

**BRIEFING OF THE UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR YEMEN TO THE OPEN SESSION OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
(19 August 2017)**

Mr. President,

Yemen today continues to traverse a critical and agonizing period as civilians pay a terrible price of an unending power struggle. Those who survive the fighting face death by famine or disease as the economic situation continues to deteriorate and the humanitarian conditions worsens.

Military clashes have continued in several governorates around the country. On 4 August, according to several field reports, an airstrike in Mahdha area of Sa'adah governorate resulted in the death of eight civilians. On 20 August, another airstrike on Muwaza district of Taiz killed more than 20 civilians. Houthi forces and forces loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh continued to shell residential areas in Taiz inflicting heavy losses among civilians who have already been subjected to much hardship over the past two years. In addition, several ballistic missiles have been launched into Saudi Arabia. There were also reports of attacks on ships in Mokha port. These attacks are a further evidence of the increasing threat to maritime security in the Red Sea. This threat puts the much-needed humanitarian and commercial supplies in peril.

We have also observed continued hostilities along the Yemeni-Saudi borders as well as in Hajja, Midi and Mareb. Fighting escalated in western Taiz, around the Khalid Bin Al Walid camp and the Taiz-Al Hodeidah road.

Moreover, forces of the Government of Yemen, backed by the UAE and US Special Forces, have launched a military offensive in Shabwa targeting Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) fighters. I reiterate that the longer the conflict goes on, the higher the risk that terrorist groups will spread and the stronger their influence will become.

Uncontrolled migration to Yemen through the Gulf of Aden has continued relentlessly with tragic consequences. On 9 and 10 August, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that more than 41 migrants died after they had been forced by traffickers to abandon the boats and jump into the sea off the coast of Shabwa.

In brief, death looms for Yemenis by air, land and sea. Diseases and epidemics are at unprecedented levels, as you just heard from Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien. Those who survived cholera will continue to suffer the consequences of the "political cholera" that infects Yemen and continues to obstruct the road towards peace.

Mr. President,

Over the last few weeks, I visited Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In these visits, I met with several ministers of foreign affairs as well as other senior officials from Yemen and the region. There is still consensus on the need to reach a political solution for the Yemeni crisis and to support the UN-sponsored peace process under the auspices of the Secretary-General. The international community is unified in support of a peaceful settlement but the parties to the conflict continue to miss this opportunity. Certain parties

continue to take advantage of internal divisions and place personal interests ahead of the urgent need for peace.

The political tensions in Yemen continue to undermine the state institutions on which many Yemenis depend. Immediate measures are needed to stop the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and save the country from further violence, epidemics, famine and other preventable and controllable crises. We are currently urging the parties to agree to measures that will preserve the country's vital institutions and help, in the first phase, to secure the continued flow of humanitarian aid, payment of salaries to civil servants and control the smuggling of weapons. The proposal seeks to ensure the safe and uninterrupted functioning of the port of Hodeida, which is presently a key artery for the entire Yemeni economy. It includes a practical plan to hand over the port to a committee of respected Yemeni security and economic figures, working under UN oversight and guidance. This committee would work to prevent the smuggling of weapons and ensure the safety and security of the port's operations and infrastructure. The committee will also ensure the smooth flow of humanitarian and commercial goods through the port to all parts of Yemen and the transfer of port revenues to support the resumption of salary payments to civil servants.

In parallel, we are working with the parties on re-opening Sanaa International Airport for commercial flights. This is a vital and fundamental component of the proposals, as it will allow the wounded and sick to seek treatment abroad and permit students to continue their studies outside of Yemen. It will also ease imports and exports and improve the conditions of the Yemeni citizens. There should also be immediate steps re-open roads to and from Taiz for humanitarian and commercial supplies as many representatives of Taiz civil society have demanded. The denial of access to basic supplies for the people of Taiz has gone on too long. Ensuring freedom of movement for civilians is required by international humanitarian law but also out of respect for the long standing values of solidarity and compassion of Yemeni society”

These initiatives should contribute to the rebuilding of confidence between the parties and serve as a first step towards a new national cessation of hostilities and the resumption of discussions for a full and comprehensive solution consisting of security and political components based on the Kuwait talks. I know that Yemenis are demanding these steps and I hope that the parties to the conflict will embrace them as soon as possible.

Mr. President,

I met with President of Yemen, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, few days ago and we discussed ideas and proposals I have presented. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and UAE expressed their full support to my proposals, which also received backing from the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League.

Last month, I received a letter from Ansarullah and the General People's Congress (GPC) reaffirming the need to build on what was discussed in the Kuwait talks. I have invited them to meet with me in a third country in order to discuss these proposals and turn them into agreement containing concrete steps which will avoid further bloodshed and alleviate human suffering. I hope they will commit to join these

meetings as soon as possible. Every day we spend lingering without serious action towards a solution means more destruction and greater loss of lives.

Mr. President,

Yemen's path towards peace is clear and the actionable proposals are ready which will yield tangible benefits and build confidence between the parties. International support for a full and comprehensive solution and for the efforts of the United Nations is unwavering. What is missing at this point is for the parties to the conflict, without any delays, excuses or procrastination, to demonstrate their intention to end the war and put the national interest above any personal gains.

Placing blame on the United Nations, the Envoy, or the International community will not make peace. Postponement and posturing for the media do not end wars but only serve to deepen the rift in the country. A solid foundation for peace needs to be built from within Yemeni society. A society at peace with competent and responsive institutions will only be built by partnership and inclusiveness and policies which respond to the demands of the people throughout the country from north to south. These aspirations will need to be reflected in a constitution that protects citizens, all citizens, youth, children, men and women from all political and ideological backgrounds.

Those who want peace shall make solutions not search for pretexts. It is no secret that there are many merchants of war in Yemen who do not want peace. We will continue to work with Yemenis, including human right groups, women's groups, and civil society, to mainstream the language of peace and reach a political solution that provides safety and stability to the Yemeni people who deserve no less.