

Briefing to the United Nations Security Council by the Special Envoy for Yemen

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Thank you, Mr. President.

I am pleased to be with you here today. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to brief this Council in person since I announced the truce in April. The truce has now been holding in Yemen for two and half months. Something unprecedented during this war, and something that seemed unimaginable at the beginning of this year. The parties recently extended the truce, under the same terms, until the 2nd of August this year. And I commend the parties for their leadership and for listening to the voices of millions of Yemenis who have been calling for a respite and for a chance for peace after more than seven years of conflict.

Mr. President, two and a half months into the truce, I would like to take stock of where we are on the implementation of the truce, highlight challenges, and delineate the way forward.

First, the truce continues to hold in military terms. There have been no confirmed airstrikes inside Yemen or cross-border attacks emanating from Yemen since the beginning of the agreement. And there has been a significant reduction in civilian casualties. However, casualty numbers due to landmines and unexploded ordinance are unfortunately increasing as civilians, including children, venture into contaminated frontline areas that were previously inaccessible.

Mr. President, despite the overall reduction in fighting, we continue to receive reports from both sides about the alleged violations inside Yemen, including shelling, drone attacks, reconnaissance overflights, and redeployments of forces. Armed clashes have been reported on several fronts with majority of incidents reported in Ma'rib, Taiz, and Hudaydah governorates. As you are aware, we do not have independent monitoring capacities, but I take all these allegations very seriously. It is critical to prevent such alleged incidents from provoking a spiral of renewed escalation and violence. In this context, I am pleased to report that my Office has convened the first two meetings of the Military Coordination Committee, comprised of representatives of the parties in addition to the Coalition's Joint Forces Command. The Committee agreed to meet on a monthly basis and to set up a joint coordination room to address issues of concern in a timely manner. The face-to-face meetings represent a significant first step towards building trust and improving communication between the parties.

Mr. President, when I last briefed this Council, the first commercial flight to Amman had just taken place the day before, following nearly six years of closure of Sana'a airport. Since then, we have also initiated flights to Cairo. To date we have had eight commercial round-trip flights which have transported 2795 passengers from Sana'a to Amman and Cairo. I would like to recognize the efforts of the Government of Yemen for prioritizing the needs of Yemenis by facilitating this opening of the airport. And I would like to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for their instrumental roles in facilitating these flights.

The steady flow of fuel to Hudaydah port has been maintained throughout the truce. During the months of April and May, over 480 thousand metric tons of fuel products were cleared – more fuel than entered Hudaydah during the whole of last year. Since the beginning of the renewed truce, 2 ships have been cleared and I hope the momentum of the last truce will not be lost. The steady delivery of fuel has taken the pressure off vital services, significantly decreased queues at petrol stations that dominated Sana'a's streets, and has allowed Yemenis to travel more easily throughout the country. As we will hear from Mrs. Ghada Mudawi from OCHA, these are some of the positive humanitarian implications of the truce.

Mr. President, it is critical that this truce can also deliver on easing the suffering of the people of Taiz. For years, their freedom of movement has been greatly impeded by the conflict. As Taizis know all too well, the only open roads to the city are long and arduous. Last November, I travelled myself for over six hours along the narrow, winding, and rugged mountainous road from Aden to the city of Taiz. Before the conflict, the same trip on the main road would have only taken three hours. In Taiz, I met with men, women, and youth, who told me about their daily plights caused by the closure of access roads in and out of the city. I have also witnessed first-hand how the severe restrictions have crippled the economy, worsened access to healthcare, and endangered travel of civilians.

Following the nomination of their respective delegations, I convened the parties in Amman to reach an agreement on opening roads in Taiz and other governorates. I want to highlight the critical role played by the local mediators and civil society representatives present at the meeting, voicing their views and priorities and providing their expertise on road openings.

After two rounds of frank and constructive deliberations on the views and options proposed by each side, I presented the parties with a proposal for the phased opening of roads. The proposal includes a main route from Taiz city to the Hawban area east of the city, as well as additional roads in Taiz and other governorates. The proposal also includes elements for an implementation mechanism and commitments to the safety of civilian travelers. While I am encouraged by the positive response by the Government of Yemen to the United Nations proposal, I am still waiting for a response from Ansar Allah. Following the constructive discussions I had in Sana'a at the end of last week, I urge Ansar Allah to respond positively without delay to the United Nations proposal.

Mr. President, recent weeks have shown the fragility of the truce and that delays to implementation might threaten to unravel it in its entirety. Resorting to transactionalism, threatening to condition the implementation of one element of the truce against another, and using escalatory media rhetoric undermines the truce. It is ultimately up to the parties to safeguard the truce and to deliver on its promise to the benefit of the Yemenis.

Mr. President, over the past two and a half months, the truce has created a more conducive environment for the parties to engage in good faith. Yet, the implementation of the truce has brought to the surface more contentious issues with political implications, such as revenue management, public sector salary payments, travel documents, and a more durable ceasefire. These are matters that are political and governance related in nature and we need to move towards a more durable arrangement on these issues.

Some of these matters have indeed been highlighted during my ongoing consultations to help formulate the priorities for a structured, multi-track process. During last month, I have held consultations with Yemeni public figures, diverse women constituencies, and economic experts and the private sector to inform the design and substance of such a process. Themes emerged from these consultations included the need to transform the truce into a durable ceasefire with an outlook to a longer-term security arrangements; and an urgent call for the payment of public sector salaries and the management of revenues, monetary policy

coordination, and reconstruction. Participants also emphasized the need to ensure the political process will be more inclusive, with women, youth, and civil society represented across the different tracks. My Office has long recognized the valuable contribution of Yemeni peace actors and I therefore look forward to listening to the briefing of Mrs. Azal Al-Salafi.

The political, security, and economic issues raised by Yemenis during the different rounds of consultations have given us a direction for the way forward. As we are working to consolidate the benefits of the truce, it is important to recognize that a structured, inclusive, multi-track process can provide the platform required to reach such durable solutions. It will also provide an opportunity to move Yemen towards a sustainable political settlement that meets the legitimate aspirations and demands of Yemeni women and men.

Over the next month and a half, I will pursue two main lines of effort. First, I will work with the parties to ensure the implementation and consolidation of all the elements of the truce, including opening of roads in Taiz and other governorates. Second, I will work to achieve more durable solutions to pressing economic and security needs. As such, I plan to initiate negotiations on the economic and security tracks. This work needs to be anchored in a political context, gearing toward a political settlement.

Mr President, I remain deeply grateful for the continuous support I receive from this Council, as well as from the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the broader international community. Such support will remain critical in the coming months. It is though, ultimately up to the parties to seize this opportunity, to negotiate in good faith, and to make necessary compromises for the benefit of Yemen as a whole. The truce offers a rare opportunity to pivot towards peace that should not be lost.

Thank you very much, **Mr. President.**