill and harm civilians. The destruction of basic infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and shopping centres, as we have seen, only worsens the living conditions of the citizens, who are have been suffering through the conflict since it began almost five years ago.

We call on all the parties concerned in Yemen not to unleash new attacks and to continue with the settlement tracks proposed by the Council and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, in respect of all resolutions, especially resolution 2216 (2015) and the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, by taking urgent steps to bring such attacks to an end.

The Government of Yemen and the Houthi movement must continue to work towards advancing the goals of the Stockholm Agreement. In that regard, we welcome the successful meeting that the parties held last month on a United Nations vessel in the Red Sea, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Lollesgaard, during which they were reached an agreement on the operational details of the entire redeployment envisaged in the Stockholm talks. We hope that in that same spirit they will subsequently be able to address the agreement on local security forces, as well as the issue of revenue and governance. Similarly, significant progress should be facilitated on the other dimensions of the results reached in Stockholm, such as the exchange of prisoners, which would foster trust between the parties.

Our delegation laments the terrible humanitarian situation that the Yemeni people have long been enduring. Civil society is increasingly affected, especially by hunger. Three-fourths of the Yemeni population require humanitarian assistance, given that the country has been suffering a blockade, which has left more than 22 million people without access to food, medicine and other basic products for their survival.

There are 2.3 million people who have been displaced from their homes, and, in more than four years, 65,000 civilians have been killed or injured, according United Nations data. Powerful data from the International Committee of the Red Cross indicate that, owing to the events that have occurred in Aden this month, the city's hospitals are experiencing significant difficulties and urgently need basic items.

We therefore reiterate our full support for the humanitarian workers and their efforts in that difficult context. They must also be protected. Commercial and humanitarian access, which must be guaranteed, is obstacle-ridden by the closure of key access points and other challenges that have plunged the country into chaos. That is why we urge the parties to do their utmost to facilitate the implementation of the humanitarian response plan and ensure that measures are adopted that fully respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Lastly, as we have reiterated on several occasions here in the Chamber, and in agreement with the other delegations, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes that the only way to resolve the conflict in Yemen is through political means, and we hope to always have the full support of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

**Mr. Adom** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this briefing on the review of the situation in Yemen. We commend Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Ursula Mueller for their substantive and insightful briefings.

Côte d'Ivoire, like the entire international community, remains deeply concerned about the risk of stalemate in the conflict in Yemen, with its devastating humanitarian consequences for the civilian population. The deadlock in the political process, as well as the violent fighting in recent days in Aden, particularly near the international airport, constitute a significant escalation in the situation.

The opening of new fronts that deepen the fragmentation of the Yemeni conflict reveal its complexity and underscore the urgent need to include all parties in the peace process. Moreover, the attacks on Saudi infrastructure, which my delegation strongly condemns, are likely to undermine regional security and stability and the paltry achievements of the peace process, including the ceasefire.

In the light of that worrisome situation, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its conviction that there can be no military solution to the crisis and reiterates its call for a political settlement. In that regard, my country welcomes the efforts of the regional forces that have led to an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Southern Transitional Council from key points in Aden. Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the holding of the trilateral meeting in Tehran on 17 August, which included Iranian representatives, the Houthi movement and delegations from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, with a view to finding a solution to the political and humanitarian crises.

That initiative serves to highlight the need to promote constructive dialogue among all the parties to achieve a comprehensive agreement and a political solution that, by necessity, would include the full implementation of the Stockholm agreements of December 2018. In that context, the full implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement seems to us essential.

We therefore urge all the parties, including those with influence over the warring factions, to comply with the ceasefire and continue the redeployment of military forces from the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa, under the aegis of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, in accordance with the agreement on the details of the concept of operations for the first and second phases of the redeployment.

In addition, Côte d'Ivoire encourages the urgent deployment of local security forces in those ports, in order to guarantee security and foster trust, as well as to allow the population to benefit from the revenues of those ports, in a country that has been bled dry, particularly in terms of its free-falling economic situation. Moreover, my delegation urges the parties to expedite the process relating to the exchange of 15,000 prisoners and the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on the city of Taiz, in order to facilitate the opening of reliable humanitarian corridors.

The humanitarian crisis in Yemen, considered the worst in the world, remains a major concern for my delegation. After several years of conflict, Yemen is now a country on the verge of total collapse. According to United Nations agencies, 24 million people are in a humanitarian emergency and 10 million are in a situation of acute food insecurity, not to mention the 3.3 million internally displaced persons. That already alarming situation is further exacerbated by the persistence of deliberate and unacceptable obstacles to the delivery of food aid.

My delegation therefore urgently appeals to all Yemeni parties to refrain from any instrumentalization and manipulation of humanitarian assistance, which constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law and resolution 2417 (2018). We also call on them to respect the obligation to protect civilians and put an end to the recruitment of child soldiers. My country furthermore urges bilateral and multilateral partners to continue their funding to support humanitarian assistance aimed at saving lives, alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people and addressing the special needs of women and girls, who are the most vulnerable in times of conflict.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its support for Mr. Martin Griffiths for his tireless efforts to reach a political settlement to the Yemeni conflict and for mobilizing the necessary resources to counter the adverse effects of the humanitarian crisis. Côte d'Ivoire strongly encourages the monitoring teams of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and the World Food Programme in their commitment to creating the necessary environment for achieving a definitive and sustainable resolution to the crisis in Yemen.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): Let me add our thanks to Special Envoy Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for their briefings and the tireless efforts of their teams.

The United States is deeply concerned about the outbreak of violence and deadly clashes in Aden. Violence plays into the hands of those who seek to prolong this conflict, at the cost of the Yemeni people, and exacerbates the humanitarian crisis that the United Nations and others are working hard to address. We call on the parties to respect the rule of law, adhere to the agreed-upon ceasefire and participate in good faith in

reconciliation talks proposed by Saudi Arabia. Dialogue represents the only way to achieve a stable, unified and prosperous Yemen. Resolving the overall conflict and finishing the work initiated by the National Dialogue Conference is the best way for Yemenis to shape their political future.

In addition to maintaining the ceasefire, it is essential that the parties continue to respect the Government institutions that underpin economic stability, such as the Aden branch of the Central Bank of Yemen, and that they allow humanitarian aid workers unfettered access to civilians affected by the unrest. We further call on all parties respect Yemen's territorial integrity.

We are pleased to see a successful resolution to the negotiations between the Houthis and the World Food Programme (WFP) that enables the resumption of general food distribution in Sana'a city and prevents a worsening food security situation. It is critical that the WFP and all humanitarian organizations be able to operate and provide life-saving assistance without the threat of diversion or corruption. We hope, for the sake of Yemenis in need, that the Houthis signing of that agreement means that the delivery of food aid will continue for the duration of the crisis.

While humanitarian assistance will not solve the conflict, it is critically important to the millions of Yemenis whose lives depend on it. The stoppage and reduction of humanitarian programmes seen this year, as a result of severe funding gaps, underlines the need for immediate financial support for the Yemen response. As one of the largest humanitarian contributors in Yemen, the United States once again calls on all donors to step up assistance in Yemen and fulfil immediately the financial commitments pledged in Geneva in February.

**Mr. Matjila** (South Africa): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ursula Mueller for their briefings. South Africa wishes to express its support for the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and commend him on all the efforts that he is undertaking to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Yemen.

My delegation would like to address two points in our intervention today, namely, the political situation and the humanitarian situation.

First, with regard to the political situation, we continue to urge all parties involved in the war in Yemen to cease hostilities and fully implement the Stockholm Agreement. We believe that, in order to achieve sustainable peace in Yemen, differences among the parties cannot be resolved militarily.

In that regard, we call on all sides to carry out their respective obligations as set forth in the Stockholm Agreement. Its implementation is of paramount importance, as it will assist in building confidence among the parties and improve the chances of reaching a broader political agreement. We welcome any positive steps taken by the parties to resolve the conflict so far, which help de-escalate tensions.

South Africa firmly believes 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 continue to support a negotiated political settlement that engages all parties in an inclusive all Yemeni-led dialogue to resolve differences and address the legitimate concerns of all Yemenis in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The recent developments in southern Yemen are of deep concern. We wish to encourage players in the region to continue the process of seeking a solution to this new development that will support the United Nations-mediated process and the Stockholm Agreement. We are encouraged by positive developments in the region to increase cooperation and work to achieve that goal. We further call on all the countries of the region to prioritize dialogue to address any political differences that might exist.

Secondly, concerning the humanitarian situation, South Africa remains extremely concerned about the serious humanitarian crisis in Yemen. To date, over 15 million people — half the population of Yemen — are facing starvation; 1.1 million people are affected by cholera; and 3 million people have been forced to flee, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Vulnerable groups, especially women and children, most often face the severe consequences of war, and that is no different in Yemen. This unprecedented humanitarian crisis of epic proportions is a strong indicator of the human toll of continued military action and conflict in Yemen, which requires an urgent commitment to a ceasefire and the pursuit of a negotiated, peaceful and inclusive solution to the crisis.

South Africa also calls on all parties to abide by their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We welcome the full reopening of the World Food Programme's aid distribution after its partial closure in June. We remain hopeful that that critical aid channel will remain open and free of misuse.

The continued violence by all parties to this conflict is not conducive to peacebuilding measures. To enable the latter, South Africa calls on all parties to de-escalate the fighting in other parts of the country and commit to a general ceasefire to enable dialogue and inclusive peaceful negotiations.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the only sustainable solution to the conflict will be a negotiated, Yemeni-led political settlement that is inclusive and fair and that puts the interests and well-being of all the citizens of Yemen first.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Ursula Mueller, for their briefings. China supports the Special Envoy in advancing the political process in Yemen and appreciates the tireless efforts of the United Nations and its relevant agencies in improving the humanitarian situation in the country.

We are deeply concerned about the recent large-scale bloody clashes in Aden, and we welcome the current de-escalation. Following the clashes, the entire international community expressed its concern about the situation in Aden. The Ambassadors to Yemen from China, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom and France immediately issued a joint statement expressing concern and urging peace talks. We hope that all the parties concerned will act in the best interests of Yemen and its people, exercise reason and restraint, resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiations and restore stability and normal life in Yemen as soon as possible.

A political solution is the only way out for Yemen. All the parties in Yemen should resolve issues by political means, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, its Implementation Mechanism and the outcome document of the National Dialogue Conference. As countries of the region play an important role in the issue of Yemen, they should strengthen dialogue and cooperation with

the United Nations to create the necessary conditions for all parties in Yemen to ease tensions, enhance mutual trust and dialogue and promote the political process.

The Security Council should remain united and provide support to Yemen's political process. The Stockholm Agreement is an important step towards a political solution to the Yemeni issue. We hope that it will be implemented in earnest. Under United Nations mediation, all parties in Yemen should continue to hold dialogue and consultations on outstanding issues, such as local security forces, port revenues and so on. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and the Redeployment Coordination Committee should strengthen coordination to push for an early resolution of relevant issues.

China supports maintaining Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. China supports the role of the United Nations as the main channel of mediation and will play an active and constructive role in promoting the political settlement process of the Yemeni issue.

It is the Yemeni people who suffer the most in the country's war. The international community should step up its humanitarian assistance to Yemen. China hopes that donor countries will strengthen their coordination with the United Nations to make good on their pledges. The parties concerned should ensure that humanitarian supplies can reach all people and areas in need of assistance. China has provided Yemen with multiple shipments of humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, through bilateral and multilateral channels, and is willing to continue to do so to the best of its ability. China expects the prompt restoration of peace and stability and the realization of development in Yemen to enable its people to have a normal life.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Madam President, for convening today's debate. We also thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Ursula Mueller for their useful briefings. We would like to express our support for the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen in an attempt to prevent a further escalation of the conflict and for the sense of duty that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has demonstrated in such difficult circumstances.

Peru deplores the ongoing violence in Yemen and the unique impact that it has had in recent weeks on

the south of the country, following the clashes reported in Aden between separatist forces and the legitimate Government of Yemen, which could have led to the fragmentation of Yemeni institutions. We hope that the most recent developments that resulted in the partial withdrawal of separatist forces from Government positions in Aden will give way to strengthened dialogue and a genuine commitment to reconciliation, which will have a positive impact on the peace process promoted by the United Nations. In that regard, the meeting being proposed is timely and essential. Nonetheless, we would like to express our deep concern about the lack of tangible progress in the implementation of the important agreements reached in Sweden, owing to the rigid positions adopted by the parties, and how the stalemate continues to undermine the momentum and credibility of the peace process and affect the image of the Organization.

In such circumstances, we would like to stress that it is important for the Council and countries with the greatest influence on the parties to exert the necessary political pressure in order to reaffirm their commitment to what was agreed in Stockholm and make their positions more flexible on crucial issues, such as the composition of local forces and the channelling of port revenues through the Central Bank.

The Council must also be consistent with regard to its responsibility to protect Yemeni civilians, in particular when all parties to the conflict continue to violate international law and international humanitarian law. We also stress the importance of addressing in tandem the humanitarian situation, which, as we just heard from Ms. Mueller, appears to be deteriorating. We are particularly concerned about the alarming levels of food insecurity, the outbreak of diseases, such as cholera, and the deterioration of economic indicators that deepen the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Against that tragic backdrop, we wish to express our full support for the humanitarian work of the United Nations and other agencies deployed in Yemen and reiterate the moral and legal duty to allow them full access to those in need. That is why we continue to expect that the recent agreement between the World Food Programme and the Houthi authorities on the selection and registration of the beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance will be fully implemented. Similarly, like other delegations and in line with Ms. Mueller's remarks, we await the disbursements pledged at the donors conference in February to ensure

that the operations of the humanitarian response plan are no longer disrupted.

Lastly, our belief that there is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen compels us to continue actively supporting the work of the Special Envoy to end the conflict and the suffering of the Yemeni people.

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

**Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*):** At the outset, I congratulate you, Ambassador Wroniecka, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you and the delegation of friendly Poland every success.

I would also like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings.

Current developments in Yemen complicate international efforts and the efforts of the Council to achieve a political settlement to the conflict in Yemen. The solution would be based on the agreed terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015). The current developments also prolong the conflict and hamper efforts to end the coup d'état staged by the rebellious Houthi armed militias supported by Iran. The coup led to a large-scale humanitarian disaster, while a settlement would lead to the recovery of the hijacked State institutions and meet the aspirations of the Yemeni people to build a new federal Yemen based on justice, equality, the rule of law, peace, security and development.

A few days ago, the temporary capital of Aden and the State institutions were subjected to an armed rebellion against the legitimate Government by the so-called Southern Transitional Council and its Security Belt Forces, which receive financial, logistical and media support from the United Arab Emirates. The Yemeni Government reiterates its position as set out in its Foreign Ministry communiqué of 10 August, which described the events in Aden as an armed rebellion that undermines Yemen's stability, security and unity and is at variance with the main aim of the coalition that supports legitimacy in Yemen — ending the coup d'état and Iran's interference in Yemen and

the region. I would like to explicitly underscore that, without the full support provided by the United Arab Emirates to plan, stage and finance the rebellion, it would not have happened. The disintegration plan is full swing despite all the calls for calm from the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Yesterday's attack in Abyan governorate continues today against the military police headquarters, a special security forces encampment and other State institutions.

The Yemeni Government holds the Southern Transitional Council and its supporter responsible for the military rebellion. The Government further calls on the United Arab Emirates to immediately cease providing support to those rebellious militias, to conform with the aims of the Coalition and to stop supporting plans that would undermine the unity, security and stability of Yemen as well as the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which leads the Coalition against the Iranian plan in Yemen and the region.

The Yemeni Government values the distinct and sincere position of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, as well as the communiqués of the Arab Coalition for supporting the legitimate Government led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in particular the communiqué dated 10 August, which calls on the rebellious militias to withdraw from all civilian and military facilities; allow for the return of legitimate forces to such facilities; hand over weapons pillaged from military bases; stop interfering in the functions and works of State institutions; stop all violations against innocent citizens and military, security and civilian authorities throughout the regions controlled by the Southern Transitional Council; and stop subjecting the city of Aden and its peaceful population to further chaos and fighting.

The Yemeni Government welcomed the call of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia addressed to the Yemeni Government and all parties to meet in Jeddah in order to maintain the constant Yemeni national interests. We dealt with it positively and with high degree of flexibility knowing the Kingdom's good faith and sincere intentions. Despite that call, forces of the Southern Transitional Council supported by the United Arab Emirates have continued at all levels the military escalation on the ground. Accordingly, we renew our rejection and

condemnation for the continued financial and military support provided by the United Arab Emirates to the southern transitional forces, which is unlawful, and we call to cease such support immediately.

The Yemeni Government underscores once again the need to implement the Stockholm Agreement, in particular the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, as a necessary step for building trust, establishing lasting peace in Yemen based on the agreed terms of reference and alleviating the suffering of our Yemeni people. We call for the launching of redeployment operations, pursuant to the agreed operations plan, and the implementation of the tripartite verification mechanism that covers all those operations.

The situation relating to the floating oil tanker *FSO SAFER*, in the port of Ras Isa, which is carrying 1,140,000 barrels of crude oil, is particularly alarming. The Yemeni Government contacted the United Nations and its agencies on that situation in March. We call on the Secretary-General and the Security Council to urgently take the necessary measures in order to put pressure on the Houthi militias so that they allow a technical team to assess the situation and start emptying and maintaining the tank as soon as possible. Regrettably, more than two months after that call, the technical team did not accomplish its mission because the Houthi militias did not allow it to reach the tanker, turning a blind eye to the natural catastrophe that could be unleashed, which would harm all the coastal States surrounding the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, not to mention international transport passages in the region and the economic as well as environmental damages that will affect the livelihoods of all coastal populations dependent on fishing.

Armed Houthi militias continue all kinds of stark and explicit violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Those violations include arbitrary detention, abductions and abuses against Yemeni civilians in the absence of legal proper procedures. The militias are randomly using huge quantities of landmines in all the areas under their control, including Al-Hudaydah and Taiz governorates, as well as in coastal villages along the Red Sea. Indeed, at least 172 civilians have been killed and 136 injured by landmines since January 2018. Moreover, improvised explosive devices have been placed at sea, posing a threat to international navigation. They further restrict the movement of civilians in and around Taiz governorate by setting up barriers and trenches

and using snipers. Even women were not spared from violations by the armed Houthi militias.

The militias have also been impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid, terrorizing humanitarian workers and illegally seizing their personal belongings as well as those of humanitarian organizations in Sana'a, while also disrespecting their independent status. They practice violence and compulsion on beneficiaries and impose administrative and bureaucratic impediments on them. The Houthi militias try to use hunger as a means to impose their sectarian armed agenda.

The Yemeni Government condemns in the strongest terms the attacks against the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the Houthi militias, most recently targeting the Shaybah oilfield. We categorically reject the use of Yemeni territories by the Houthi militias for launching such attacks against neighbouring countries.

As a remarkable step, the Houthi militias have normalized their relations with the Iranian regime.

Indeed, they have now even appointed a Yemeni Ambassador to the Iranian regime. The Yemeni Government totally rejects this act by the militias and the political regime in Iran. We condemn it, as it explicitly contravenes the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions by seeking to legitimize the presence of the armed militias, in violation of State sovereignty.

It is high time for the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and implement its own resolutions relating to Yemen, as well as to bring an end to the suffering of Yemeni people due to the unjust war, now entering its fifth year, led by the Houthi militias with the support of Iran.

**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 11.30 a.m.*