



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

SE Grundberg's Briefing to the UN Security Council

15 January 2025

Open Session

Thank you, **Mr. President**.

Mr. President, let me begin by extending my best wishes to everyone for the new year and welcoming the newly elected members of this Council. Allow me as well to express my sincere gratitude to Major General Beary, Head of Mission of UNMHA who will be briefing the Council in the closed session for the last time of his tenure. As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the coming year, I look forward to continuing working with this Council on a sustainable solution to the conflict in Yemen.

I spent much of last year trying to protect Yemen from the regional escalation and trying to focus attention on the very real opportunity to resolve the Yemeni conflict. However, the context has become increasingly internationalized, with Ansar Allah intensifying its strikes in Israel and continuing attacks in the Red Sea, prompting retaliatory strikes by the United States, United Kingdom, as well as Israel on Yemen. Recent Israeli airstrikes have damaged critical civilian infrastructure, including the port of Hodeidah and Sana'a International Airport. The damage to the port and tugboats impacts the ability to unload humanitarian aid. The United Nations has been consistent and strong in its messaging: civilians and civilian infrastructure must never be targeted, whether in Yemen, Israel, or Gaza. Ongoing discussions for a ceasefire in Gaza and release of hostages signal hope that an opportunity for regional de-escalation could materialize.

However, until today, the escalating cycle of strikes and counterstrikes has hindered the prospects of peace and diverted crucial attention and resources from Yemen. These actions threaten maritime security, destabilize Yemen's economy, and strain regional stability. The need to address Yemen's crisis becomes ever more urgent as regional stability requires, in part, achieving peace in Yemen.

I have actively engaged with Yemeni, regional and international stakeholders across the region, holding sometimes difficult, often constructive, and always frank discussions during my visits to Muscat, Sana'a, and Tehran, and Riyadh to intensify engagements for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. My message to all interlocutors is the same: we need immediate de-escalation and genuine engagement for peace. Almost 40 million Yemenis have waited far too long.

During my meetings with senior political and military officials in Sana'a, I reiterated calls already passed by World Health Organization Director General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus during his recent visit to Sana'a strongly urging Ansar Allah to immediately and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained personnel from the United Nations, national and international organizations, diplomatic missions, and the private sector. I further urged them to release the Galaxy Leader vessel and its 25-member crew, which have been unlawfully detained for over a year now. During my visit, I met with the family of my colleague who has been detained for over six months. I met children who miss their father, a wife who misses her husband, a mother missing her son. Their anguish—and their enduring hope for his release—mirrors the experience of countless families affected by these unjust detentions. I am also concerned by reports of a new wave of arbitrary detentions, which further exacerbates the suffering of families and undermines trust. I trust this Council will remain steadfast in supporting all efforts to secure the unconditional release of those arbitrarily detained.

Mr. President, while regional tensions dominate the headlines, we have witnessed some escalation along several frontlines, reminding us that the relative stability and improved security conditions for civilians that have existed since the 2022 truce could be lost. In one tragic incident in Taiz governorate, two children were killed, and two others were injured, in an attack west of Taiz city, near the site of a previous drone strike I highlighted in my last briefing. I am also concerned about the reports of military operations by Ansar Allah in Hankah Al Masoud village in Bayda governorate. These attacks must cease, and the parties must urgently take concrete steps towards achieving a nationwide ceasefire agreement. My office has continued to hold discussions with the parties on actions needed to create the conditions for a ceasefire.

At this critical juncture, any further escalation risks undermining existing commitments and would have devastating humanitarian consequences for Yemen's people, who have already endured nearly a decade of unimaginable hardship. A return to widespread violence would trigger further displacement, collapse essential services, and exacerbate the already dire humanitarian crisis—pushing Yemen further away from the peace it so desperately needs. It could erase the hard-earned progress in de-escalation and erode the fragile trust necessary to advance a sustainable peace process. For the sake of the Yemeni people and to preserve the possibilities for peace, I urge all parties to refrain from actions that deepen suffering or could undo the progress made to date.

Mr. President, my Office has engaged in extensive dialogues with both parties at the technical level on economic issues, and I welcome their candid engagement, acknowledgement of the pressing economic challenges, and shared aspiration for a better future for all Yemenis. In addition, we are working closely with key actors from the banking and private sectors to identify measures needed for Yemen's economic recovery and to prepare for a broader dialogue on the economy.

The ongoing economic deterioration across Yemen is impacting everyone, particularly the most vulnerable. While the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah have each taken steps to address the crisis, these broader structural challenges at hand must be addressed through collaboration. In our discussions, we explored how collaboration between the parties could unlock critical peace dividends. These include the unification of the central bank, the resumption of fossil fuel exports, and the full payment of public sector salaries.

The parties must act decisively and not delay making progress on tangible opportunities due to imagined future scenarios. Time is not on our side, and delays will only worsen the suffering of

those who have already endured so much. The cost of inaction will be profound, with the heaviest burden falling on Yemen's most vulnerable populations.

Our efforts remain focused on creating pathways to sustainable peace. My Office continues to facilitate a series of political dialogues involving Yemeni political parties, civil society actors, key stakeholders, and prominent experts. These initiatives prioritize the meaningful participation of women and youth, ensuring their voices are central to shaping an inclusive vision for Yemen's future. These efforts are critical in laying the foundation for a broader political process. Complementing these dialogues, we are conducting consultations and focus group discussions to amplify the perspectives of marginalized groups.

In parallel, my Office has engaged with representatives of the Military Coordination Committee to advance steps toward achieving a nationwide ceasefire. We also continue our work to convene the parties' prisoners' committees and urge all sides to persist in their efforts toward the release of conflict-related detainees on an all-for-all basis. Prioritizing this humanitarian file is not only essential for alleviating immediate suffering but also represents a critical step in creating a foundation for broader agreements. Such actions demonstrate a genuine commitment to advancing the peace process and signal a willingness to prioritize the well-being of those affected by the conflict.

Mr. President, while the coming year will not be without challenges my determination to safeguard the progress made to date on the roadmap and keep focus on the prospects for peace in Yemen remains intact. De-escalation is needed in the wider region and the United Nations's active work towards this goal must be supported. A stable, peaceful Yemen benefits all, and efforts must align with the aspirations of its people for peace, dignity, and a future free from the shadow of war.

Against the background of escalation in the region and uncertainty in the region and international community, I am concerned that parties may reassess their options for peace and make miscalculations based on flawed assumptions. The unity of this Council and its consistent messaging to the parties on the importance of a negotiated settlement will be pivotal in the months ahead. Your commitment has been instrumental in reinforcing international expectations for progress and in demonstrating a shared resolve to support Yemen on its path to peace. As we navigate the challenges ahead, this steadfastness will remain vital—not only in safeguarding the progress made to date on the elements of the roadmap, but also in advancing a comprehensive political settlement and upholding the hope of a brighter, more stable future for the Yemeni people. Thank you very much.