

**United Nations**

Office of the Special envoy OF  
the Secretary-General for Yemen



**الأمم المتحدة**

مكتب المبعوث الخاص للأمين العام  
للأمم المتحدة إلى اليمن

**Briefing of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen to the open session of  
the Security Council**

**17 October 2019**

*(As delivered)*

**Mr. President,**

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to brief this Council.

**Mr. President,**

In recent months I have been warning darkly of the perils facing Yemen, including the prospects for instability in the south; and the frightening risks of the country being drawn into a regional conflict. I seemed perhaps at times to have abandoned the creed of the mediator, which is to find and nurture any and all signs of hope.

Well, Mr President today, I want to claim that there are indeed signs of hope for the people of Yemen, even in the middle of a misery, which Mark has just described with his usual accuracy and depth, and which for those involved might sometimes seem endless.

Yes, indeed, there are signs of hope. But these are fragile and in need of our diligent care and attention.

In my briefing today, **Mr President**, I will seek to point to these signs of hope: in the south of course as I have already mentioned; but also in the reduction in violence very recently in the north; and also in a growing generosity of spirit between the parties and in the parties which often seem so lacking in, for example, freeing some of those detained and imprisoned, and in finding creative ways to allow those desperately needed oil ships that Mark has been referring to, to enter Hodeida in a very impressive way in these last few days. And as Mark has been telling us much needed they are.

So these are small signs perhaps in a frightening season but something for us to nurture.

**Mr President,**

In the south, the situation remains volatile, but with a tenuous calm in Aden. It is worth noting that there has been no large-scale fighting in the areas of dispute despite our deep concerns in this

Council from August onwards. And I think this can be taken as a testimony to the restraint shown by the those on the ground and their leaders.

Many of us had hoped, including myself here in Riyadh, that an agreement could have been announced today. I understand we are not quite there yet but it certainly does seem that progress has been made, very significant progress during the Jeddah talks under the leadership of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Thanks to their strenuous diplomatic efforts, the Saudis, there are encouraging signs that an agreement aimed at resolving the issues between the Government of Yemen under President Hadi and the Southern Transitional Council may be well within reach. It is important, I am sure to the members of this Council as it is to me that it is done swiftly as the Government needs to return safely and with full authority to Aden and state institutions must be allowed to be fully functional again with all speed. Law and order must be restored, and services delivered to the people of the south. The hiatus indeed in government activities, and particularly the disruption of basic service delivery, threatens people's lives. And I would like to say that the leadership of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman is of key importance in this context, not just in the mediation that we have seen in these Jeddah talks but also in the other context that I shall refer to today in trying to create new opportunities for the parties to engage with new confidence between them and I am grateful to him for that.

**Mr. President,**

I welcome, as I did publicly at the time the initiative by Ansar Allah, under the leadership of Abdel Malek al Houthi, to suspend all drones and ballistic missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, I think it was an initiative announced on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September and I also welcome the reduction of violence that followed that announcement.

Mark Lowcock is quite right to remind us about the unconscionably high level of civilian casualties in September, and indeed the degree of military activity on those fronts that he was referring to, this is objective truth. It is also true, as he said, that since the beginning of October, the number of airstrikes has reduced considerably across Yemen. And I am obviously encouraged by that. This is however a very recent and obviously a very fragile gain, but it's a certainly step in the right direction.

**Mr. President,**

My good friend and colleague General Abhijit Guha has just assumed his duty as the Head of UNMHA and the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee. God bless him for doing this task and I wish him success in his endeavour. We met indeed when he came to the region and we are in daily contact on the issues that face him. I am very grateful to him for taking up this opportunity under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

Confidence building is the keystone to the full implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement. I would like to emphasize to you Sir that the presence and work of UNMHA in Hudaydah, the way it has tailored sometimes in subtle and sometimes in radical ways its operations to the needs on the ground, are indeed more ground-breaking than I think many of us have realised. In this context the leadership shown by General Lollesgaard, his staff and now General Guha, to prioritise the

establishment of the Joint Operations Centre along with the two parties, as agreed in that meeting of his committee on the boat in the Red Sea to which we have already reported, that has already resulted in a tangible reduction in cease-fire violations. And we are confident that the process will continue. In addition of course, the redeployment of forces so central to the Hudaydah agreement will continue to be a primary focus. And I think that these two parts of the Hudaydah strategy under UNMHA and its parties in that committee will ensure us a steady progress towards the objectives of that agreement reached in Sweden, which are essentially humanitarian and which are crucial to the success and sustainability of the humanitarian programme in Yemen.

In this connection, **Mr. President**, this month, as I referred to at the beginning, the parties have shown their strong commitment to find some understanding on some measures that will alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

I welcome the release of 290 detainees by Ansar Allah. It was remarkable to see the joy as we have wanted and waited to see, of the many families welcoming their individual loved ones back. I hope, I'm sure we all do, that this step will be the start of further initiatives and we are engaged even now today in talks with the parties that will facilitate the release of all detainees. I invite, in this statement, the parties to meet with us and our partners, the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose President Peter Maurer has been only this week in Riyadh focused on this issue, at the nearest opportunity to resume the discussions on the further releases set out, mandated, required and hoped for by the Stockholm Agreement.

**Mr. President**, I am very grateful, and this is not the first time Mark has referred to this issue, and I have referred to this issue, I'm grateful to President Hadi's decision to allow those fuel ships into Hudaydah. And this important decision, Mark has outlined its humanitarian consequences already, and it also has consequences in terms of confidence. This important decision will respond to humanitarian needs. But it's a good example of an issue which is of great humanitarian importance and as I say potentially builds vital confidence between the parties to address their differences which of course is what my focuses on, so thank you President Hadi for that.

As we speak and as I was coming to this meeting, Mr. President, and thanks to the support of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and concerted and I must say detailed, difficult and ultimately positive efforts of the parties to the conflict, humanitarian assistance is, as we speak, being delivered to the people in need in Duraihmi. I cannot express to you sufficient respect for Lise Grande, our Humanitarian Resident Coordinator in Yemen and also to the World Food Programme, whose leader David Beasley, we've had so many privileges to hear in this Chamber, and whose staff have diligently pursued this difficult, tricky, necessary and ultimately successful to us for making this happen. Now for these humanitarians, this may be part of their daily tasks, but I can tell you, Mr. President, that the people of Duraihmi, this is a day of real consequence.

In Taiz, we have heard reports of potential offers from both parties to open humanitarian corridors, and I mentioned that, Mr. President, because of course Taiz was one of the issues agreed upon in Sweden to precisely seek such openings. I hope that these reports, Mr. President, translate into reality. God knows, Taiz deserves some good news so I hope an agreement comes on the heels of the promises being made.

Finally, **Mr. President**, as I said in the outset, there are signs of hope. We can clearly see that there are opportunities here that need to be grasped. At the same time let's be under no illusion about the challenges and the difficulties ahead.

Today we have some positive indications. And I hope by the time we meet again, Mr. President, that we shall have more clarity, more certainty and more reason to hope.

Thank you very much sir.  
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