



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

**Briefing by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the UN Security Council**

**15 April 2024**

Thank you, **Madame President**. Allow me to start by wishing Yemenis and Muslims around the world Eid Mubarak.

Needless to say, we meet at a particularly dangerous moment in the Middle East. The need for broader regional de-escalation is acute. I share the Secretary-General's alarm about the very real danger of region-wide escalation and his urging to all parties for maximum restraint. Sustained and enduring efforts towards fostering peaceful and stable relations are imperative for the well-being of the populations in the Middle East. This has long been evident in the case of Yemen, and is a rightful demand that the Yemeni people deserve.

We also meet just as the holy month of Ramadan has come to an end. In previous years, Ramadan provided an opportunity for the Yemeni parties to overcome differences, reinforce hope, and build confidence. Two years ago, the parties agreed to a much-welcomed nationwide truce, which has ever since provided relative calm along the Yemeni frontlines. And last year, over nine hundred detainees were released, allowing them to spend the Eid reunited with their families and loved ones.

Regrettably, this year has not witnessed such scenes of celebration. Detainees we had hoped would be released in time to spend Eid with their loved ones remain in detention. Roads we had hoped to see open remain closed. We also witnessed the tragic killing and injury of sixteen civilians including women and children when a residence was demolished by Ansar Allah individuals in Al-Bayda governorate.

Instead of narrowing differences and building confidence, **Madame President**, I am troubled by the apparent growing divergence between the parties. On the economic front, the parties are engaging in unilateral actions that risk further bifurcating the economic system. The disintegration of the currency in circulation in Ansar Allah controlled areas presents a real economic problem for the Yemeni people, but reaching a solution is being severely complicated by the contested authority of the Central Bank of Yemen. The challenges facing the Yemeni economy require, rather, a strategic and coordinated response in line with the long-term settlement of the conflict.

While the country-wide military situation remains contained in comparison to the situation before April 2022, we have recently seen an escalation of hostilities on several frontlines, particularly in Al Dhale' and Lahj. Troop movements, intermittent fighting, and exchanges of fire have also been reported in Hudaydah, Ma'rib, Sa'adah, Shabwa and Ta'iz governorates.

**Madame President**, what Yemenis ultimately need is a nationwide ceasefire, improved living conditions, and the resumption of an inclusive political process that meaningfully engages a wide variety of voices, including women, youth, civil society and marginalized groups. My mediation approach has been focused on delivering exactly that. Last December, the parties took an important step by articulating to me their readiness to operationalize a set of commitments through a United Nations roadmap. Unfortunately, momentum towards an agreement was stalled by regional events, which have significantly complicated the mediation space.

The escalation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, having entered its sixth month, has continued with Ansar Allah targeting commercial and military vessels, and the United States and the United Kingdom carrying out attacks on military targets in Hudaydah, Hajjaj, Sana'a and Ta'iz. In the absence of a ceasefire in Gaza and a complete termination of attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the threat of further escalation persists. The recent developments involving Iran and Israel underscore the urgency of this matter. The region must, with the support of the international community, seek avenues for coexistence based on incremental trust-building, mutual security, and a departure from the zero-sum mentality of achieving victory at the expense of others.

**Madame President**, while the conflicts in Yemen and the wider region have become undeniably interlinked, I strongly believe that we owe it to the Yemenis to ensure that resolving the conflict in Yemen is not made contingent upon the resolution of other issues. We cannot risk Yemen's chance for peace becoming a collateral damage. Yemeni people, including the seventeen million that remain dependent on humanitarian aid and for their survival, have suffered for too long already. Peace in Yemen has intrinsic value, and I am convinced that a Yemen at peace with itself and its neighbors would have a positive impact on the regional dynamics.

If we leave Yemen's political process in the waiting room and continue down this path of escalation, the consequences could be catastrophic, not only for Yemen, but also for the wider region. Engagement with the parties on the roadmap and its elements can help to open space for dialogue. I therefore continue to be in close touch with all sides to build confidence and find solutions. My Office will continue to encourage and help the parties with the opening of roads, resolving difficult economic differences, making progress on the roadmap, and preparing for its implementation. We will also continue our work on the release of detainees. And in the meantime, I call on the parties to refrain from unilateral escalatory measures and engage in good faith dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations to find common solutions through collaboration, and to turn disputes into opportunities to take the path towards common prosperity.

**Madame President**, in my recent visits to Washington, Riyadh, Muscat, and Moscow I underlined the need for de-escalation in the Red Sea and to remain focused on the long-term objectives for

Yemen: namely an intra-Yemeni political process that results in a sustainable and just peace, addresses human suffering and allows for reconstruction and economic prosperity. I was pleased to hear that, across the board, my interlocutors continue to remain united in their support for these objectives. I will depend on this support and the support of this Council in the months ahead.

Thank you, **Madame President**.