



**Briefing by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the UN Security Council  
10 July 2023**

Thank you very much. And thank you also for giving me this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in Yemen and my efforts to mediate an agreement on the way forward between the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah.

Despite the expiry of the Truce, Yemen and its people continue to feel the benefits from the longest period of relative calm since the beginning of the conflict.

According to the latest United Nations report on children and armed conflict, the truce contributed to a 40 per cent decrease in grave violations against children, such as killing, maiming, and recruitment to armed formations. That is a meaningful achievement, but more progress is needed. Just last week, a mortar attack injured five children in Hays district, south of Hudaydah. I join UNMHA in condemning the incident and calling on all parties to uphold their obligations under international law and prevent and end violations against children.

Other benefits continue to this day. Commercial flights between Sana'a and Amman continue. This month, I welcomed the first commercial flights in 7 years between Sana'a and Saudi Arabia, carrying Yemeni Hajj pilgrims. Fuel also continues to flow steadily through Hudaydah's ports.

Most importantly, this period of relative calm has opened the door for serious discussions with Yemeni actors on the way forward toward ending the conflict. Discussions are ongoing, but – if we are to sustainably end the war – these talks have to reach a serious breakthrough. I am grateful for the continued efforts of regional actors, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, in support of these discussions.

We have also seen the parties engage constructively in other confidence-building measures. My Office recently convened the parties in Amman to discuss further detainee releases, building on the successful large-scale release of detainees in March, in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross. I am grateful to the Government of Jordan for hosting these and other meetings in Amman, and for continuing to support the work of my Office.

So, for more than a year, we have seen some important and positive steps that have de-escalated violence and helped to improve the lives of Yemenis.

However, **Madam President**, the situation on the ground remains fragile and challenging.

On the military situation, although fighting has decreased markedly since the start of the Truce, the frontlines are not silent. Armed clashes have taken place in Dhale', Taiz, Hudaydah, and Marib,

and Shabwa. I am also concerned by reports of troop movements, including near Marib, and recent parade of fighters in Ibb. These continued sparks of violence, alongside public threats to return to large-scale fighting, increase fears and tensions. I call on the parties to stop provocative military actions and rhetoric that raise the specter of further escalation.

Moreover, **Madam President**, the parties continue to battle on a different front – the economy. The struggle to control revenue-generating ports, trade routes, the banking sector, currency and natural-resource wealth has become inseparable from the political and military conflict. The value of the Yemeni riyal against the US dollar in Aden has decreased by over 25 per cent in the past 12 months. As always, it is Yemeni citizens who pay the highest price for the economic divisions and deterioration in the country.

Freedom of movement also remains a huge challenge. Conflict-related road closures force thousands of Yemenis every day to take unsafe routes, and have raised the cost of transporting goods by upwards of 100 per cent. Landmines, unexploded ordnance and climate change-related extreme weather events compound the impact of freedom of movement restrictions on civilians. In addition, despite recent positive efforts, the need to further expand the availability of flights to and from Sana'a airport is of pressing concern.

For women and girls, the restrictions on the freedom of movement have become even more pronounced over the course of the conflict. The requirement that women and girls travel accompanied by a male relative has expanded significantly over the past year, especially in Ansar Allah-controlled areas. This requirement is also often imposed by armed groups at checkpoints in different parts of the country. Such restrictions prevent women from accessing their basic needs, from engaging in economic opportunities, and from participating in politics and peace-making efforts.

**Madam President**, we cannot afford to seek a seasonal peace. The parties need to make further, bold steps toward a peace that is sustainable and just. This means an end to the conflict that promises accountable national and local governance; economic and environmental justice; and guarantees of equal citizenship for all Yemenis, regardless of gender, faith, background or race.

Even if the way forward to such a future is challenging, it is well-lit. And there are three key elements here.

First, the parties need to immediately stop military provocations and prepare for and agree to a sustainable nationwide ceasefire. My Office recently held constructive discussions with Government of Yemen delegates to the Military Coordination Committee on protection of civilians, including women's security, and plans to implement a ceasefire. This followed an early meeting in May with the Joint Forces Command about technical preparations for a ceasefire.

Second, the parties need to immediately de-escalate economically and address near- and longer-term economic priorities. They need to ensure regular public sector salary payments nationwide. They also need to reverse antagonistic economic policies, which deepen the divide between them and further fragment the country. And they need to enhance economic and other links among

Yemenis in different parts of the country, including by opening roads, and by building on previous efforts to further expand the availability of flights – including domestic flights – to and from Sana’a airport. My Office is in constant communication with Yemeni political actors, businesses, civil society and others to explore sustainable solutions.

Third, the parties need to make progress on agreeing to a clear path to restarting an intra-Yemeni political process under the United Nations auspices. This process needs to start urgently in order to consolidate the gains made since the truce and prevent further fragmentation.

To find sustainable solutions for near-term challenges, Yemenis need to address broader issues at the heart of the conflict. For example, we see now how current discussions over salary payments are becoming linked to issues of revenue management, and ultimately to longer-term questions of the shape of the state.

Only Yemenis can debate and decide on such weighty and fundamental questions of sovereignty, national and local governance, revenue management and security arrangements. The United Nations-mediated process will be led and owned by Yemenis, and will involve and reflect the priorities of a plurality of Yemenis, including women and men from across Yemen’s governorates.

I want to note here, **Madam President**, that Yemenis have rich capacities to draw on in any political negotiation. There is a rich history of dialogue, innovation and compromise in Yemen, including at the national level. And at the local level, Yemenis every day prove their solidarity and capacity to resolve problems. They open roads, release detainees and negotiate access amid significant barriers to movement. In some governorates, local authorities have actually stepped up service delivery despite the challenges of the conflict. In some others, private sector actors have stepped in to provide crucial social services such as health and education. We need to build upon these efforts to support post-conflict governance and peacebuilding.

**Madam President**, everyone in this Council wields influence. I ask you to use that influence to encourage the parties to stop escalatory actions and work along the path I have outlined here today.

Thank you very much.