

**BRIEFING OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR YEMEN TO THE OPEN SESSION
OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL**

12 July 2017

Mr. President,

The situation in Yemen remains extremely grave. The intensity of the conflict increases day after day and the tragic humanitarian situation continues to worsen.

For a third successive year, Yemenis have seen the Holy month of Ramadan transformed from a month of tolerance and peace into a month of violence and hopelessness. Yemen has seen an increase in battles of attrition between the parties to the conflict, and the pace of military operations has increased in Hajjah, Marib and Al Jawf governorates. Since 10 June, fighting has also escalated significantly in Taiz and areas to the east of the city. The fighting for control of the Presidential Palace in the city has intensified in parallel with indiscriminate shelling in residential areas, leading to an increase in the numbers of dead and injured, and further destruction to the city's remaining civilian infrastructure. There have been numerous casualties in Ma'reb governorate, particularly during the battle for control of Serwah district.

Violence has also continued in Hajjah governorate and the border area between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including on 22 and 29 June when rockets landed in the Jizan area of Saudi Arabia. Airstrikes have continued to hit numerous locations in the governorates of Saada, Taiz, Marib and Sana'a. Airstrikes hit a market in Moshnaq village in Saada on 18 June and Al-Mokha town on 4 July. Both incidents resulted in numerous civilian deaths and injuries, including women and children.

I am deeply concerned by the continued targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure by the parties to the conflict. I have consistently urged the warring parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. The targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is utterly unacceptable and must stop immediately.

On 15 June, an Emirati ship was subjected to a bombardment from the vicinity of Al-Mokha port, threatening maritime security in the Bab Al-Mandab strait. The continued targeting of vessels in the area seriously jeopardises the provision of much needed humanitarian and commercial supplies to the most vulnerable Yemenis.

In addition, security continues to be undermined by the activity of extremist groups including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. On 7 June, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeted the convoy of the Abyan Chief of Security, killing two of his bodyguards. Later in the month, on 14 June, militants detonated an improvised explosive device at a police station in Al-Dhale' governorate, killing the Chief of Police and wounding several others. As part of their counter-terrorism efforts, on 27 June, the Government of Yemen re-deployed additional forces to Abyan, Lahj and Taiz.

As I have stated here many times, the longer the conflict lasts, the more the terrorist groups will expand and threaten Yemen's future.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian situation in Yemen is appalling. The people are suffering from war, hunger and cholera, which has spread further during the last few weeks. The country is not suffering from a single emergency but a number of complex emergencies, which have affected more than 20 million people and whose scale and effect will be felt long after the end of the war. 14 million people are food insecure, of whom almost 7 million are at risk of famine. My colleagues will provide further details on the humanitarian situation in their briefings.

Cholera is spreading rapidly and is infecting children and elderly people and other vulnerable groups in many areas of the country. There are now over 300,000 suspected cases and over 1,700 have died as a result of the epidemic. Tens of thousands of healthcare workers have not been paid for many months, more than half of the country's health facilities have closed and supplies of medicine and medical equipment remain severely limited.

The speed and scale of Yemen's cholera outbreak highlights the consequences of a collapsed public sector system. I praise the generous donation of USD 67 million from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which helped to slow the spread of the disease. I call on other donors to provide further contributions as soon as possible. The non-payment of salaries for healthcare workers and other staff in the public sector is an urgent issue. If this is not addressed the health situation will continue to deteriorate and key state institutions will cease to function. I fully support the joint UNDP, WHO and UNICEF proposal to support immediate payments to health care workers as soon as possible in advance of an agreement to restart salary payments nationally as I have proposed. I encourage member states to support this important initiative which will help ensure the maintenance of health care services. Preserving national capacity is critical to stabilizing the humanitarian situation now and to securing service delivery in the future.

A World Bank-financed cash transfer program is expected to disburse the first quarterly payment to the most vulnerable households across the country in August, benefitting about eight million Yemenis. My office has been working continuously with partners to ensure the success of this initiative, to support household purchasing power, avoiding widespread destitution, improving the general situation and restoring hope. I hope that the international community will heed this call and support these initiatives.

Mr. President,

Over the last year, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and I have called repeatedly for the resumption of commercial flights from Sanaa. The lack of commercial flights has placed an unnecessary burden on the population and worsened an already desperate humanitarian situation. I appeal to the Coalition and the parties to the conflict to support our proposal for the resumption of regular flights specifically for individuals requiring medical care, students studying abroad and the reunion of families.

Mr. President,

I continue to encourage the parties to work towards the agreements I outlined during my last briefing to this Council. I am planning to invite representatives of Ansar Allah and GPC to restart discussions of these ideas as soon as possible. In the past few days, I was in direct contact with Ansar Allah, which is

cause for optimism. I am grateful for the efforts of the People's Republic of China for playing an instrumental role in this regard.

The proposed agreements focus on the Hodeidah port and the surrounding area and aim to ensure the continued flow of basic humanitarian supplies and commercial goods through the port and to implement a programme for collecting taxes and other revenues so that they can be used to support salaries and services, instead of supporting the war. An agreement on the port of Hodeidah should become the basis for a national agreement for the resumption of salary payments nationwide that will provide some relief to many Yemenis. Without doubt, such an agreement will require clear mechanisms to ensure that all state revenues, whether collected in Hodeida, Sanaa, Aden or elsewhere, are used in support of salary payments and the reactivation of state institutions in all areas of the country.

The Government of Yemen has reacted positively and has agreed to negotiate on the basis of my proposals. In my meetings with President Hadi he agreed on the necessity of implementing measures to ensure the delivery of humanitarian and commercial supplies, and prevent arms smuggling and the diversion of taxes and other revenues. I arrived this morning from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where I met Saudi Crown Prince, First Deputy Prime Minister His Royal Highness Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdel Aziz Al Saud, and I welcome the commitment by the Saudi leadership to support agreements between the parties on these issues.

I will depart for Cairo tomorrow to continue my current work with the Government of Yemen and regional leaders on these ideas. I also hope to meet with the delegation of Ansar Allah and GPC soon to discuss the possible agreements on Hodeidah and salaries as a preliminary step to a national Cessation of Hostilities and a comprehensive resolution to the conflict which restores peace to Yemen. It is essential that Ansar Allah and the GPC engage with me constructively and in good faith on these proposals if they truly want an end to the war and improvements in the humanitarian situation.

I reiterate my sincere gratitude to the international community, which has consistently supported my efforts and the proposals that I have put forward to the parties. I briefly visited France recently and the new government has re-iterated its support for the peace process. Regional and international unity is critical in order to secure peace and security in Yemen.

Mr. President,

I commend the courageous efforts of Yemeni civil society, who continue to push for peace in spite of many security challenges. In June, the Yemeni Women's Pact continued to promote a spirit of compromise and mechanisms that could put an end to this devastating conflict. I recently met a group of Yemeni youth activists who also demonstrate the same commitment and dedication. Yemeni civil society groups are in constant contact with my team and me. They are supportive of the efforts of the United Nations and recognize that only a political solution will end the war and the suffering of the Yemeni people. Their drive and sense of nationalism carries with it high hopes. I wish that the political leaders would mirror these activists' love of their nation and its people, which I sense with each and every proposal I receive from them. They are the true voices of Yemen, far removed from personal concerns and considerations. They convey the suffering of the people from the farthest corners of the country.

The political leadership must recognize that the continuation of the war can only lead to more human and physical loss, and complicate crucial questions on the future of the country, including the grievances of the South. In this context, the Southern Question requires a deeply considered solution and I call on Yemenis to address this question through dialogue and peaceful means.

Finally, I want to note that history will not judge kindly those Yemeni leaders who have used the war to increase their influence or profit from the public finances, and Yemenis' patience will not last. The people need an alternative to politicians who work for their own interests and not for their country, who destroy and do not build, and who use the finances of the people and the state to enrich themselves, rather than serve the people.

I call on all of the parties to act for the sake of peace. Their excuses are unacceptable, and their justifications are unconvincing, especially when the solutions are in plain sight. The opportunity to reach peace is not yet lost.

Thank you, Mr. President.