

مكتب المبعوث الخاص
للأمين العام للأمم المتحدة إلى اليمن



Office of the Special Envoy
of the Secretary-General for Yemen

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

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Thank you, Mr President,

Mr. President, two weeks ago, the parties agreed to extend the truce in Yemen under the same terms for another two months, until the 2 of October. I commend the parties for taking this step, which allows for the longest pause in fighting since the war began to continue. It also allows for the benefits of the humanitarian and economic measures in the truce agreement to unfold.

Along with the truce extension, the parties committed themselves to using the next two months to continue negotiations to reach an expanded truce agreement by the 2 of October. An expanded agreement will include additional elements that have the potential of further improving the daily lives of Yemeni men and women. It would also allow for further steps towards ending the conflict. As I work with the parties to achieve this goal, we all need to remind ourselves that failure to reach an agreement to extend the truce would lead to renewed cycles of escalation and violence, with predictable and devastating consequences for Yemen's population. Yemen urgently needs avoid this scenario. And I call on the parties to make the choice to build the necessary confidence to avoid a return to war and to begin to build a lasting peace.

Mr President, Before I delve into the elements of the expanded truce proposal and explain the tangible impact it would have for Yemeni men and women, allow me to first recapitulate where we stand to date in terms of the implementation of the current truce.

Four and a half months in, the truce continues to broadly hold in military terms. No major military operations or changes to frontlines have occurred and there have been neither confirmed airstrikes inside Yemen nor cross-border attacks emanating from Yemen. We continue to see a significant decline in civilian casualties, with the first week of August seeing the lowest civilian casualty count since the start of the truce and since the beginning of the war. Most civilian casualties continue to be a result of explosive remnants of warfare, including landmines and unexploded ordnance. A worrying development is the increase in child casualties, which now constitute about 40 per cent of reported civilian casualties. One particularly horrific incident occurred in Taiz on the 23 of July, when a mortar was fired into the residential Zaid al-Mushki district killing one child and injuring ten others. I condemn all such acts of violence, and civilians must be protected at all costs.

My Office continues to receive reports from both sides regarding the same types of alleged incidents as reported in the last months. As the truce does not include any independent monitoring mechanism, I encourage the parties to make use of the channels established under the truce, such as the Military Coordination Committee, to manage these alleged incidents.

The Military Coordination Committee, the MCC, is an important outcome of the truce. Maintaining this channel is of the utmost importance. The fourth meeting of the MCC is expected to take place during the last week of August in Amman, Jordan. The parties have agreed to also meet as part of a technical working group to establish a Joint Coordination Room, which would support the MCC by managing incidents through de-escalation at the operational level. The Chair of the MCC, my Principal Military Advisor, just concluded a two-week visit to Aden, Sana'a, and Taiz, where he held constructive discussions with MCC representatives, as well as other security, political, and civil society representatives.

Mr President, Road openings in Taiz and other governorates continue to be at the forefront of my efforts. My Office has recently spent time on both sides of the frontline in Taiz, where they engaged with local authorities, as well as with local mediators and civil society organizations.

Several proposals with different sets of roads and sequencing options have been presented to the parties. It is regrettable that, despite these efforts, there has not been more progress achieved on road openings to date. For the sake of the people of Taiz, the wider population and the economy, the parties need to agree on opening roads as soon as possible. Road openings are mainly a humanitarian issue, and the truce provides a conducive environment for the parties to swiftly deliver on this issue, as they have done with other elements of the truce that are improving the humanitarian situation. The people of Taiz and across Yemen deserve for the truce to deliver for them in all its aspects.

Mr President, One of those elements is the flow of fuel imports to Hodeidah port which continues with the extension of the truce. Since the start of the truce, a total of 33 ships were cleared to enter Hodeidah port, bringing in almost one million metric tons of various fuel products. I would like to register again my appreciation for the pivotal role played by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) in facilitating this flow of fuel product imports and I reiterate my concern that funding shortages could result in the closure of UNVIM.

Mr President, another key element of the current truce agreement, which serves to improve the lives of Yemeni men and women, is the opening of Sana'a International Airport to commercial flights. To date, 31 round-trip flights operated to and from Sana'a, transporting more than 15,000 passengers. My Office continues to work with the Egyptian authorities to facilitate regular flights to and from Cairo. Since my last briefing to this Council, and as a result of the extraordinary support provided by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, there has been an increase in the frequency of commercial flights to three flights per week operating between Sana'a Airport and Amman. I hope to see the number and frequency of flights increase even further to allow Yemeni men and women to reunite with their families and seek medical treatment and educational opportunities abroad.

Mr President, From the beginning, I have made it clear that the truce is an interim measure that aims to halt hostilities and address urgent humanitarian and economic needs. OCHA Director of

Operations and Advocacy Ghada Mudawi will speak more in detail about these humanitarian and economic needs in her briefing. In my discussions with the parties, they continue to emphasize the need to build on the existing truce to achieve a wider array of economic and security priorities and to move toward more durable solutions for issues with political implications. For this reason, I have been seeking to mediate an expanded truce agreement for the past weeks.

My proposal for the expanded truce agreement includes i) an agreement on a transparent and effective disbursement mechanism for the regular payment of civil servant salaries and civilian pensions, ii) the opening of additional roads in Taiz and other governorates, iii) additional destinations to and from Sana'a International Airport, and iv) regular flow of fuel to the ports of Hodeidah. An expanded agreement would provide for movement along a multi-track process to address additional humanitarian and economic issues and create a more conducive environment to start discussions on a durable ceasefire and to prepare for the resumption of a Yemeni-led political process under United Nations auspices. Both parties have provided substantive feedback on my proposal. While a zone of potential agreement was discernable, more time was needed for the parties to discuss the details of an expanded truce agreement.

The latest truce extension therefore allows us to continue to expeditiously work toward an expanded truce agreement. I am therefore intensifying my efforts to support the parties in resolving outstanding issues. Given the complexity of the issues being addressed and the time constraints we face, I call on the parties to demonstrate flexibility and to respond positively if I ask them to convene to reach agreement.

Mr President, During the next weeks, I will continue to count on the support of the international community for the implementation, extension, and expansion of the truce. I am particularly thankful for the concerted support of this Council, as well as from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman. We have a joint responsibility in helping Yemen and its population to take the necessary and decisive steps towards peace. We need to end the conflict, not merely manage it.

Thank you, Mr President.