



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 14 October 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In its resolution [2481 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested me to present a review of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) within three months of the date of adoption of that resolution. The Mission, established pursuant to paragraph 1 of resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#) for an initial period of six months from 16 January 2019 and extended by resolution [2481 \(2019\)](#) until 15 January 2020, is designed to support the implementation of the Agreement on the City of Hudaydah and the Ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa, as set out in the Stockholm Agreement (see [S/2018/1134](#)).

In the 10 months since the United Nations-brokered Stockholm Agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Houthi movement, and 3 months since the adoption of resolution [2481 \(2019\)](#), progress in Hudaydah remains key to the efforts to address the conflict in Yemen.

#### Work of the Redeployment Coordination Committee

Since my previous review of UNMHA dated 10 June 2019 ([S/2019/485](#)), the Redeployment Coordination Committee resumed its joint working sessions aimed at discussing and agreeing on the modalities for the maintenance of a ceasefire and the mutual redeployment of forces in Hudaydah governorate. The holding of the joint sessions, which had required complex front-line crossings, had been suspended for five months because of operational challenges and a volatile security environment. In the interim, the Chair of the Committee, supported by my Special Envoy for Yemen, had engaged in intensive bilateral exchanges and mediation efforts to address the concerns of the two Yemeni parties, rebuild confidence and ensure the effectiveness of the Committee as a mechanism for consultation and de-escalation.

As a result, during the reporting period, UNMHA successfully convened two joint meetings of the Committee on board a United Nations-flagged vessel anchored in open waters, on 14 and 15 July and on 8 and 9 September. Under the auspices of UNMHA, and thanks to the active contribution of the delegations of the Government of Yemen and the Houthi movement, the Committee has achieved notable progress. First, the parties reached a final agreement on the technical modalities for the redeployment of forces in the city of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa in two phases, in accordance with the Hudaydah Agreement.

Second, the parties agreed to activate a tripartite ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism, which consists of liaison officers from both parties and UNMHA. The mechanism is aimed at preventing incidents in Hudaydah governorate



through sustained monitoring of the front lines in the governorate and the provision of a direct channel of communication between the parties, under the auspices of UNMHA. To that end, UNMHA set up a joint operations centre that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and embedded four senior liaison officers, two from each party, to work with UNMHA personnel on board the United Nations vessel. The Senior Liaison Officers monitor developments on the front lines, through contact with their respective field liaison officers, diffuse tensions as they arise and report on their efforts to UNMHA. Importantly, ownership of the mechanism and responsibility for its effectiveness lie with the parties, while the Mission provides logistical and advisory support.

To complement the mechanism, the parties have also signalled their willingness to engage in further confidence-building measures and have agreed on a concrete set of measures aimed at incremental disengagement on the front lines. These measures, which are currently under consideration by both parties at the senior level, include the establishment of monitoring posts in the city of Hudaydah and regular bilateral meetings on the front lines under mutual safety guarantees. In addition, both parties have discussed the opening of humanitarian corridors for Yemeni civilians across Hudaydah governorate.

Notwithstanding this progress, reaching agreement on a time frame for the full and effective implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement remains challenging. Following finalization of the operational plans for redeployment in July, my Special Envoy put forward a proposal, on 8 August, which was aimed at breaking the stalemate over the launch of the first phase of the redeployment. While the parties continue to reiterate their commitment to the implementation of the Agreement itself, a political agreement on the issues of the local security forces in the vacated areas, port revenues and governance arrangements has yet to be reached, delaying the start of the redeployment process.

### **Coordination with stakeholders of the Stockholm Agreement**

During the reporting period, UNMHA maintained coordination with United Nations entities and other stakeholders of the Stockholm Agreement, including with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on the issue of local security forces, demining activities and port rehabilitation, as well as with the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism on the issue of enhanced monitoring at the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa.

UNMHA continued to support the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism in discussions with relevant authorities in Hudaydah on technical aspects of launching the Mechanism's operations from inside the ports, which is pending approval of the two parties at the political level.

In the meantime, the Mechanism's operations continue mainly from Djibouti. It is worth noting that UNDP has completed an assessment of the three ports and raised funds for an emergency rehabilitation package aimed at keeping the port operational to handle the shipment of commercial and humanitarian goods into Yemen. Similarly, my Special Envoy, in close collaboration with UNMHA and UNDP, is working on a mechanism and options for port revenue management.

Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre teams, supported by UNDP, are yet to complete the marking of minefields in Hudaydah after Houthi forces redeployed from the ports in May. UNMHA is liaising with UNDP to coordinate, through the Centre, the development of quick-impact mine action initiatives to ensure the safety of the population of Hudaydah. Humanitarian actors and UNMHA personnel are monitoring the removal of military manifestations in the vicinity of the minefields.

Related to these issues, my Special Envoy for Yemen is liaising with the parties to encourage progress on outstanding political issues related to local security forces, while UNDP remains ready to provide technical support to any agreed approach, as well as the launch of enhanced monitoring through the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism.

In addition, as part of its mandated tasks, UNMHA has, when requested, continued to serve as a liaison between humanitarian actors and the military leadership of the parties in Hudaydah to support the planning, coordination and conduct of humanitarian tasks. UNMHA, which does not participate in the humanitarian tasks itself, has facilitated operational movements for United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations through communication with the parties, including with respect to access to critical infrastructure in contested areas.

### **United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement deployment and operations**

During the reporting period, military and police monitors deployed on temporary duty were replaced with personnel organized specifically for UNMHA. The Mission is now at its initial operating capacity in Hudaydah, with 55 personnel, including 35 military and police monitors<sup>1</sup> and 20 civilian personnel. UNMHA now has a sufficient number of Liaison Coordination Teams to carry out monitoring activities under phase 1 of the mutual redeployment and to support the activities of the joint operations room of the ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism on board the United Nations vessel 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

UNMHA leadership continues to engage with local authorities on a range of vital mission support issues, including with respect to formal arrangements required to operate aeromedical and casualty evacuation capabilities using a helicopter pre-positioned in Djibouti, along with delivery of the required personal protective equipment, armoured vehicles and information technology and telecommunications equipment. While facilitating access to the country for Mission staff has improved during the reporting period, UNMHA continues to work with the local de facto authorities to address challenges related to the movement of UNMHA personnel in Hudaydah.

### **Ceasefire-related developments**

Since entering into force on 18 December 2018, the ceasefire continues to hold in Hudaydah governorate insofar as neither side has attempted major offensive operations to seize new territory. Nevertheless, a pattern of concerning incidents persists in some areas, including Hali, Durayhimi, Hays and Tuhayta' districts, in particular through indirect fire and sniper activity. Exchanges of direct and indirect fire have also been reported in the front-line areas of the city of Hudaydah (Sha'b and July 7 areas, both in the Hali district) and around the airport in the Hawak district. A coalition air strike occurred on 20 September 2019 in the vicinity of the Hali district of Hudaydah governorate, immediately north of the city of Hudaydah.

These incidents notwithstanding, the Mission's presence, including through the conduct of monitoring and presence patrols throughout the city of Hudaydah and the ports, continues to have a tangible calming and moderating effect, and the Mission also plays an active role in preventing escalatory activity. There has been an overall

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<sup>1</sup> Troop-contributing countries are: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Police-contributing countries are: Bangladesh, Finland, Indonesia, Malawi, Norway, Sweden, Turkey and Uganda.

reduction in the number of reports of violence and civilian casualties, a growing number of returnees to the area and increased economic activity observed in Hudaydah since the establishment of UNMHA. The ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism, activated on 10 September, has provided further opportunities to reduce violence and prevent escalation, with an estimated 30 to 40 per cent reduction in the number of incidents since its creation.

In all these endeavours, close cooperation between the Office of my Special Envoy and UNMHA has been critical in ensuring coherence and coordination across operational and political activities. In this regard, my Special Envoy and the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee continue to work together and with the parties to finalize the outstanding negotiations to allow for the full implementation of phases 1 and 2 of redeployment, as well as to resolve the issues pertaining to local security forces.

### **Observations**

The successful outcomes of the two most recent meetings of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, including the agreement on all the technical modalities for phases 1 and 2 of redeployment, as well as the activation of the ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism, demonstrate the parties' continued commitment to the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement. The sustained reduction in violence observed in Hudaydah and the continued operation of the port have been among the major achievements of the Agreement so far. The parties must, however, exercise maximum restraint and ensure adherence to the terms of the Hudaydah Agreement.

The parties' openness to further measures, including regular meetings in areas along the front lines in the city of Hudaydah and the opening of key humanitarian corridors, is also very encouraging. It is now of the utmost importance that this openness be translated into concrete action on the ground, as it would critically improve access for humanitarian and commercial imports to the Yemeni population in need.

Despite a challenging environment, UNMHA has been delivering effectively on its mandate, maintaining direct, face-to-face meetings of the Redeployment Coordination Committee within the context of ongoing conflict outside Hudaydah. I remain convinced that the objectives of UNMHA continue to be achievable and appropriate for the situation on the ground, with the composition and approach of the Mission remaining suitable for delivery. Full implementation does, however, remain dependent upon the Yemeni parties, who must also improve their support for the operations of the Mission.

The Mission, supported by its operational partners on the ground, will continue to be focused on supporting the parties' efforts to implement the ceasefire, execute the redeployment of forces and conduct mine action operations. It will also continue to facilitate and coordinate United Nations support to assist the parties in fully implementing the wider aspects of the Hudaydah Agreement. Furthermore, UNMHA will continue to serve as a credible and effective conflict prevention tool at a critical entry point for humanitarian assistance to Yemen, acting as an impartial arbiter of conditions on the ground. In this way, UNMHA will continue to play a key role in building the foundation for sustainable peace in Hudaydah, which can be a basis for a wider effort to reach a negotiated political settlement to the conflict in Yemen.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**