



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8672**<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Friday, 22 November 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Ms. Pierce .....	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium .....	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China .....	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Côte d'Ivoire .....	Mr. Adom
	Dominican Republic .....	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Equatorial Guinea .....	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	France .....	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany .....	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia .....	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait .....	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru .....	Mr. Ugarelli
	Poland .....	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation .....	Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa .....	Mr. Ntsoane
	United States of America .....	Mrs. Craft

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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19-38117 (E)



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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Griffiths is joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Amman.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Members of the Council may recall that, after the events in the south in August of this year, I called for decisive action to seize the opportunities available for peace in Yemen. Since then, the momentum to reach a political settlement in Yemen has been building. We have seen the parties work together with the support of Saudi Arabia, regional powers, the international community and the United Nations to achieve compromise on a range of issues, including the situation in the south, the de-escalation of hostilities and specific economic challenges. None of those are small issues. Reaching compromises has been no small achievement by those involved.

We are now beginning to see the need in Yemen for the kind of leadership that creates peace. A leader for peace is one who practises the art of concession and of inclusion and who encourages forbearance over entitlement. We are now seeing some evidence of that kind of leadership. In this briefing, I would like to give some examples.

The Riyadh agreement, signed on 5 November between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council, is a first example. The events of August created what I defined to the Council at the time as "an existential threat" to Yemen. The prospect of a

break-up of the State was real and, frankly, terrifying. During the talks leading to the Riyadh agreement, negotiated over 86 days, leaders from opposing parties sat down and agreed to work for a greater cause. The mediator, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the best traditions of that role, praised them for their courage rather than criticizing them for the many weeks of hard work that had gone into making that moment happen.

We must all thank President Hadi Mansour and the Southern Transitional Council, as well as the Saudi leadership, for this example of how to bring out the best in the parties. It should serve as a catalyst to move Yemen swiftly towards settling the conflict before us in the Council through political means.

Saudi Arabia's achievement in that regard shows the positive role that regional support can play in all our efforts to achieve peace. Two weeks ago, I had the privilege to meet with the Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. He was very positive about the prospects for a comprehensive peaceful resolution to the conflict in Yemen and made clear to me that Saudi Arabia would support efforts to make that happen soon. That was confirmed on Wednesday by Saudi Arabia's King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in his message to the Shura Council, in which he hoped that the agreement signed in Riyadh would open the door to broader peace talks. I am grateful to the leadership of the King and that of the Crown Prince for their words of support.

In what is perhaps an even more important sign that something is changing in Yemen, I would draw the Council's attention to a simple indicator of the war itself. In the past two weeks, the pace of that war has dramatically reduced. There were reportedly almost 80 per cent fewer air strikes nation-wide than in the previous two weeks. I realize that those are short periods but nonetheless it is striking. In recent weeks, there have been entire 48-hour periods without any air strikes for the first time since the conflict began.

We call this de-escalation, a reduction in the tempo of the war and perhaps, we hope, a move towards the overall ceasefire in Yemen for which Mr. Lowcock, Ms. Mueller, I am sure, and many members of the Council have been calling for a very long time. The cessation of missile and drone attacks on Saudi territory announced by Ansar Allah on 20 September has been sustained for the second month in a row. Efforts to

de-escalate violence are holding. I hope that we will all soon be able to build on that achievement.

I should say here very clearly that I fully support and endorse all efforts that reduce the war in Yemen. I am sure that the members of the Council agree with me. As the United Nations, we continue to uphold our responsibility to bring the parties closer to ending the conflict. What is taking place at the moment, both in the south and in the north, lays the necessary, indeed vital, groundwork for that process. The acts that we have seen translated into a reduction of the tempo in the war and an agreement on the south are the decisions of leaders who begin to see, perhaps as yet indistinctly, though clearly unmistakably, a prospect for peace. They are doing the right thing. Let us have a lot more of it. We therefore celebrate these achievements, even as we prepare for our turn at the table.

My third example relates to the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which is now almost a year old. We have seen continued positive signs in Al-Hudaydah, where the parties have taken further steps forward in implementing the agreement reached in Stockholm last year. In an earlier briefing to the Council, Mark Lowcock and I both spoke of the urgent need for some creative flexibility on the part of the Government of Yemen to allow fuel ships expeditiously to enter Al-Hudaydah to avoid the crushing damage to livelihoods of a fuel shortage, the outlines of which were already visible in Sana'a and in other cities. At that time, the Government stood by its right to issue decrees for the purpose of raising taxes — a process which led to a politicized deadlock over fuel imports to Sana'a and surrounding governorates.

This month, however, the Government's economic and technical team has agreed with my Office to establish a mechanism to have traders deposit the taxes and customs for commercial oil and gas shipments into a special account in the Central Bank in Al-Hudaydah, under United Nations supervision. The proceeds will go to pay the salaries of the civil servants in Al-Hudaydah and elsewhere, as set out in the Al-Hudaydah element of the Stockholm Agreement. I am grateful to both the Government and Ansar Allah for the concessions they have made to achieve significant progress on addressing this issue of port revenues and for breaking the logjam for the entry of fuel ships into Al-Hudaydah. The result is that fuel ships are now entering Al-Hudaydah and a crisis has been averted due to the creative thinking of those involved.

In Al-Hudaydah, the parties have also strengthened their adherence to the ceasefire. The establishment of the ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism has enabled a reduction of the number of security incidents in the governorate; there are now 40 per cent fewer incidents than before the mechanism came into effect. Since the creation of five joint observation posts on the frontlines in Al-Hudaydah, we have also observed a decrease by approximately 80 per cent in the number of security incidents in the city. Indeed — remarkably, belatedly, but very much welcome — for several days in a row, there were no incidents in the city at all. I would like to commend, as I am sure Lieutenant General Guha will, the parties for this constructive cooperation. Both achievements are remarkable and should be noted by all of us. I suggest that Al-Hudaydah is another example of the value of creative concession supplanting the desire for victory.

The United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) has been playing a vital role in supporting the parties with the implementation of that agreement. I would therefore like to express some concern here about the increasing restrictions imposed on the movements of the Mission's personnel in Al-Hudaydah. These restrictions not only hamper the Mission's day-to-day operations, but also threaten the implementation of its mandate. I hope that the relevant authorities will take all necessary measures to ensure the freedom of movement necessary for UNMHA to carry out its mandate.

In late October, my Office had the privilege of meeting for two days with 20 Yemeni women peace leaders from across the country. We discussed together the elements of any political settlement so as to ensure that their perspectives are taken into account now, before the settlement is negotiated. They also provided evidence of the intrinsic and, I think, perhaps unique contribution that women's groups make in Yemen, as they do elsewhere, in improving local conditions during conflict. We know how important it is to include both a gender perspective and women's participation in the processes of peace.

In conclusion, during my last briefing to the Council (S/PV.8642), I referred to signs of hope in Yemen. I hope that through this brief survey I have given evidence that these signs are beginning to produce results. That means that Yemen's leaders must now ask themselves what peace should look like. They will need to reach an agreement on the political and security arrangements to

end the fighting, and we will be there to help them to do so. They will need to lead in rebuilding the country, its economy and its social fabric, and we will all be there to make that happen. They will need to deal pragmatically with complex political challenges in a landscape that has changed dramatically during the years of conflict. Laying the groundwork to address all of these issues must start now, but we believe, as one Yemeni leader said so vividly to me, that we may soon see a return to civility in Yemen's social life.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mueller.

**Ms. Mueller:** Every month in Yemen, some 250 humanitarian partners work with the United Nations to assist 13 million people in the country. We are delivering the world's largest humanitarian operation in an extremely challenging environment, in which things seem to be relentlessly getting worse. That is why humanitarians have consistently advocated action on five priorities: first, respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians; secondly, unhindered humanitarian access; thirdly, funding for the humanitarian response plan; fourthly, support for the economy; and fifthly, progress towards a political solution. If fully implemented, these steps would immediately and significantly reduce people's suffering and help set the stage for lasting peace. I would like to review where these five priorities stand today.

First, I will review compliance with international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. Every month, the Council hears examples of the devastation the war has brought to civilians and civilian infrastructure. Attacks continue to cause civilian harm across the country. Two days ago, artillery shells struck a market in Sa'ada. Initial reports indicated that that attack killed and injured dozens of civilians. Two weeks ago, an attack in Taiz governorate badly damaged a hospital in the town of Al-Mukha. That was the only medical facility providing free emergency surgical care in the area. Its closure deprived local communities of access to those services until the hospital reopened just a few days ago. It is a miracle that no one on the hospital grounds was killed or injured in the attack, which occurred when patients and medical staff were inside the compound. Over the past month, we have also seen reports of fishermen killed by air strikes. Shells have fallen on civilian homes and sites hosting displaced families. Landmines and other explosives have also

killed and injured civilians. These events occur with a regularity that should alarm all of us.

It is not only Yemenis who suffer. Migrants and asylum-seekers, mainly from the Horn of Africa, continue to arrive in Yemen. The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 160,000 migrants will arrive in Yemen this year. They face appalling levels of abuse, including rape, torture and economic exploitation by human traffickers. The war has not spared migrants and asylum seekers either. Casualties in the Sa'ada attack earlier this week, for example, included Ethiopian and Somali nationals. Their plight is now getting more attention. Despite those and other incidents, there are also some signs of progress. There were fewer civilian casualties in October than any other month this year, while September was the year's deadliest month for civilians. We hope that the violence will continue to decrease. We continue to call on the parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take constant care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The second area of priority action is the obligation of all parties to facilitate humanitarian relief. Yet humanitarian access remains an enormous challenge in Yemen, particularly in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. There were recently some limited improvements — for example, Ansar Allah authorities have allowed more non-governmental organization (NGO) projects to start over the past few weeks, and we have heard assurances on several other issues. But, despite those assurances, Ansar Allah authorities continue to enforce an increasing number of restrictive regulations on humanitarian action. Those restrictions regularly hinder assistance for millions of people. Although partners are still able to deliver aid, doing so requires constant engagement at all levels, often resulting in unacceptable delays for people who need the help.

Although some projects were approved recently, Ansar Allah authorities are still blocking or delaying half of all NGO projects in areas under their control. Needs assessment and monitoring are frequently blocked as well. In several cases, United Nations and NGO staff have been forced out of Yemen, often without cause. All types of humanitarian movements in the north, including deliveries of life-saving assistance, are routinely blocked. Even when movements have been authorized, partners may still face arbitrary refusals or delays at checkpoints. Ansar Allah-affiliated authorities also frequently seek to interfere in humanitarian

operations, including attempts to influence the selection of beneficiaries or implementing partners.

Ansar Allah authorities are also continuing their campaign to coerce humanitarian partners into working under conditions that, if accepted, would contradict humanitarian principles and almost certainly result in loss of funding and programmes closing down. We have also seen an alarming increase in violence and harassment targeting humanitarian workers in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. Over the past three months, there have been 60 separate incidents of attacks, intimidation, detention and other forms of mistreatment of humanitarian staff. In several cases, the looting of relief supplies and occupation of humanitarian premises have disrupted critical deliveries of aid and services.

The very serious issues I have just outlined have all been directly, clearly and repeatedly raised with Ansar Allah. Although some forward steps have been taken after continuous engagement, the humanitarian operating environment in the north remains extremely constrained. As we begin to think about next year's humanitarian response plan and our ability to raise money for it, we sincerely hope that Ansar Allah authorities will listen and change course in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

On a separate note, we also hope that Ansar Allah will allow the long-planned United Nations assessment of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker to take place. The *FSO SAFER* tanker continues to pose a serious risk of environmental and humanitarian disaster in the Red Sea — and such a disaster is avoidable. Our assessment team remains ready to deploy within three weeks.

Access challenges in Government-controlled areas are of a different nature. We continue to seek a faster and more streamlined approach to Government processes to approve humanitarian projects, as well as to expedite humanitarian cargo arriving at the Port of Aden.

The third point I want to highlight is funding for the humanitarian response plan. As the Council heard last month from Under-Secretary-General Lowcock (see S/PV.8642), new funding since September from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and the United States, among others, has enabled agencies to reopen suspended programmes. That means that children are once again receiving regular vaccines, health-care centres are receiving supplies and malnutrition treatment centres are getting back to work. With the humanitarian response plan now

more than 70 per cent funded, the aid operation is on a much stronger financial footing than it was several months ago. We are grateful to all donors for their continuing support.

The fourth priority is the economy, which is a key driver of humanitarian needs. Yemen imports almost everything, including food, fuel and medicine. That means the exchange rate makes an enormous difference to people's lives and their ability to access the goods they need to survive. The rate is currently fluctuating between 540 and 575 rial to the United States dollar. That is better than the 595 rate last month, but still more than twice as high as the pre-crisis level. We continue to call for a regular programme of foreign exchange injection into Yemen's economy to stabilize the exchange rate and help make goods and services affordable.

Last month we also updated the Council on the impact of severe fuel shortages following the strict enforcement of Government regulations on commercial fuel imports. Fuel is essential to transport food to markets, pump drinking water and power sanitation systems. Shortages have eased considerably since then, and fuel prices have come down, although rural areas are taking longer to rebound. As members just heard from Special Envoy Griffiths, the parties have also worked closely with his Office to design a mechanism that will allow adequate fuel supplies to enter all ports, including Al-Hudaydah. We commend the flexibility of all stakeholders on this critical issue. It is essential to keep supplies of fuel and other essential commodities flowing. Under-Secretary-General Lowcock was in the region this week and had positive discussions with the Government of Yemen on the fuel issue and the economy.

The fifth and final priority is the need for progress towards a political solution and, ultimately, peace. We all agree that Yemen needs a political solution if the crisis is ever to end. Members also just heard Special Envoy Griffiths summarize several very encouraging developments in that regard. We welcome those steps and join millions of Yemenis in hoping that they are a sign of even more progress to come.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Mueller for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mrs. Craft** (United States of America): We thank Special Envoy Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-

General Mueller for their briefings and for the admirable work their teams continue to do.

The United States welcomes the signing of the Riyadh agreement between the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. Forming a new and inclusive Cabinet will help create a Government that is more representative of the Yemeni people. We encourage the parties to swiftly implement the terms of the agreement. The return of the Government of Yemen to its temporary capital in Aden and the reintegration of forces in the south under Government control are important steps on the path to a broader political settlement. Saudi Arabia's laudable work and the Yemeni parties have produced vital progress. With the support of the Southern Transitional Council, the Government of Yemen can now refocus its attention on dialogue with the Houthis to end this horrible conflict, which recent reports indicate has claimed the lives of more than 100,000 women, children and men since 2015.

We welcome Special Envoy Griffiths' announcement today of progress that will enable fuel ships to enter Al-Hudaydah. We are also heartened by the recent progress made by the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement and Lieutenant General Guha in establishing observation posts for monitoring the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement. We call on all parties to safeguard the Mission's personnel as they carry out their duties. However, the Al-Hudaydah Agreement should not impede broader efforts towards a comprehensive political agreement. As the parties engage in dialogue with the aim of ending the conflict, the financial contributions of Member States remain essential for addressing what has become the world's worst humanitarian crisis. We are pleased to hear that contributions this autumn to the United Nations humanitarian response plan enabled several critical humanitarian programmes to become fully operational once again after facing closure owing to funding shortfalls.

We are proud of our continued role as one of the largest humanitarian contributors in Yemen, especially because the programmes that the United States funds through the United Nations and multiple non-governmental organizations have a profound impact on the lives of ordinary Yemenis. Two examples illustrate this point. Recently, one of our implementing partners treated more than 16,000 people for communicable and non-communicable diseases. And in the second

instance, that humanitarian partner improved access to safe drinking water for 24,000 people. It is those kinds of faithful efforts that provide desperately needed resources for thousands of vulnerable Yemenis. We are increasingly concerned, however, about limitations on humanitarian access in northern Yemen. In order to do their vital work, humanitarian organizations must be allowed to operate freely and independently in a manner that reflects the principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality. Recent developments in Yemen are encouraging, and we hope that they will lead to further de-escalation throughout the country. That will of course aid Special Envoy Griffiths and his team's efforts to invigorate the political process, but even more importantly, it will begin to clear a path for dignity to the return of the people of Yemen, a path that we hope will widen in the coming weeks and months.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive overview of the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen.

As we have heard from today's briefers, the situation in Yemen is extremely worrying, especially on the humanitarian front. Despite the efforts both through the United Nations and bilaterally by Member States, the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement has stalled. In the light of that, we view the signing in Riyadh on 5 November of an agreement between the internationally recognized Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council as an important step towards uniting Yemeni society and a positive example of how to arrive at desperately needed mutually acceptable solutions and compromises, given the current realities on the ground. We would particularly like to highlight the mediation role played by Saudi Arabia, which has contributed significantly to the achievement of these agreements, and which also took on the role of monitoring their practical implementation. We also note the United Arab Emirates' constructive approach to the process.

We hope that the Yemeni parties' ability to reach agreement and find common denominators will help them to reach a political settlement to this protracted political and military conflict as soon as possible. In that regard, we support Mr. Griffiths in his mediation efforts to convince the parties to the conflict of the futility of any military solution and of the importance

of achieving a comprehensive ceasefire and developing confidence-building measures. Since the very beginning of the conflict Russia has advocated solely for a political and diplomatic solution through inclusive dialogue among all Yemeni forces, without exception. We are continuing our assistance, including through our contacts with all of the country's political stakeholders and interested parties, encouraging them to adopt a constructive approach and reject military solutions.

It is still possible to make progress in Al-Hudaydah and with the comprehensive Yemeni settlement that the Special Envoy has been working on. The international community must continue its collective efforts to shift the conflict onto a political track and provide the necessary aid to the millions of Yemenis in dire need of various kinds of assistance, who are starving or unable to access essential health services and medicines. We urge all the parties to work for a comprehensive de-escalation, which will make it possible to address Yemen's humanitarian catastrophe, whose scale Ms. Mueller talked about today, in earnest. The provision of humanitarian assistance to Yemen should be one of our priorities. I want to stress that humanitarian assistance to Yemen from abroad must be distributed on a non-discriminatory basis among the entire population throughout the country, regardless of who controls which territory. We stand behind unconditional compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law and ensuring unimpeded access for humanitarian aid to all parts of the country.

We have been compelled to conclude that the armed confrontation in Yemen contributes to further strengthening the positions of terrorist groups there. Based on our experience in Syria, we know that the fight against militants has to happen now. It cannot be put off till later. The sooner all the parties in Yemen unite their efforts to counter the threat of terrorism, the less likely it is that the radicals will be able to maintain their positions.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the Council of resolution 598 (1987), which directed the Secretary-General, in concert with the States of the region, to develop an architecture for security and trust in the region. In that context, Russia's well-known concept of collective security in the Gulf region, which is specifically aimed at resolving conflict situations and developing control and confidence-building measures, is becoming increasingly relevant. We once again call

on all interested parties to study that document and join the collective quest for mutually acceptable solutions to the problems in the region. There is an urgent need for joint efforts to improve the atmosphere, which will enable the Special Envoy to focus on the work of settling conflicts.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam President, we would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their valuable briefings.

I will focus on two areas, the developments on the political and security front and in the humanitarian situation. As we are meeting here today we are witnessing constructive and positive developments in Yemen, particularly the fact that on 5 November the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council succeeded in signing an agreement in Riyadh. We commend the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its eagerness to lead the negotiations and succeed in reaching an agreement. The signing of the Riyadh agreement and the implementation of the first of its provisions, with the Yemeni Government beginning its work in the temporary capital of Aden, show clearly that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the States of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen are keen to see security and stability restored there.

We hope that the agreement will build trust and support the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, paving the way for a comprehensive political settlement to the crisis based on the three agreed terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

We welcome Mr. Griffiths' information on the remarkable and clear decrease in military operations in Al-Hudaydah. This is encouraging. We hope it continues and leads to a dialogue and constructive negotiations. Accordingly, we affirm Kuwait's willingness to host the Yemeni parties, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the aim of reaching a final and comprehensive settlement of this crisis.

On the humanitarian front, in a hoped-for result of the positive developments in Yemen, humanitarian

agencies resumed their activities in a number of areas, and the funding for the 2019 humanitarian response plan also saw an increase. Kuwait has pledged a total of \$600 million to support the humanitarian activities of the United Nations in Yemen since the beginning of the crisis, \$350 million of which we have disbursed to international organizations and relief agencies and the remainder of which we intend to distribute. In that regard, we reaffirm how important it is to remove all obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to cooperate with humanitarian agencies, notably the World Food Programme. We are deeply concerned about the obstacles in the areas under Houthi control, which Ms. Mueller mentioned in her briefing. We therefore emphasize the importance of ensuring that all Yemeni parties comply with international humanitarian law and allow humanitarian agencies to carry out their tasks freely, independently and objectively.

We commend the Yemeni Government's recent constructive role in allowing 10 oil tankers to enter the country. As Ms. Mueller mentioned, that has had a positive impact on the country's oil shortages. We deplore the fact that United Nations experts were unable to reach the *FSO SAFER* floating oil tanker in Ras Isa in order to carry out the necessary inspection and assessment processes, despite the Organization's repeated requests, which runs the risk of creating a serious imminent environmental disaster in the Red Sea.

In conclusion, we want to reiterate our position that there can be no military solution to this crisis. We call on all the Yemeni parties to fully implement the three pillars of the Stockholm Agreement in order to support the Special Envoy in his efforts to reach a political solution based on the three agreed-on terms of reference in order to end the crisis, preserve Yemen's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Mueller for their briefings.

It is becoming clearer every day that a political solution must be found to the Yemeni crisis. As the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen has shown, we are seeing positive and encouraging signs of de-escalation, momentum that must continue and be translated into tangible progress on the ground so as to achieve a significant reduction in the hostilities. We

welcomed the adoption of the Riyadh agreement, which is an important step in the settlement of the crisis and helps to preserve Yemen's unity and territorial integrity. It must now be fully implemented.

Discussions on a comprehensive and inclusive political solution must be resumed without delay or preconditions. The United Nations has an essential role to play in mediation and supervision in the quest for this political solution and its implementation. A political solution is the only way out of the conflict for the Yemeni people, who continue to suffer as a result of the disastrous humanitarian situation. Respect for international humanitarian law is not negotiable. It is binding on us all. That means protecting civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, along with civilian infrastructure. It also means guaranteeing full humanitarian access. All the parties to the conflict must ensure that. The increasing restrictions imposed by the Houthis on humanitarian actors are preventing millions of people from receiving aid, and that is unacceptable. The effective coordination of assistance must be a priority and every effort must be made to facilitate the work of humanitarian actors. It is also essential to ensure that the United Nations has access to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which is a serious potential threat to the environment. An oil spill would have a disastrous impact on the entire region.

The Council can rely on France to remain fully engaged in the pursuit of a political solution to the Yemeni crisis, both within the Council and as part of its broader efforts to promote de-escalation in the region.

**Mr. Ugarelli** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you for convening this meeting, Madam President, and we are also grateful to Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their valuable briefings.

Peru is following developments in Yemen closely. It is clear that in recent months there has been progress on the ground and that the level of violence has decreased. But it is also true that the overall picture remains uncertain and that millions of people are living in conditions of extreme vulnerability. This morning Mr. Griffiths noted some positive political signs, which give us reason for cautious optimism. If acted on quickly and pragmatically, they could lead to concrete progress towards sustainable peace in Yemen. That applies specifically to the renewed willingness to participate in dialogue shown by some of the main stakeholders in the



conflict, assisted by the recent hopeful understandings in southern Yemen that we are all aware of.

Peru encourages the parties to maintain this dynamic of rapprochement in order to overcome the deep-seated mistrust that still governs their relationship, for which a genuine, good-faith commitment without preconditions is critical. It is essential to make progress in that regard because of the ever-present risk of widespread famine, the persistence of cholera and the collapse of public services and the economy, which have claimed more lives than military action has. We must therefore assume our responsibility to protect the country's most vulnerable citizens, which includes eliminating all obstacles to assistance and all threats to humanitarian personnel in the course of their work. Specifically, we urge the Ansar Allah authorities to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations and other actors in the territory under their control, and to refrain from setting conditions on the location, form or beneficiaries of the aid.

We also emphasize that the ports, airports and land routes in Yemen must remain open and operational in accordance with the Council's direction in its various statements. Opening Sana'a airport for the delivery of medical supplies and to enable emergency humanitarian evacuations is particularly important, and we hope to see greater flexibility from the Arab coalition and other relevant actors on that sensitive issue. We also welcome the recent fuel supplies that have reached Yemen, although we encourage the promotion of comprehensive solutions to prevent future shortages. To that end, we consider it a matter of urgency to ensure that the international community continues to contribute to stabilizing and reactivating the Yemeni economy in order to consolidate the appreciation in the local currency's value in the past few weeks and to contain the inflation that has wreaked so much havoc among the poorest populations.

In conclusion, I want to reaffirm Peru's full support for Mr. Griffiths in his efforts to prevent further escalation and promote dialogue between the parties, as well as our unwavering commitment to the protection of civilians in all situations and circumstances.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Ms. Ursula Mueller for their briefings.

A negotiated political agreement as the basis for an inclusive dialogue is the only way to resolve disputes

and address the legitimate concerns of all Yemeni people, including those from the south of the country. We therefore acknowledge the efforts being made in the region to bring peace to the people of Yemen.

We are optimistic about the progress achieved and wish to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its mediation efforts, which have helped to bring about the signing of the Riyadh agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. The agreement marks a pivotal moment that opens the door to broader consultations that could lay the foundations for peace to be achieved across Yemen.

While we welcome all of the efforts to exercise restraint, which have led to a decrease in the number of air strikes within and outside Yemen, we stress that protecting the civilian population and civilian infrastructure are fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, and therefore condemn the attacks carried out across the country.

Turning to the implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, we echo the call made on the parties to abide by the ceasefire in that governorate and to guarantee the necessary freedom of movement to the staff of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen so as to allow them to carry out the required monitoring. At this crucial juncture, it is more necessary than ever for the parties to refrain from escalating the situation.

We wish to highlight the situation of persons internally displaced by the war, migrants and refugees, many of whom are women and children, and the exceptional work being done by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in providing assistance to those vulnerable groups. These efforts must be underpinned by humanitarian access and security guarantees.

The humanitarian needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups must figure prominently on the agenda, and assistance must be provided to Yemen to allow it to improve its economy and therefore to meet the basic needs of its people. Allow me also to note our concern at the current state of the abandoned floating storage and offloading facility, the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, in Al-Hudaydah. We must not allow a potential oil spill that would lead to an unprecedented environmental disaster in the Red Sea, and we call on all actors, especially the Houthis, to allow the United Nations assessment team to access the tanker.

This concern has been repeated countless times in the Council, but nothing happens. It is crucial that in the light of the advances towards peace in Yemen, efforts continue to be made to seek a political solution, including through the significant participation of women and young people in the conflict-resolution processes in Yemen.

The Council remains united in the face of the situation afflicting the people of Yemen, recognizing that the only answer is a political solution that once and for all lays the groundwork for putting an end to the conflict.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation thanks Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their briefings.

China supports Special Envoy Griffiths in his efforts to advance the political process in Yemen and commends the untiring efforts of the United Nations and the relevant agencies to improve the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Recently there have been signs that the situation in Yemen is easing. The United Nations and countries of the region should seize this opportunity and further encourage the Yemeni parties to bridge their differences and strive for an early resumption of the comprehensive political settlement process.

China welcomes the fact that the Yemeni Government and the Southern Transitional Council formally signed the Riyadh agreement recently. We commend Saudi Arabia and the other countries involved for the positive role they played in this respect. We hope that this will serve as a good example of negotiated solutions achieved through dialogue.

China supports Special Envoy Griffiths in his preparations for a new round of peace talks. The Yemeni parties should refrain from any action that could lead to an escalation of tensions and keep the momentum towards a political solution going.

Since it was concluded nearly a year ago, the Stockholm Agreement has been instrumental in improving the situation in Al-Hudaydah and advancing the political process in Yemen. We also can see that right now the situation in Al-Hudaydah remains tense. Nevertheless, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) and the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) have overcome all difficulties and eased the situation there.

China appreciates this. It would behove the Yemeni parties to demonstrate political will, stop violating the ceasefire agreement and ensure that the Al-Hudaydah Agreement is fully implemented.

China supports the prisoner-exchange committee and encourages it to keep up its effective work in effectively implementing existing agreements. That will also help the parties have greater confidence in each other and pave the way for comprehensive political negotiations. The Council should remain united on this matter, firmly support Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territory integrity and provide political support for the diplomatic efforts of the United Nations and countries of the region.

Recently the Ambassadors of the permanent members of the Council to Yemen held a meeting in Riyadh with Special Envoy Griffiths and General Guha, Chair of the RCC, and reiterated their support for its work. All members of the Council should work in synergy with the Special Envoy, UNMHA, the RCC and the countries of the region to contribute to the early restoration of peace and order in Yemen.

The international community should provide assistance tailored to improving the living conditions of the Yemeni people. The Yemeni parties should fully cooperate with the humanitarian operations of the United Nations and other relevant agencies. Current efforts should be focused on easing Yemen's oil crisis, stabilizing the Yemeni rial and prices, curbing the cholera epidemic, supporting development and reconstruction projects and increasing employment.

China has long been working to provide assistance to the Yemeni people. Recently, through bilateral channels, we once again provided assistance to Yemen; in particular, we provided a gift of sporting goods to Yemeni youth. On 31 October, China and the Yemeni Government signed an economic and technical cooperation agreement whereby Yemen will receive 100 million yuan renminbi, or \$40 million, worth of aid to improve Yemen's economic and humanitarian situation. It is China's consistent position that development is an effective pathway to peace and stability in countries in conflict.

China stands ready to carry out further practical work for the benefit of the Yemeni people, participate in the economic reconstruction of Yemen, bolster the Yemeni people's confidence in their future and

contribute constructively to the early achievement of lasting peace and stability in Yemen.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller, of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their very pertinent updates today. We are happy about these encouraging updates, including on the significant decrease in the number of security incidents disclosed by the Special Envoy, particularly concerning the prospects for the continuation of the peace talks. They reignite hopes that had been dimmed for several months.

In responding to the briefings, Indonesia would like to underscore three points. First, we welcome the Jeddah agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council, facilitated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We thank the Kingdom for its excellent work in that regard.

Some seem to believe that the timeline and objectives of the Riyadh agreement are ambitious, but for the people of Yemen who have suffered so much for so long, an ambitious timeline and objectives are necessary. The challenge is implementation. Indonesia strongly hopes that the agreement will be implemented without delay, as a building block towards a national-level political settlement. As my delegation has repeatedly stated, the only way to reverse the humanitarian crisis and ease the suffering of the Yemeni people is through a comprehensive political settlement.

That brings me to my second point. We strongly support the efforts of the Special Envoy to resume talks at the earliest possible moment. It is now almost a full year since the Stockholm Agreement was reached. While the Agreement has not been fully implemented, it is evident that it has brought hope to Yemenis. There is no doubt that there would have been no improvement in the situation in Al-Hudaydah without the Agreement.

Building on the gains of the Stockholm and Riyadh Agreements, the intra-Yemeni political process should be resumed, under United Nations facilitation, with the participation of all legitimate parties concerned, including women and youth. It is critical that Yemenis own the process and the outcome; accordingly, we support a Yemeni-led process facilitated by the United Nations. It is also crucial that whatever the result, it be well understood by the parties and properly implemented and that it trickle down to the situation on the ground. Regional key countries play a pivotal role in supporting

the peace process. A nationwide ceasefire and an end to the conflict should be the ultimate objectives for all.

Thirdly, further progress is required in implementing the Stockholm Agreement, in parallel with a resumption of the political process. That process should include the swapping of prisoner and dialogue on Taiz. We also expect further progress in Al-Hudaydah, the maintenance of the ceasefire and the demilitarization of the area around the ports. Al-Hudaydah is crucial, not only because it is key to humanitarian assistance, but also because it is a source of revenue for the Yemeni people. Implementation must not be derailed.

Lastly, my delegation calls on Ansar Allah authorities to protect and grant unhindered access to all humanitarian workers operating on the ground as they carry out their work to deliver humanitarian assistance.

As this is the penultimate briefing on Yemen this year, Indonesia calls on everyone to make a big push in the month ahead to boost hope for all Yemenis as the year comes to a close.

**Ms. Wronecka** (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers for their detailed accounts of the current situation in Yemen. Allow me to reiterate our full support for the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and to express our appreciation for the tireless work of all United Nations personnel in Yemen.

I would like to begin by expressing Poland's full support for the progress made to date with regard to the political situation in Yemen. We welcome in particular the signing of the Riyadh agreement by the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council and commend the diplomatic efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which were instrumental in reaching an understanding between the parties. The return of the Prime Minister of Yemen to Aden marks an essential first step in the implementation of the agreement. We urge all stakeholders to show good faith, abide by the terms of the agreement and ensure its timely implementation.

The Riyadh agreement is an important step towards reaching a political settlement in the conflict in Yemen. It opens a window of opportunity for the resumption of an inclusive political process that would resolve differences and address the legitimate concerns of all Yemenis. We therefore urge all parties to step up their engagement with the Special Envoy in good

faith and without preconditions with a view to reviving comprehensive negotiations, with the participation of all groups in Yemeni society, including women and youth.

Apart from inclusivity, other key factors to restore stability and create conditions conducive to the resumption of the political process include renouncing violence, de-escalating tensions and advancing confidence-building measures. It is therefore paramount that the parties uphold their obligations under the Al-Hudaydah Agreement; ensuring the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement is also of critical importance.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, notwithstanding the positive developments outlined by Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller, the overall living conditions of the Yemeni people remain extremely dire. In that connection, we call upon the parties to allow and facilitate the safe, rapid and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid and personnel to all parts of the country and to immediately lift all restrictions on humanitarian access and commercial imports. We also urge them to prioritize the protection of civilians, including the most vulnerable groups, namely, women and children, and to fully comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The perpetrators of violations must be held accountable.

Lastly, I would like to touch upon the very concerning issue of the decaying *FSO SAFER* oil tanker in Al-Hudaydah, whose rupture and a subsequent oil spill would lead to an unprecedented environmental and humanitarian catastrophe in the Red Sea. We call on all actors, especially the Houthis, to allow the United Nations assessment team to access the tanker without further delay.

**Mr. Adom** (Côte d'Ivoire): My delegation thanks Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their informative briefings on the latest developments in the political and humanitarian situations in Yemen.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the signing of the agreement reached on 5 November in Riyadh between the Yemeni Government and the separatists of the Southern Transitional Council. The agreement provides for power-sharing within a new Government formation and the return of institutions to Aden, the provisional capital. That is very good news for the Yemeni people

and for the peace process. Negotiations made possible by the involvement of regional actors send a strong message of unity to all stakeholders. All stakeholders, without exception, should be encouraged to see that advance as a window of opportunity to overcome their differences through negotiated political solutions that would consolidate the de-escalation and further boost the peace process. It would also be wise to fully involve women and young people in the quest for that long-awaited peace. Above all, Côte d'Ivoire would like the Riyadh agreement to serve as an anchor point for building an environment of trust between the parties concerned. It also supports ongoing diplomatic initiatives, in particular those under the auspices of the Sultanate of Oman, to facilitate talks between regional actors and the Houthis.

Côte d'Ivoire shares the international community's concerns about the particularly worrisome humanitarian situation in Yemen. Indeed, after several years of conflict, Yemen is a depleted country where, according to United Nations agencies, 80 per cent of the population is experiencing a humanitarian emergency, 10 million people are food insecure and 3.3 million are internally displaced. It is therefore important to invite all the protagonists of the current crisis to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. In that regard, my country welcomes the adoption by the Human Rights Council on 26 September of resolution 42/2, condemning breaches of those international legal standards.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that it is urgent to ensure the full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, signed in December 2018. Compliance with the provisions of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement on the redeployment of military forces from the ports of Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa remains an urgent necessity in that regard. Control of the ports is undoubtedly the main issue and obstruction to the process of the full redeployment of military forces from those port facilities. The establishment of local security forces in those ports should therefore allow for a revitalization of the political process. That is why my country welcomed this morning's announcement by Mr. Griffiths of an oil tanker entering the port of Al-Hudaydah to supply the country with oil. Côte d'Ivoire urges the Yemeni parties to pursue the redeployment of military forces from the ports under the auspices of the Redeployment Coordination Committee and to cooperate fully

with the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement.

The relative ceasefire observed by the Houthis since 21 September and the releasing of 290 prisoners should constitute the basis of a peace agreement. We welcome that as a very positive step forward. Those humanitarian gestures, consistent with the Stockholm Agreement, should serve to create an environment conducive to the continuing exchange of prisoners and the implementation of the statement of understanding on the city of Taiz. Moreover, it is of the utmost importance to Yemen that any momentum that generates hope for peace, stability and security be supported and encouraged.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire wishes to renew its encouragement for the Special Envoy in his steadfast efforts to promote dialogue among the parties, which the Council hopes will be fruitful in realizing a definitive settlement of the conflict in Yemen.

**Mr. Heusgen (Germany):** It is always a pleasure to see Mr. Martin Griffiths, and today it has also been a pleasure to listen to him and his upbeat briefing. I do not need to repeat all of the various positive developments, I can only echo what he and my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire said: the momentum that has been built needs to be sustained in both the south and the north of the country. It is essentially the obligation of the leadership, as Mr. Griffiths said, that leaders on all sides continue to be constructively engaged by talking to each other and that they pursue the path of de-escalation.

I was a little concerned that by the end of his very interesting statement, Mr. Griffiths would propose that the leaders be candidates for the next Nobel Peace Prize, but then had the cold shower from Ms. Ursula Mueller. It is always a pleasure to see her, but it was not a pleasure to hear what she had to say. She reminded us of the humanitarian situation, which continues to be the worst we face in the world today. Although we have heard about positive developments in Al-Hudaydah, that governorate remains the place with the highest number of civilian casualties.

With regard to humanitarian access, I had to listen very carefully, but I heard our Russian colleague say that we must ensure unconditional compliance with international humanitarian law, and I can only subscribe to that — not only in Yemen. It is absolutely vital that humanitarian access be granted, and we still face a lot of problems in that regard.

Several colleagues, including the representatives of France, the Dominican Republic and Poland, all mentioned the unresolved issue of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which represents an increasing threat to the environment. All those who are in contact with the Houthis should pressure them into at least allowing for a United Nations assessment team to have access to the ship.

Germany continues to be committed to supporting the Special Envoy. We are ready to support the political process by facilitating meetings at different levels. With regard to the provision of financial humanitarian aid, Germany remains committed and will contribute substantially to the Yemen humanitarian response plan. We also appeal to other donors to continue to be engaged and to disburse their contributions in a timely manner so that the problem we encountered this year does not repeat itself.

Finally, I want to come back to Mr. Griffiths' briefing. At the end, he highlighted his contact with women leaders, and I fully support that. Others members have also highlighted the inclusion of youth. It is important not only to hold separate meetings with them, but to ensure that women have a seat at the negotiating table and are able to bring their vision and point of views to the negotiations process.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea)** (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller, for the valuable information they provided.

Equatorial Guinea has been closely following the situation in Yemen and remains confident in the work of the United Nations, which, owing to the relentless efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the strong support provided by partners of the United Nations and the entire international community, continues to seek a successful path for the parties to the conflict to arrive at a definitive solution and restore the peace and tranquillity for which the Yemeni population has yearned for the past five years.

Over the past few months, the Yemeni parties have been carrying out important initiatives aimed at reorienting the dynamics of the conflict, both in the north and south of the country. That demonstrates their firm commitment to reaching an agreement on a

number of measures that would reduce the suffering of the Yemeni people. One such step was the releasing of 290 detainees by the Houthi movement. The same spirit was evident in its announcement on 20 September to suspend all attacks with drones and ballistic missiles against Saudi Arabia.

We also welcome the diplomatic efforts undertaken and sponsored by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which led to the signing of the Riyadh agreement on 5 November with a view to resolving the important differences between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. It is urgent that the parties implement the terms of that agreement, among other aspects, given that the return of the Government to Aden and the full functioning of its institutions, the services of which must reach the country's citizens, are reliant on the agreement. In short, the Riyadh agreement is a step in the right direction in pursuit of a definitive solution to the Yemeni conflict.

Equatorial Guinea also commends the leadership of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, which, together with the two Yemeni parties to the Stockholm Agreement, succeeded in establishing the joint operations centre. The existence of the centre is giving rise to a tangible reduction in ceasefire violations.

My delegation regrets the terrible humanitarian situation suffered by the Yemeni population since the beginning of the conflict, with the civilian population being increasingly affected. Humanitarian agencies are having to overcome significant restrictions in addition to frequent harassment and attempts at interference. In such difficult conditions, the most needy cannot easily be reached. Last month, we heard about local authorities blocking assessments of the humanitarian situation in Hajjah and Al-Hudaydah, where approximately 12,000 families have been affected by floods. Millions of people are not guaranteed of their regular food supply and others do not know where their next meal will come from.

We therefore echo the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 26 September condemning the ongoing violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, including the recruitment and widespread use of children by the parties to the conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detentions, the denial of humanitarian access and attacks on the population

and civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, missions and their personnel, as well as schools.

Finally, my delegation would like to reiterate its full support for the efforts of Mr. Griffiths. We also encourage all the parties not to abandon the path of dialogue, since the only way to resolve the conflict is political through frank, direct and inclusive dialogue among all parties.

**Mr. Ntsoane** (South Africa): Allow me to begin by thanking Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, for their briefings. South Africa wishes to express its support for Special Envoy Griffiths and for all his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Yemen. We would like to address the following two issues in our statement: first, the political situation and, secondly, the humanitarian situation.

First, on the political situation, South Africa welcomes the signing of the Riyadh agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. We also note some of the key points in the Riyadh agreement, which include activating the role of all the Yemeni State authorities and institutions, upholding the full rights of all Yemeni people, and the participation of the Southern Transitional Council in the Government delegation to consultations on the final political solution to the conflict in Yemen. It is hoped that the agreement will be the first step towards creating a broader and more comprehensive political settlement for ending the war in Yemen. We also commend the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its role in facilitating the signing of the agreement.

We further welcome the encouraging signs of dialogue between the parties, with a view to de-escalating tensions. We call on all the parties to urgently engage in talks aimed at alleviating the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. It should be possible for all parties to engage and agree on alleviating the plight of the people of Yemen caught up in this violent armed conflict.

We further remind the parties to implement some key elements of the Stockholm agreements, including the prisoner swap and resolving outstanding issues related to the status of local security forces. We hope that the various ongoing dialogue efforts feed into a broader United Nations-led process that is inclusive. Without a concerted effort towards a political solution

to the conflict, the humanitarian disaster in Yemen will continue to worsen and remain a source of instability not only for the parties involved in the conflict but for the entire region.

Secondly, on the humanitarian situation, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains the worst in the world. Nearly four years of conflict and the resultant severe economic decline have driven the country to the brink of famine and further imperilled critical health, energy, water and sanitation infrastructure. An estimated 80 per cent of the population — 24 million people — require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, including 14.3 million who are in acute need. The severity of their needs is increasing, with the number of people in acute need a staggering 27 per cent higher than last year. Two-thirds of all districts in the country are already suffering pre-famine, and one-third faces the convergence of multiple acute vulnerabilities. An estimated 85,000 Yemeni children under the age of five may have died of starvation.

Furthermore, about 2 million Yemeni children have stopped attending school since the start of the war and, according to UNICEF, many schools are damaged or not in use or have become shelters for the displaced. The armed conflict in Yemen has killed and injured thousands of Yemeni civilians since it began. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, almost 7,000 civilians have been killed and more than 10,000 wounded. Thousands more have been displaced by the fighting and millions suffer from shortages of food and medical care.

We welcome the decrease in violence, as mentioned by the Assistant Secretary-General this morning. We hope that the situation will continue to improve. South Africa continues to call on the parties to the conflict to allow the free, regular and unimpeded passage of food and other humanitarian relief and not to take actions that would deprive civilians of their rights to food and health. In that regard, we remind the parties to the conflict that all necessary measures should be taken to respect the Geneva Conventions. The unprecedented humanitarian crisis is a strong indicator of the human toll of continued military action and conflict, which necessitates an urgent commitment to a ceasefire and the pursuit of a negotiated, peaceful and inclusive solution to the crisis.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the only sustainable solution to this conflict will be through a negotiated, Yemeni-led political settlement that is inclusive and puts the interests and well-being of all the citizens of Yemen first.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytsverve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their briefings.

I, too, would like to welcome the signing of the Riyadh agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council. We commend Saudi Arabia for its mediation efforts and its leadership. We hope that this positive momentum can be maintained during the next stages in the political process, which must be inclusive, with the meaningful participation of women and young people, and reflect the ethnic, geographical, social and political diversity of the Yemeni population.

We welcome the de-escalation efforts, although the civilian population is still suffering disproportionately. We encourage the continuation of those efforts to achieve a cessation of hostilities throughout the country.

Humanitarian access remains very difficult, as Ms. Mueller told us. It is essential that all parties facilitate access for humanitarian assistance and respect international humanitarian law. In particular, we call on the parties to lift all restrictions on humanitarian access and commercial imports. We encourage the Government of Yemen to suspend the implementation of Decree 49 until a lasting solution to the oil crisis is found. We encourage the Houthis to provide access to the *FSO SAFER* tanker in order to facilitate an assessment of the situation and to prevent a potential environmental disaster.

In parallel, we continue to call on all parties to fully implement the Stockholm Agreement, including the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, the agreement on the exchange of prisoners and the statement of understanding on Taiz.

Finally, the parties must respect their obligations and commitments under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

The British Government, too, wants to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, the Special Envoy and their teams for the hard work that they are doing. We join others in welcoming the Riyadh agreement and the vital role that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played in brokering it. We share South Africa's point and emphasis on inclusivity.

With regard to momentum and making the best use of next year, our colleagues from Indonesia, Germany and Côte d'Ivoire put it very well, and we, too, share that sense of hope that something truly meaningful can be done. I wanted to tell Special Envoy Griffiths that we welcome his continued facilitation of consultations between the parties. It is important that the Riyadh agreement and de-escalation efforts are integrated into a wider inclusive political process, and we urge Mr. Griffiths and Saudi Arabia to work closely to ensure that the respective initiatives are integrated and enable a holistic approach. The Council and the wider community need to be ready to support a renewed peace process, and the Special Envoy can count on the United Kingdom to do its utmost in that regard. We hope for broader implementation of the Stockholm Agreement to continue in parallel with these efforts.

On the humanitarian front, as the Assistant Secretary-General said, the situation is a very sobering one. I share the German representative's concerns on these issues. The United Kingdom has committed nearly \$1 billion in assistance since the conflict began, and more than a quarter of this sum has been in the current financial year. We are contributing to the immediate food needs of more than 1 million Yemenis each month, treating 70,000 children for malnutrition and providing more than 1 million people with an improved water supply and basic sanitation. We therefore in no way underestimate the scale and the enormity of the task, and we applaud all those who work on the ground to deliver aid to vulnerable people in such difficult and dangerous circumstances.

The Council needs to be confident that the assistance provided by the international community is indeed reaching those in need, and that means that it is in turn vital that humanitarian access improve across the entire country, including in Houthi-controlled areas in the north. The United Kingdom takes this opportunity to call on the Houthis to engage urgently and constructively with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator on the ground, Ms. Lise Grande, to ensure that vulnerable

people can be reached and to comply immediately with resolution 2451 (2018) by facilitating swift, unhindered and safe humanitarian access.

We know that the operating environment for humanitarian organizations is almost impossible in the north — 60 per cent of humanitarian sub-agreements this year have not been signed by the Houthis, and that affects 4 million people. This situation is obviously something that cannot continue. Humanitarian organizations are ready to save lives. They must be allowed to do their jobs.

With regard to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, an issue that has been mentioned by a number of representatives today, we share those concerns. We think that the inaction of the Houthis on this issue is reckless. We call on them to allow the United Nations team access to the tanker before it is too late.

I also want to say a quick word about the economy. The progress that has recently been achieved between the parties in facilitating fuel imports through the Red Sea ports is very welcome. It is now vital that the Government of Yemen and the Houthis engage constructively with the United Nations to agree on an effective mechanism for port-revenue sharing. A long-term solution needs to be secured so that sufficient levels of fuel can enter the Red Sea ports each month.

Finally, I wish to conclude by echoing what the representatives of Germany and of Belgium said about the importance of unconditionally implementing international humanitarian law.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

**Mr. Al-Saadi** (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I wish you and the friendly delegation of the United Kingdom all the best. I would also like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings.

The Yemeni Government has expressed its sincere and serious desire to achieve a just and lasting peace based on the three agreed terms of reference,



namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2216 (2015). The Government has sought to prioritize the interests of Yemen and its people in the fulfilment of their aspirations to build a new and federal Yemen based on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference — a new Yemen that would serve Yemeni interests and play a major role in assisting our regional partners to combat the terrorism and sectarianism schemes that seek to spread chaos, destroy our nation's aspirations and undermine the foundations of our society.

The Yemeni Government greatly values the determined efforts of Saudi Arabia, with the King and the Crown Prince of the country at the helm of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen, Their efforts have played a significant role in the signing of the Riyadh agreement, which is an important step upon which to build in making future progress on a comprehensive peace based on the agreed terms of reference while maintaining the fundamentals of our national identity.

The agreement seeks to ensure the full restoration of the Yemeni State with the operationalization of all of Government powers and institutions in Aden, the temporary capital, as well as in liberated governorates, while committing to full citizenship rights for all Yemenis and to eliminating sectarian discrimination. The agreement also seeks to place all military formations outside of State institutions under the control of the Ministries of Defence and of the Interior so as to contribute to liberating the governorates remaining under the control of the Houthi militias and to solidifying efforts aimed at expediting the disruption of the Houthi-Iranian scheme in Yemen. The agreement also seeks to usher in a new era of stability and security in Yemen and neighbouring countries and to serve the interests of our country and the Yemeni people while preventing divisions, creating a united front, initiating a new era of construction and development and combating extremist terrorist groups.

The President of Yemen has called for the immediate and full implementation of the Riyadh agreement and for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to return to Aden, the temporary capital, this week. These steps would ensure that the root causes of the current problems and their repercussions are addressed, namely, the presence

of military formations operating beyond State authority that have prevented the Government from exercising its full sovereignty and authority in the temporary capital of Aden.

We welcome the statements expressing international support for the Riyadh agreement by our brotherly and friendly States members of the Security Council, which we all welcome as a positive step towards lasting peace in Yemen. We look forward to the support of our brothers and friends in the international community for efforts made by the Yemeni Government to overcome the challenges, improve the economy and consolidate security and stability.

The Stockholm Agreement is almost a year old. However, no progress has yet been made on its implementation. We must reflect on the reasons for delay and exert pressure on the party obstructing implementation of the Agreement. The implementation of the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, especially its provisions related to the local security forces, local authorities and the withdrawal from the port and the city of Al-Hudaydah, as well as opening humanitarian corridors, will be an important confidence-building measure that points the way towards possible lasting peace.

Any attempt to circumvent the Agreement would undermine the efforts of the United Nations and hinder the political process. It would play into the hands of the party that has undertaken the coup, allowing it to avoid fulfilling its obligations. We must clearly and decisively condemn the Houthis for their non-compliance with the ceasefire and for their continued military escalation. The foregoing violations unequivocally affirm that the Houthi militias are not ready for peace. They do not care about the humanitarian suffering caused by their unjust war against the Yemeni people, as they use the humanitarian situation as a tool for blackmail and other forms of political pressure.

The Yemeni Government condemns the Iranian regime's recognition of the representative of the Houthi coup and its handover of diplomatic buildings in Tehran belonging to the Republic of Yemen to him. This handover is in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions related to Yemen, notably resolution 2216 (2015). We call on the Security Council to condemn this blatant and flagrant violation of international law

as a dangerous precedent in international relations. We stress that legal action declaring this irresponsible act null and void must necessarily be taken.

The Yemeni Government is making tremendous efforts to revive the economic situation in the country. We have achieved positive results through the implementation of Decree No. 75 of 2018 and Decree No. 49 of 2019 on collecting taxes, customs duties and other legal revenues from the imports of oil derivatives for the purpose of paying the salaries of civil servants. During the past month, we have facilitated the entry of oil derivatives into the port of Al-Hudaydah, which has generated legal revenues of more than 15 billion Yemeni rials in just two weeks. The Houthi militias must deposit these revenues into a temporary account at the Central Bank of Al-Hudaydah branch under the supervision of the United Nations in accordance with the Government initiative. These revenues will be used to pay the salaries of civil servants in areas under the control of the Houthi militias. We warn that, as has happened with past revenues, these revenues might be diverted and used to enrich warlords engaged in the conflict at the expense of the suffering Yemenis.

The Yemeni Government calls once again on the international community and the Security Council to exert continued pressure on the Houthi militias to allow the United Nations technical team access to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker so that an assessment of the damage may be conducted, rather than waiting until a preventable serious environmental disaster for which the Houthi militias would be morally and legally responsible takes place.

In conclusion, the Yemeni Government reiterates its commitment to fully implementing all elements of the Stockholm Agreement and the Al-Hudaydah Agreement, as well as to releasing prisoners and detainees as part of its apolitical humanitarian approach. We also call for lifting the siege on the city of Taiz.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.*