

**SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR YEMEN, ISMAIL OULD CHEIKH AHMED,  
BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL  
31 August 2016**

Mr. President,

I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the latest developments in the pursuit for peace in Yemen.

The last month has been tragic for Yemen. The departure from Kuwait without an agreement has betrayed the expectations of millions of Yemenis who had hoped that these talks would bring an end to the conflict and open the way for Yemen's return to a peaceful and orderly transition.

The end of the Kuwait talks was followed by a severe breakdown of the Cessation of Hostilities and a dangerous escalation in military activities. Extensive military confrontations have been on-going in recent weeks in Sana'a, Taiz, Al Jawf, Shebwa and Mareb governorates and along the border between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The clashes have resulted in tens of casualties, extensive destruction and renewed displacement.

As has been the case throughout the conflict, numerous violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have accompanied the fighting. On 17 August, the Secretary-General noted with concern the continued escalation of hostilities in Yemen and along the border area, including airstrikes and ground fighting. He also condemned in the strongest terms the attack on a rural hospital in Hajjah.

According to human rights organizations, at least 60 members of the Baha'i community in Sana'a have been detained without charge, including six children. Further arrests were reportedly carried out on 16 August. This demonstrates a worrying disrespect for the human rights of minority groups, and I echo the call from human rights groups for the immediate release of those still in detention and I call on all parties to fulfil their obligations and release all prisoners and detainees.

I call on all groups to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilian life and infrastructure.

The military escalation will continue to provide opportunities for the spread of terrorist groups. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State continue to wreak havoc in significant parts of Yemen. For example, a suicide attack in Aden killed and injured tens of Yemenis on 29 August. The Yemeni Army's growing ability to confront extremist groups, evidenced by the recent detention of suspected AQAP militants and military operations in Zinjibar and Hadramout, is encouraging. However, the absence of the state in many parts of Yemen, in addition to the chaos created by war, will continue to facilitate the expansion of these terrorist groups which represents a real threat to the region.

Mr. President,

The Kuwait talks concluded after over three months of difficult negotiations. I would like to restate my gratitude to the Emir of Kuwait for hosting these talks and for his efforts to encourage the Yemeni parties to conclude an agreement. The talks in Kuwait did not yield an agreement but they were not without important results. During the talks, the architecture of a roadmap emerged, which we will

expand upon in the coming weeks. Before departing Kuwait, I agreed with both parties to continue consultations separately and to reconvene direct talks at a later stage.

Delaying progress towards an agreement is particularly dangerous considering the grave deterioration in the economic situation. Of particular concern are delays in the payment of salaries in many parts of the country. Without external support, the lack of revenue and shortage of liquidity could make it impossible for salaries to be paid in the coming months. There are reports of civil servants unable to collect their wages in Aden and other parts of the South. The stoppage of salary payments risks driving many more Yemenis into destitution and vastly exacerbating the humanitarian situation. It will be necessary to find practical solutions which will allow Yemen to overcome the liquidity crisis and ensure continued payments of salaries without discrimination everywhere in the country.

From a humanitarian perspective, the escalation in fighting has led to tragic and unnecessary civilian deaths, casualties and a worsening of humanitarian suffering. The number of internally displaced persons has risen to over three million. Food prices are on average at least 60 per cent above pre-crisis levels while income levels have dropped dramatically. Despite the rising levels of need, it has become increasingly difficult for humanitarian agencies to access many areas. The health care system and other basic social services are struggling to cope with an increased workload and fewer resources. The cessation of Yemenia flights to and from Sana'a has blocked access to Yemenis seeking urgent medical treatment outside of the country, removing a much needed humanitarian life-line. In this context, I welcome US Secretary of State Kerry's announcement of an additional sum of \$189m to the YHRP, which remains only 28% funded.

Mr. President,

Over the past two weeks, I have conducted intensive meetings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. In Riyadh, I met with President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Prime Minister Ahmed Bin Dagher, who reaffirmed their willingness to continue consultations on the basis of the principles agreed upon in Kuwait. During these visits, I also held extensive discussions with the Foreign Ministers and senior officials of Yemen, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. These discussions have reaffirmed the strong international and regional support for the settlement of the conflict in Yemen and a commitment to help overcome the desperate economic and humanitarian challenges the country is facing.

During my last visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia I briefed a joint meeting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States which had been called specifically to discuss how to overcome obstacles in the peace process. The meeting was followed by a discussion with the Foreign Ministers of the GCC member states, who emphasized their full support of the United Nation's efforts in Yemen. In both encounters, there was strong support for a return to the Cessation of Hostilities, which began on 10 April 2016. There was also consensus on the need for a full and comprehensive political solution, involving clearly sequenced political and security measures, firmly grounded in the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes.

This proposed agreement will define a path for the rapid formation of a Government of National Unity to be formed immediately following the withdrawals and handover of heavy weapons in Sana'a and some other vital areas. Implementation would be overseen by Military and Security Committees

comprised of senior military professionals, acceptable to both parties, who would assume responsibility for the security of the population, critical infrastructure and state institutions. The agreement would provide for the immediate restoration of the functioning of state institutions free of interference from revolutionary committees or other bodies created during the conflict.

Mr. President,

The effective resumption of talks will only be possible if all parties maintain their commitment to a negotiated settlement and refrain from unilateral actions. I am extremely concerned by the announcement by Ansar Allah and former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, of the formation of a Supreme Political Council with broad administrative, security, economic, and legislative powers. These actions breach the commitments provided by both Ansar Allah and the GPC to engage constructively in the peace process as requested by this Council and creates a new potential impediment to progress towards an agreement.

Unilateral actions of this sort will only complicate Yemen's path to peace and delay the end of military violence. We cannot effectively negotiate new political arrangements while unilateral steps are being taken which are inconsistent with a future comprehensive agreement. I, therefore, urge both to refrain from taking any additional unilateral steps, which could undermine attempts to reach a peaceful settlement.

With the foundation of international and regional support, I will resume consultations with the Government of Yemen, Ansar Allah, and the General People's Congress in order to take advantage of this new initiative to and build on the progress made in Kuwait.

Mr. President,

In order to accelerate the path to renewed talks, the resumption of the Cessation of Hostilities will be critical. Further military violence will not ease the way to a negotiated settlement. As I resume consultations, my priority will be to gain a re-commitment from all sides to the Cessation of Hostilities. This should start with the full deployment of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee in Dharan al-Janub. As specified in the Terms and Conditions, which were agreed before the start of the Kuwait consultations, the Cessation of Hostilities should include a full end to all military activities by land, sea or air, and using any kind of weapon. It should include a complete de-escalation along Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia.

The re-commitment to the Cessation of Hostilities will spare Yemen the further loss of life, allow the increased flow of humanitarian assistance and generate much needed confidence for the negotiation of a comprehensive and peaceful solution. Only a negotiated political settlement can put an end to the devastation and injustice brought about by this horrific war. The Yemeni people have suffered for far too long and understandably demand that Yemen's leaders demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of Yemen and the Yemeni people and that they restore peace and security to their country without further delay.

Peace in Yemen is a priority, and the safety and security of all Yemenis should not be taken for granted. The United Nations has dedicated all of its political and administrative expertise to help Yemenis, but this will not be sufficient if the decision-makers do not uphold their responsibilities and prioritize the interest of the population. The United Nations has not and will not fail Yemen. Yemen's leaders must not fail the Yemeni people, all the Yemeni people, in the South and in the North.