



**Briefing of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen
to the United Nations Security Council
15 April 2021 (As delivered)**

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Allow me to start perhaps by extending my warmest wishes to the people of Yemen and Muslims around the world for the Holy Month of Ramadan, which is now with us. Ramadan Kareem.

Mr. President,

For many Yemenis, the conflict has changed the way they see their lives as well as their futures. In many areas of the country, a generation of children has suffered sporadic or no schooling. Employment is too often partial or indeed non-existent. The institutions of the state, essential for the delivery of basic services, have suffered years of attrition. The problems in getting fuel imported for civilian use drive up prices of basic commodities. Electricity in some parts of Yemen is a daily struggle. And, as we will hear from Mark, I am sure, COVID-19 has unleashed itself again on the people of Yemen with a new ferocity. As bad as anything else for the people of Yemen, there is no sense as to when this tragedy might end.

It is very likely that most Yemenis consulted, that most Yemenis that are polled, that most Yemenis who were included in the national conversation about the war insist that ending the war is the simple, most important objective.

It is very likely that this massive popular consensus in favour of peace exists in all conflicts. The people are always the champions of peace. And, in this perhaps, Yemen is no different from other countries burdened by conflict.

But, **Mr. President**, in two other ways, Yemen is indeed different. The first is that the international community, as represented by this Council, is united. I am among those very grateful to this Council for keeping Yemen high on your agenda with regular and frequent briefings, and for always delivering a central, clear and consistent message: that the only way out of the conflict is a negotiated political solution. It is also true, in addition, that there is a convergence of diplomatic voices in favour of an end to the war and its successful political resolution. Since we last met, Mr. President, I have visited Muscat, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Berlin, and I am here in Amman where I also met leaders of the Government. In all these capitals, I have discussed in detail our current efforts to end the war in Yemen. And in all cases, I have come across at a minimum a consensus in support, and more often an active role in support of the four points on which we are seeking agreement between the parties, the deal that we have been specifically focusing on since the beginning of February, and which is built on the experience of the Joint Declaration. So, the Security Council unity is reinforced by diplomatic unanimity and by

specific actions by key member states, and I must express particular gratitude again to Oman, to Saudi Arabia and to the United States for the closely coordinated support that they provide to the proposal we have in our hands; and to the tireless efforts, and I mean tireless, and perseverance of my distinguished counterpart, Tim Lenderking, the US envoy, is a particularly great help to us in our efforts to bridge the divides between the parties. And I have just returned from Berlin and Abu Dhabi where we held a series of meetings with Tim and his team also present.

So, there is diplomatic consensus but there is a further important regard that gives us hope for Yemen, and it is different from other conflicts. I have said it before, but it is important to repeat it here: the way to end the war is known, and its principal elements frequently discussed with the parties. These discussions acknowledge the urgent humanitarian situation and aim to provide key entry points to address humanitarian needs in these four points, and then to build trust, sustainable communications between the parties, so they do not walk back to war. Our past experience in the negotiations that we had in Geneva, in Stockholm, in Kuwait earlier on, and in the shuttling of 2020, have informed the discussions that we now have with the parties and that is for example - from that experience which we have learnt - that's why we call this time for a nationwide ceasefire not a partial one and that's why we insist on a specific date to be agreed by the parties in the overall package for the launch of the crucial, essential, unavoidable political process.

Mr. President, all we need now, is for the parties to agree to this deal. That's all.

Mr. President, the urgency of progress towards a peaceful settlement makes the continued violence on the ground, as I know we will hear from Mark, all the more concerning. Marib, as we have endlessly discussed in this Council, remains the major centre of gravity in this conflict. It is as true today as it was last year, through those many months. The fighting in Marib, Goodness knows we have seen this spike and fall, and spike and fall and now it is showing dangerous signs of escalating once again. Internally displaced people, along with local communities, have been in the line of fire, and are threatened by the assault on the city of Marib. I am also alarmed by multiple drone and ballistic missile attacks carried out by Ansar Allah against Saudi territory but also in Yemeni territory particularly during the past week, including against civilian facilities. We know this must stop.

In Hudaydah, the UN Mission for Hudaydah Agreement, UNMHA, led by General Abhijit Guha has been undertaking intensive discussions with the parties as we have observed before, on the resumption of the activities under the umbrella of that Redeployment Coordination Committee, and I particularly want to show respect to the activities of the mission and the Deputy Head of the Mission, in addition to Abhijit Guha, who has been actively pursuing this aim, and I know they have been in Aden, Sana'a and elsewhere trying to get agreement on a meeting to bring the parties together. Let's hope this works. If so, this will be a considerable boost for the efforts to maintain calm in Hudaydah and finally to implement more of that Stockholm Agreement.

Mr. President,

In Taiz, fighting has increased, tensions continue to build, the city's civilian population continues to suffer the worst of the conflict and its impact on basic services and freedom of movement is tangible and considerable. Like many areas of the country, Taiz has also been hit by an extraordinary and alarming resurgence of COVID-19. Key roads in Taiz have been closed for several years, inflicting terrible social and economic consequences upon the people. It is a town besieged.

I want to briefly refer to the issue of prisoners and detainees, because it has come up recently in calls by the parties for a general release. I will simply say this: thousands still remain detained and are waiting for their release and would love to see those aspirations realised. My office remains prepared to convene the parties at any time and anywhere if there is a real prospect of progress being made in that direction, so of course I welcome the recent statements in favour of release. I note also that the four detained journalists are still there, still needing to be released, there are human rights issues to be addressed, and be under no illusions, we remain very focused on trying to get that prospect to become realised.

Mr. President, what I have described provides, as you can imagine, only a small glimpse of the effects of the war. If you listening to Yemeni women then you get a much deeper insight, as you can imagine into the often-untold stories of this conflict, many of which Mark has frequently brought to this Council. My Office has just completed a second digital consultation with Yemeni women from several governorates - and with digital means one can reach much larger numbers of women in place. Those participating highlighted the erosion of the social fabric, political marginalization as well as the severest humanitarian impacts of this war, as usual the worst of which, are visited upon women and girls.

These effects run much deeper than we can imagine in a single briefing. But I want to end with messages of encouragement by saying something about the meaning of the prospects of the deal for the Yemeni people, the four points that we are negotiating and I would like to briefly recap: we have had six years of misery and division and warfare. We have massive popular consensus in favour of ending the war. We have diplomatic unity to pursue the goal quickly to end this war and fourthly we have a plan as to how to achieve it.

I want to spend a moment **Mr. President** at the end here, to look at what might happen the day after an agreement on those four points is made and I say this, as an encouragement to all those who can decide to agree or not to agree:

In Hudaydah, impediments to the entry of ships will be lifted, allowing those ships carrying fuel and other crucial commodities to berth, all of them, and to discharge their cargo. Revenues from the tax on these ships will be put towards civil service salaries. Sana'a airport will see flights to international and national destinations; students will come home; the sick will travel for medical treatment.

The ceasefire, the nationwide ceasefire means that the guns will fall silent; and the roads long blocked by front lines will open progressively, not in a day, but in short order, for the passage of goods, humanitarian first, but then for the free movement of people; for those children to go to their schools without hinderance and for workers to return to their place of work across the lines that have impeded that.

Lastly, and I realize this is a hope, perhaps even a dream, the parties would agree with a date to the resumption of peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations. This political dialogue, and we are ready and we are prepared, will be inclusive, will be Yemeni-owned, will be Yemeni-led and it will aim to sustainably and comprehensively end the conflict, the aspiration of the people as we so frequently are reminded.

Mr. President,

These arrangements will allow for a normalization of life that has all too often and perhaps today seemed and seem like a cruel hope for the people of Yemen, for those of us in many of our countries, a daily reality, a daily privilege. Let us together call upon the parties not to disappoint not us, but their own people, and instead deliver Yemen from its plight.

Thank you, Sir.