



Briefing to the United Nations by the Special Envoy for Yemen

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Thank you, **Mr. President**.

Allow me to start by welcoming the newly elected members to this Council. I look forward to work closely with you towards a peaceful, durable, and inclusive settlement of the conflict in Yemen.

I am pleased to deliver the first briefing of the year from Yemen. Today I have held positive and constructive discussions with the leadership here in Sana'a, represented by Mahdi al-Mashat, and I look forward to continuing these conversations. In recent weeks, I have also had fruitful discussions with the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad al-Alimi, as well as with regional stakeholders in Riyadh and Muscat. I am hopeful that we can build on these discussions to ensure that 2023 delivers a more peaceful and prosperous future for Yemeni men and women.

Mr. President,

Before discussing the current state of play and the way forward, let me first turn to the situation on the ground. The overall military situation in Yemen has remained stable. There has been no major escalation, nor changes in the disposition of frontlines. I would like to acknowledge the parties for continuing to show general military restraints. However, we continue to see some limited military activity along frontlines, in particular in Ma'rib, Taiz, Dali', Hodeidah, and Lahj governorates, as well as along the Saudi-Yemeni border area. These military activities have, regrettably, also resulted in civilian casualties. I call on the parties to respect International Humanitarian Law. Military activity, combined with negative rhetoric and escalatory political and economic measures, create a situation where a simple miscalculation could reignite a cycle of violence that will be difficult to reverse. I therefore urge the parties to actively work to extend the longest period of relative quiet we have seen in the past eight years, which offers a much-needed reprieve for the Yemeni population.

The absence of large-scale fighting is also positive for the continuation of the elements operated under the truce. Since the truce first came into force on the 2nd of April last year, 97 roundtrip flights have transported almost 50.000 passengers between Sana'a and Amman, with 46 flights operating since the expiration of the truce on 2nd of October 2022. Similarly, 81 fuel ships have entered Hodeida port, out of which 29 ships have entered since the truce expiration. I welcome the continuation of these measures which allow Yemenis to continue to experience the benefits of the truce beyond its formal expiration on the 2nd of October.

Mr. President,

Allow me to now turn to the current state of mediation efforts. I have been in continued contact with the parties, as well as with regional countries. Discussions have focused on options to secure agreement on military de-escalation and measures to prevent further economic deterioration and mitigate the impact of the conflict on civilians. We know from experience, however, that short-term measures and a piecemeal approach that focuses on individual issues can only provide temporary and partial relief. This is why I have also been engaging the parties on embedding these immediate-term measures in a more holistic vision and ensuring movement towards a more comprehensive settlement. This includes the resumption of a political process and a nationwide ceasefire.

We are currently seeing an intensification of regional and international diplomatic activity to resolve the conflict in Yemen, and I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the efforts of Saudi Arabia and Oman in this regard. We are witnessing a potential step-change in the trajectory of this 8-year conflict. The ongoing dialogues are a possibility that should not be wasted and that demands responsible actions. While regional and international support is crucial in both the negotiation and implementation phases of any agreement, I would also like to stress the importance of Yemeni ownership of the process. Many of the issues on the table, especially those related to sovereignty issues, can only be sustainably resolved through an inclusive, intra-Yemeni dialogue. My Office continues to hold consultations with a variety of Yemeni stakeholders, including political parties, women's groups, and civil society. This helps ensure that the negotiation agenda is not solely determined by the warring sides, and that the substance developed and discussed with the parties is informed by the perspectives and interests of a diverse range of Yemenis.

Mr. President,

The situation remains complex and fluid. Based on my recent discussions with the parties, I note the following: The various dialogue efforts of the last months have allowed for a clearer definition of the parties' position and the development of options for mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues. It is nevertheless important that discussions on the short-term way forward are framed in the context of a more comprehensive approach that delineates a clear pathway towards a sustainable political settlement. Some of the issues on the negotiation table cannot be viewed in isolation. There are sequencing challenges as well as concerns around guarantees for all sides, and these need to be addressed. In addition to working towards a shared vision for an end of the conflict, it is also essential to break this vision down into concrete, actionable steps. Otherwise, challenges will arise and cause delays in the implementation phase. Ultimately any set of steps should be geared towards facilitating an inclusive Yemeni-led process under UN auspices for sustainably resolving the conflict.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by reiterating that I am encouraged by the intensified discussions that are taking place. Yemen needs an agreement that includes a shared vision for the way forward in order to avoid a return to full-blown conflict. I therefore urge the parties to make the most of the space for dialogue provided by the absence of large-scale fighting.

I would also like to reiterate my sincere appreciation for the steadfast support of this Council. The united position of this Council sends a clear signal to the Yemeni parties that the international community expects, and is committed to helping them make, progress towards a comprehensive settlement and a more peaceful future.

Thank you, **Mr. President.**