



**Briefing to United Nations Security Council**  
**UN Special Envoy for Yemen – Mr. Martin Griffiths**  
**11 November 2020**

**Thank you, Madam President,** and thank you for this opportunity to update the Council.

As members are well aware, I have been mediating the text of the Joint Declaration for many months. I have been carrying out discussions virtually and, when practical, shuttling between the parties. It has been a painstaking process, which has faced many challenges along the way as you know. The parties have remained engaged throughout and I thank them for that. And I also thank the Council again for your steadfast support for an urgent agreement on the Joint Declaration, most recently through your press statement of 17th of October.

**Madam president,**

There is an often-repeated maxim in conflicts around the world that the parties involved must take ownership of the solution for it to be workable and for peace to be sustained. And Yemen is no exception to this maxim. The conflict is between the Yemeni parties. Only serious and deliberate commitments by their leaders can bring this conflict to a close. It is now time for them to take the final decisions required to bring the negotiations on this Joint Declaration to fruition.

I have been moving back and forth between the parties in search of finality on this Joint Declaration for several weeks. The same challenges have been coming up repeatedly, particularly with regard to the economic and humanitarian measures, as you know, the second item within that overall agreement. And I have been working of course with each party to find solutions. But in the end, I am here to say, I am the mediator and not the negotiator. And the parties need to negotiate with each other, rather than with me.

I am struck by the example of the meeting recently held in Switzerland on the release of prisoners and detainees. In that case, with all due care of course for the protocols required by COVID 19, we were able to bring the two parties to meet and successfully to produce a result that gave hope to so many Yemenis and indeed I hope soon to bring the parties together again for a further meeting in that series. I am becoming convinced that perhaps this is exactly what is needed in the case of the Joint Declaration itself, an opportunity for the parties to explain to each other their positions and together to reach the compromises needed. I will be discussing this and other options with the parties in the near time.

No doubt, the issues in the Joint Declaration are more challenging and more fundamental to the politics of this conflict and the situation on the ground and I don't underestimate the challenge. But the parties know the issues well, Madam President. We and they have been over this ground many times. And with determination I believe they can reach an agreed path towards a solution and an agreement on that Joint Declaration.

**Madam President,**

Since my previous briefing, the violence on the frontlines has not been quite as intense as previous months. This is of course, very positive, but by no means, I am afraid, a source of great comfort. I am deeply concerned by the periodic spikes in violence between the parties particularly in Marib and Taiz, and of course, the recent escalation in attacks on Saudi territory, which we all believe should be stopped immediately. I hope these spikes do not herald a return to the widespread violence of earlier this year. Several locations have experienced shootings and shelling, that I know that Mark will describe, shelling that have destroyed homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship. Once again of course, I call on the parties to uphold their obligations under international law to protect civilian lives and infrastructure.

My colleague General Guha has told me that the situation in Hudaydah has also become calmer than when we discussed this last time we met, however tensions between the parties persist and we hear rumors that it may spike again. The mission, UNMHA, has continued its efforts to reactivate the Redeployment and Coordination Committee which we discussed last time and other joint mechanisms to provide some basis for cooperation between the parties and there is good progress to be observed in those efforts today.

And overall, I must underline that there is no better option than that ceasefire, combined with a return nationally to the political process, that is essential for the parties to create stability on all those frontlines. And that is what they can bring to the Yemeni people through the Joint Declaration.

**Madam President,**

I turn to the vexed issue of the SAFER tanker, which I know Mark will also be referring to, which is long overdue a solution. Discussions with Ansar Allah have been slower than an issue of this urgency and magnitude requires. The United Nations has been trying to negotiate access for months for the expert mission to conduct an assessment of the condition of the vessel, undertake initial repairs, formulate recommendations on what is required to avoid a spill. And in fact discussions have been constructive particularly of late, but we are yet to receive the approvals needed for that mission to move. And given what is at stake, it is of the highest importance that we get that green light from Ansar Allah, and that colleagues in UNOPS [United Nations Office for Project Services] will be able to proceed.

**Madam President,**

As the conflict in Yemen has become prolonged, again as we discussed last time, broader stability across the country has become an ever more pressing concern, not least in the southern governorates. One year ago, the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council signed the Riyadh Agreement under the auspices and with the mediation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This then, gave us all hope of greater stability in the south, improved functioning of state institutions, and perhaps even more importantly the prospect of genuine political cooperation between those two signatories. We desperately need that agreement to work – for the sake of the

Yemeni people, for the sake of the south, and for the sake of the process that you have entrusted to me – and of course again, I call upon the parties to swiftly implement it and I should note **Madam President**, that in recent weeks in Riyadh, there has been a great increase in focus of attention by the Kingdom and by the parties to resolve their differences, to clarify the particular agreements they need to make it go forward, and I was certainly reassured just an hour or two ago by a call with Riyadh, saying that they believe that they can soon announce a very real progress, I certainly hope so, I hope so very much indeed.

**Madam President,**

The 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 has rightly intensified the attention to women's participation globally, and this is also been the case, in Yemen. And I am one of those continually inspired by their courage and determination of women in Yemen to end the war and build peace and indeed to be the primary champions of peace in Yemen.

To mark that anniversary, I am very pleased to record that UN Women with my Office convened a meeting of 30 Yemeni women leaders representatives of many different networks across the whole country, along with international partners and diplomatic representatives. And the women in that meeting, emphasized, of course, as you would have imagine, the importance of resuming negotiations, ending the war, enhancing women's political participation and representation, itself not a great record recently, as well as protection from political and gender-based violence. And as we said in that meeting, these are not just good ideas when Yemeni women, Madam President. These are good ideas for Yemenis and indeed for us all. And to ensure that these ideas become central to the negotiations that we hope to see happen soon. We need to see women represented in the delegations of the parties. And I believe strongly, and it was discussed in some detail in that meeting, that all of us in our very different ways can help to make that happen and to encourage the parties to include a minimum of 30 percent of women in their delegations.

And so, **Madam President**, Yemen as I said at the beginning of this presentation, is at a point of decision. Not for the first time and certainly not for the last. The plight of its people as we should be hearing of course from Mark and David, demand nothing less than a firm bet on peace, the end of the shooting war, opening up the country and resuming at long last the search for an inclusive political solution. It's that simple, **Madam President**, and that important.

Thank you very much.