

Joint Communiqué on the conflict in Yemen

1. The Foreign Ministers of Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, and the United Kingdom co-hosted a meeting on Thursday 17 September 2020, in connection with the 75th United Nations General Assembly, with Ministers and representatives of United States, China, France, Russia, and the High Representative of the European Union, to discuss the urgent need for political progress in Yemen.
2. Following briefings by the UN Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen, the Group discussed the urgent need for military de-escalation and political progress in Yemen, underlining their full support for the Special Envoy, Mr Martin Griffiths, including his efforts to facilitate agreement between the Yemeni parties on the Joint Declaration comprised of a nationwide ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures and the resumption of a comprehensive, inclusive political process. The Group reaffirmed the international community's firm commitment to uphold Yemen's sovereignty, unity, independence, and territorial integrity. They reiterated that only an inclusive political solution can end the conflict in Yemen.
3. The Group stressed the need for the parties, through the political process, to swiftly conclude a comprehensive transitional agreement in order to end the conflict, usher in a transitional period where power is shared among diverse political and social components, and at the end of this period, ensure a peaceful transition of power to a new, inclusive government on the basis of credible national elections. The Group underlined the need for an inclusive political process, including the full participation of women and youth. The Group called on the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Houthis to engage with the Special Envoy constructively and continuously, without preconditions, in order to swiftly reach agreement on the UN peace proposals. The Group also called on the neighbours of Yemen to use their influence to this effect in support of UN efforts.
4. The Group stressed the urgent need for de-escalation across Yemen and a nationwide ceasefire, as well as a full implementation of resolution 2532. In this regard, they welcomed the Secretary-General's call on 25 March for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Yemen as well as the unilateral ceasefire announced by the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen on 8 April, and expressed regret that the Yemeni parties did not seize the opportunity to achieve a nationwide ceasefire. The Group voiced its great concern about the continuing Houthi offensive on Marib, putting residents and displaced persons there at grave risk, which threatens to derail the UN peace process. The Group emphasised its concern about continuing violence in the Yemen conflict, including the continuation of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, which pose a serious threat to regional security. The Group expressed its concern about reports of continued civilian casualties. The Group called on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, notably humanitarian workers and health personnel, as well as civilian infrastructures.
5. The Group reiterated its commitment to the Yemeni peace process and the relevant Security Council Resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes. It reiterated the importance of full compliance by Member States with the arms embargo imposed by UN Security Council resolutions concerning Yemen. The Group welcomed the announcement on 28 July of acceleration of the Riyadh Agreement, mediated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and welcomed the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this regard, and called on the Yemeni Government and Southern Transitional Council to fully implement those steps urgently. If implemented these agreements would bolster UN efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution.

6. The Group welcomed the commencement of the latest round of prisoner exchange negotiations in Geneva and called on the parties to urgently implement their stated commitments in this regard. The Group reaffirmed its full support for UNMHA and called on the Yemeni parties to respect the ceasefire in Hodeidah and to engage constructively on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, including the UNVIM mandate, and which remains an important part of the Yemen peace process. In this regard, the Group further called on the Yemeni parties, to engage constructively with UN proposals to ensure the adequate and unhindered flow of fuel, humanitarian goods, and food into Yemen through Hodeidah port and to establish a mechanism for directing port revenues to civil servant salary payments, based on the 2014 payroll database. The Group expressed concern over the humanitarian consequences of fuel shortages in northern Yemen. The Group emphasized the importance of ensuring that the civilian population can regularly access adequate supplies of fuel and other essential goods. The Group also reaffirmed its support to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.
7. Following the white note issued on food security risks by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on 4 September (with reference to UN Security Council Resolution 2417), the Group noted that economic and humanitarian indicators show rising food insecurity, and that famine is a realistic prospect in Yemen this year in the event of prolonged food import disruption or hindrances to distribution, exacerbated by the outbreak of Covid-19. In this regard, the Group expressed deep concern that the UN Humanitarian Response Plan has received only 30 per cent of the funding it needs this year. The Group expressed appreciation to the UK, US, Sweden, Kuwait, and the EU, for committing additional funding since the 2 June Pledging Conference to the UN Humanitarian Response Plan totalling over \$350m. In order to prevent famine, the Group called on all donors to disburse existing pledges immediately and to consider making further contributions. The Group also discussed the central role of economic collapse in intensifying the risk of famine and urged Yemen's partners to consider all possible measures to strengthen the economy, including regular foreign-exchange injections into the Central Bank and steps to encourage robust flows of critical commercial imports through all of Yemen's ports. In this context, the Group reiterated the need to address the main drivers of the current humanitarian crisis, and referred to the ongoing coordinating efforts by the EU, the UN, and the World Bank in this regard.
8. The Group recognised that obstruction and interference with humanitarian assistance operations remains extremely challenging, particularly in northern Yemen. While the Group took note of initial steps taken by the Houthis, greater progress overall is needed to enable humanitarian organisations to continue delivering life-saving assistance to millions of vulnerable people throughout Yemen. The Group called on the Yemeni parties to facilitate full, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to all the people in need. The Group urged potential donors who have made significant contributions in the past, to step-up humanitarian assistance to the UN-led response.
9. The Group further recognised the grave threat posed by the Safer oil tanker, whose dire condition risks an environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophe to Yemen and the region, and called on the Houthis to urgently facilitate unconditional and safe access for UN experts to conduct an assessment and repair mission.
10. The Group looked to the Security Council to review progress at the next session, and agreed to reconvene at senior official level within six months. The Group welcomed the German offer to host such a meeting in Berlin.