

**SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN YEMEN,  
SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR YEMEN, ISMAIL OULD CHEIKH AHMED  
15 October 2015**

Mr. President.

Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in Yemen.

Yemen is ablaze and the Yemeni population is in a catastrophic situation. The country is bleeding and its cities collapsing. Yemen's citizens are deprived of the most basic rights and trapped amidst political dispute and war without restraint.

In my very first briefing to this Council, I informed you of the Secretary-General's plan to convene peace talks between the parties to the conflict in Geneva. Those talks, while producing valuable ideas for the future, failed to produce the relief from violence desperately need by the people of Yemen. The parties even failed to meet face to face. Those first attempted talks took place nearly 5 months ago.

Just last month I informed the Council of my intention to convene consultations in the coming weeks. Again these talks were cancelled as new pre-conditions were set. These missed opportunities weigh heavily on the well-being of the people of Yemen, their future and the future of their country. They have left the Yemeni people to face an increasing spiral of violence and misery.

As I have reported previously, extremist groups are rapidly taking advantage of the conflict and the disorder it spawns. Many in the international community saw the return of the government to Aden in as a sign of hope for the future. With the legitimate government back in place, we hoped that the people in these areas would see a return of tranquility and a restoration of essential services.

Tragically, the government headquarters in Aden were attacked on October 6 by Daesh. Many civilian employees lost their lives and other leaders were injured. The government has again been forced to evacuate until more secure premises can be arranged. Last month suicide bombers again targeted a mosque in Sanaa leading to the death of numerous people who had gathered for prayers for Eid al-Adha. The bombings of mosques in Yemen, a country famed for its tolerance, has become a common occurrence. The longer the war continues, the more extremist groups will expand their presence taking advantage of the chaos of the war and the enhanced availability of weapons.

The fate of Yemenis is no better than the fate of their country. Civilians continue to face a deteriorating humanitarian situation and suffer the consequences of blatant disregard for the laws of war. Is this what the Yemeni people deserve?

The last OCHA report indicates that there are over 21 million people in need of humanitarian response – 80 per cent of the population. Some 20 million lack access to safe drinking water. The number of severely malnourished children exceeds 500,000.

Twice in the last months wedding parties were attacked leading to over a 100 civilian deaths. Civilian areas of Taiz and other cities have been subjected to indiscriminate shelling. Taiz, the city that was considered Yemen's cultural capital, is facing an extreme crisis. Taiz became a battlefield. People are struggling to survive.

Humanitarian aid, which is supposed to flow freely, is being stopped from reaching the people of Taiz, leading to grave shortages of medicines and other supplies. Obstruction to the flow of fuel into the city has left many parts of the city without drinking water, further placing the population at risk of disease.

The obstruction of commercial shipping continues to undermine the lives and livelihoods of Yemenis. Fuel which is critical for transport, the functioning of hospital and for the pumping of water in many areas of Yemen is still not reaching the country in sufficient quantities. According to the same OCHA report, only 1% of Yemen's normal monthly fuel requirements were allowed into September. Recently several fuel tankers were allowed to enter Hodeida which I hope we alleviate the devastating fuel shortages.

We salute the humanitarian workers who have strived to alleviate suffering and help Yemenis survive this crisis. They are working under extremely difficult conditions and some have even lost their. I want to express my deep gratitude for their efforts.

Mr. President

Despite the misery of the situation I also have share with you some factors which still inspire hope for the future of Yemen. I recently attended a gathering of Yemeni women organized by UNWomen in Larnaca in collaboration with my office and the UN Resident Coordinator in Yemen. The conference brought together women from all parts of the country and from across Yemen's broad political spectrum.

While the women differed in the views of the origins of the current crisis, they came together in demanding that these political differences be addressed in peaceful dialogue. They called for urgent measures to improve the humanitarian situation, to lift all obstructions to humanitarian access and the flow of commercial goods into Yemen and within its borders, and to protect all civilians from all forms of violence. They appealed for to the parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table and resume the peace process.

I was very inspired by their ability to work together despite their different views. The women in Larnaca agreed to form a Women's Pact for Peace and Security. I plan to work with this group and other women's and civil society groups to ensure that their voices can help bring the country out of its current crisis and back to a peace political dialogue.

Mr. President.

When I last briefed the Council I informed you that we were close to agreement on convening consultations between the Government of Yemen and its opponents. These consultations were unfortunately delayed as the Government sought a clearer acceptance by their opponents of UNSC 2216 (2015).

I have kept in touch regularly with the leaders of the Houthis and the GPC and encouraged them consistently to accept UNSC Resolution 2216 as the basis for a negotiated way out of the crisis. The Houthis and the GPC leadership have now clearly stated that they are committed to implementing UNSC Resolution 2216, including a negotiated withdrawal from Yemen's key cities and a surrender of all heavy weapons to the state.

I have recently returned from another tour of the region during which I was able to update the Government of Yemen in Riyadh and the leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the developments in the country and on my discussions with the Houthis. I also held similar discussions on the margins of the General Assembly with the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Dr. Abdullatif Zayani, and the Foreign Ministers of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Qatar and the

Sultanate of Oman. I held similar consultations in Russia with senior government officials working on the Middle East, including Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Leonidovich Bogdanov, who were all very supportive of our efforts to reach a peaceful political solution to the conflict.

I am very grateful for the support for my efforts in the region. I have worked closely with Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Dr. Zayani in the last weeks in order to reassure the Government of Yemen of urgent need for talks.

Based on my consultations in the region and with the Yemeni stakeholders, the Secretary General informed President Hadi of the Houthis' acceptance of UNSC Resolution 2216 in their discussions with me and in their official correspondence. On this basis, the Secretary General encouraged him to accept to send a delegation to UN sponsored talks.

I am pleased to report to you that President Hadi informed the Secretary General, in a letter from 19 October, of his intention to send a delegation to participate in peace talks in order to negotiate an end to the present conflict based on the framework provided by UNSC Resolution 2216. I will start working immediately with the Government of Yemen, the Houthis and other stakeholders to agree on the agenda, date and format for these talks.

I hope that these first face to face talks will chart a course towards a rapid end to the fighting, the resumption of political dialogue, and Yemen's return to an orderly and peaceful political transition.

The negotiations I have proposed are firmly based on UNSC Resolution 2216 and will seek to find a negotiated way forward in each of resolution's key components including the withdrawal of militias from key cities, the release of prisoners, the return of heavy weapons seized from the army, improvements in the humanitarian situation and the resumption of inclusive political dialogue. They are clearly defined to ensure that they lead the country back to the GCC Initiative and the Outcomes of the National Dialogue.

I have no doubt that these talks will help us start a new phase that will mark the new history of Yemen and I believe will bring hope to Yemenis who have been suffering the effects of this conflict. They know, as the Secretary General has stated many times, that there is no military solution to this conflict and that only peace talks will pave a road to a better future.

But this first sign of hope will need to be nurtured and protected. The positions of the different sides to this conflict remain very divergent. Your support and encouragements will be necessary so that the sides to the conflict enter these talks in good faith and motivated by a sincere desire to see an end to the conflict.

Last but not least, I want to leave you with few words of hope, gratitude and faith. I hope that I will be able to soon report to this Council on the outcomes of the upcoming Yemen-Yemeni consultations. I am grateful for your ongoing cooperation and the support of the region and the international community. I have faith that the Yemenis will in the end unite behind common vision for the country, which reflects their aspirations. I hope they will soon turn the sad page of the war to look towards brighter future endowed with pride and hope.