



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

8981st meeting

Monday, 28 February 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Ms. Bongo
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mr. Asokan
Ireland	Mr. Kelly
Kenya	Mr. Kimani
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 25 January 2022 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/50)

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22-27089 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 25 January 2022 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/50)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2022/158, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/50, which contains a letter dated 25 January 2022 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, China, France, Gabon, Ghana, India, Kenya, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Norway

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The draft resolution received 11 votes in favour, none against and 4 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2624 (2022).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the penholder, the United Kingdom, for its efforts to converge the views during the negotiations. We would

also like to thank the Member States for their cooperation during the short period of the negotiation process.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the adoption of resolution 2624 (2022) and the addition of the Houthis to the sanctions list, as well as the imposition of an arms embargo on this terrorist group, pursuant to resolution 2216 (2015), in response to its flagrant violations and vicious attacks.

The purpose of the resolution is to limit the military capacity of the Houthis and end their escalation in Yemen and the region. The resolution also seeks to prevent their aggressive actions against trading vessels and their threat to international trade and navigation routes, as well as to end the suffering of civilians in Yemen and in the neighbouring countries caused by their terrorist actions. We therefore call on the Houthis to stop their cross-border terrorist attacks and return to the negotiating table to begin a serious political process.

We reiterate that there is no military solution to the Yemeni crisis. The only solution is through concerted efforts to find a political solution that is Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned, under the auspices of the United Nations, and in accordance with the three terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the Comprehensive National Dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015).

Mr. Asokan (India): We welcome the adoption of resolution 2624 (2022) to extend the mandate of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and the Panel of Experts supporting the Committee. India attaches great importance to the work of the Committee and the Panel and therefore voted in favour of the resolution.

Through the resolution, the Council has reiterated its unequivocal condemnation of the cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, particularly those targeting innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure, and demanded the immediate cessation of such attacks. We welcome the Council's action to hold Ansar Allah accountable for its acts, through the imposition of an arms embargo on the group. It is clear that the conflict in Yemen and the cross-border attacks are being fuelled by the continued supply of arms and weapons, in clear violation of the Council's targeted arms embargo. In that regard, we support the resolution's call to enhance maritime

cooperation in the region and strengthen the Yemeni Coast Guard to effectively detect and prevent violations of the arms embargo.

We also underline the need to address the increasing threat emanating from Yemen to the safe navigation of commercial ships and merchant vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Such attacks have implications for overall maritime security in the region and must be deterred. The Council's affirmation that such acts and attacks constitute a designation criterion can also contribute to that deterrence.

As a country with civilizational ties with Yemen, India is pained to witness the continued suffering of the people of Yemen due to the protracted conflict. We reiterate our call on all parties to the conflict to renounce military confrontation and make concrete efforts to establish enduring peace. I reaffirm India's steadfast commitment to a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process, with the goal of achieving an inclusive and peacefully negotiated settlement to the conflict.

Mr. Kelly (Ireland): My thanks go to the United Kingdom for its work as penholder.

Ireland fully supports the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and regards the sanctions regime as a critical tool of the Council to contribute to a solution to the conflict and restore long overdue peace, security and stability in Yemen.

For the past seven years, the devastating crisis in Yemen has taken an immense toll on the Yemeni people. Since the beginning of 2022, the escalation, with daily civilian casualties, demonstrates why a politically negotiated solution is the only path forward. It is vital for the Yemeni people, who are on the brink of famine and facing extreme food insecurity.

The escalation of recent months also poses a serious threat to regional security. We strongly and unequivocally condemn cross-border attacks on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates by the Houthis, targeting civilian infrastructure, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. Such attacks are totally unacceptable. We offer sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones and solidarity to the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The persistent Houthi offensive on Ma'rib,

home to 1 million displaced people, is reprehensible. We call again for its immediate cessation.

Ireland abstained in the voting on resolution 2624 (2022). Our concern is not about the Houthi leadership, whose behaviour we utterly condemn. Our concern lies with the millions of innocent people living under their control. Ireland has a principled position across all Security Council files that we must avoid impediments to humanitarian aid reaching all people in need. The resolution adopted today designates the Houthis as a group under the targeted arms embargo, as provided for in resolution 2216 (2015). We fully support the implementation of the arms embargo to halt the illicit flow of weapons into Yemen.

We wish to underline that humanitarian and commercial activities should not be impacted by that designation. We have worked throughout the negotiations on that aspect and welcome constructive engagement on the inclusion of language in the resolution to that end. However, Ireland remains nonetheless concerned that the designation may result in unintended negative humanitarian and political consequences. It will be vital to ensure clear messaging around that point for humanitarian and commercial actors.

There is no internationally agreed definition of the terms "terrorism" or "terrorist group". There was no consensus on the use of such language in the context of the negotiations. We remain concerned about the fact that the use of those terms in a Security Council resolution dealing with sanctions in Yemen may have unintended negative consequences for the millions of Yemeni people living under Houthi control. That is against the backdrop of severe humanitarian funding shortfalls and an already fragile economy.

Although counter-terrorism efforts and the provision of humanitarian assistance are mutually inclusive objectives, we must continue to protect the humanitarian space. More time for due consideration of that language and its implications would have been very valuable. We urge States to continue to ensure that all measures taken by them to implement resolution 2624 (2022) comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Moreover, we must do all that we can to ensure that attempts towards constructive dialogue between all parties to the conflict and the United Nations-led process, under the auspices of the Special Envoy, are not adversely affected. Special

Envoy Grundberg has our full support in his tireless efforts and we call on all parties to de-escalate and engage in good faith with him to that end.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico recognizes the value of the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and the Panel of Experts on Yemen.

Mexico abstained in the voting on resolution 2624 (2022) for the following reasons.

First, in the absence of an internationally agreed definition of terrorism, the inclusion of the Houthis on the sanctions list and their designation as a terrorist organization could dilute the limits framing the conduct of hostilities in Yemen, to the detriment of respect for international humanitarian law. We reiterate that the fight against terrorism must be conducted in full compliance with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

Secondly, we are concerned about the negative impact that such a designation could have on the work of humanitarian actors, particularly in view of the grave humanitarian crisis in Yemen, where two-thirds of the population are dependent on humanitarian aid. While the proposed sanctions against the Houthis are limited to the application of an arms embargo and not an asset freeze, that could have serious implications for humanitarian operations, including those necessary to conduct imports of essential goods. According to some humanitarian actors, its impact will not be mitigated by proposals to safeguard humanitarian operations and the import of essential goods.

Thirdly, we are concerned about the implications of the designation for the United Nations-facilitated political process, as well as for efforts to resolve the critical situation regarding the *FSO SAFER* tanker.

Fourthly, the designation of terrorist groups by the Council has taken place within the framework of the regime established by resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1373 (2001), which we believe needs to be maintained. We do not consider it appropriate that the mechanism for the designation of terrorist groups should pass through resolutions relating to sanctions regimes. Those are two different spheres of application that should, in our opinion, remain distinct.

On the other hand, Mexico considers the provisions that seek to strengthen the implementation of the

arms embargo to be a positive step, given that the high availability and continuous flows of such arms contribute to the spiral of violence that Yemen is experiencing. The effective implementation of those provisions will result in a reduced capacity to attack neighbouring countries, as has been the case in recent months with attacks against Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and various vessels in the area, which we firmly condemn.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): The conflict in Yemen has reached a critical and tragic juncture. The Houthi offensive against Ma'rib has triggered a deadly military escalation. Last month, the spiral of violence resulted in more than 650 civilian casualties — the highest monthly count in more than three years.

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating, with 21 million people in need of assistance. In December, aid agencies had to reduce food rations for more than 8 million people due to the lack of funding. From March onwards, those rations may be further reduced or cease altogether.

The conflict increasingly stretches beyond Yemeni borders, with a high risk of spiralling out of control. The recent Houthi attacks against civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are deplorable and constitute a reminder of the blatant disregard for human life shown by the Houthis in and outside of Yemen. Brazil reiterates its strong condemnation of those attacks and stands in solidarity with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and third countries, such as India, whose nationals have also been among the victims.

The current humanitarian crisis and regional security threats will come to an end only with a sustainable and inclusive peace. The Yemen sanctions regime, like all measures of that kind, needs to be part of a comprehensive and coherent strategy for achieving peace. It should also be carefully calibrated to avoid detrimental effects on the humanitarian situation.

Resolution 2624 (2022), which we have just adopted, includes new text that seeks to support the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, as well as provisions seeking to safeguard humanitarian and economic activities. Those are valuable inclusions and we commend other Council members for their constructive efforts in that regard.

Brazil believes, however, that there are elements of the text that risk setting back those shared objectives. As we have stated before, applying an overarching counter-terrorism framework to the conflict in Yemen could affect the prospects of dialogue and de-escalation at a time when they are needed the most, both for the wider resolution of the conflict and for specific issues, such as ongoing negotiations related to the *FSO SAFER* tanker.

In the absence of a legal definition of terrorism, the Council should proceed with caution. The characterization of the Houthis as a terrorist group in a Security Council resolution will have direct and, in many cases, immediate repercussions on many national legal systems, thereby affecting the capacity and inclination of exporters, banks, shipping companies and other private actors to interact with the Yemeni economy.

While more humanitarian funding is urgently needed, aid alone cannot sustain a population of 30 million. We should strive to protect the Yemeni economy and its vital links to the world. Similar concerns are raised by the listing of the group as a whole under the Yemen sanctions regime.

Finally, Brazil takes this opportunity to reiterate its support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and calls upon all parties to engage constructively with him and his office.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): We voted in favour of the renewal of the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and we did so because we are committed to strengthening the resolution and enabling it to respond more effectively to the evolving threat. We note that, despite multiple diplomatic engagements, the regrettable military escalations have undermined efforts aimed at moving towards peace.

It is imperative to ensure that those who engage in indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen and from the territory of Yemen into other countries in the region, such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, are held to account. Measures, including sanctions, should be instituted in order to impede their capacity and incentives to undertake such acts. We are aware that sanctions can have negative implications for humanitarian access. As such, we believe that efforts can be made to ensure that humanitarian access is not impeded.

Kenya is alarmed about the increasing trend of transnational groups carrying out attacks outside a territory in which they are engaged in peace processes. In this case, the attacks by the Houthis on civilian targets in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia cross over an acceptable threshold. They contradict the Council's efforts to help the mediation of peace in Yemen. It is time for the Security Council to limit such incentives for groups that can launch cross-border attacks as a way to draw attention to themselves and leverage in their national positions. Sanctions such as the ones being levelled today help reinforce to those groups that they will need to cease their external attacks in order to have any hope of being accepted as legitimate political actors. The same is true for Al-Shabaab, which the Security Council continues to treat as a political spoiler, but what part of political spoiling is it to attack hotel, schools and malls in Kenya?

The Houthis' control of populations and the manipulation of the humanitarian space must not be given support by the Security Council. Surely, we are aware by now that attacks on civilians and civilian objects are some of the greatest drivers of humanitarian crisis. Countering terrorism and supporting humanitarian action are not in conflict with one another. Carve-outs must be designed in order to enable them to work together. Kenya has tried to bring carve-outs to the Council, and we hope that in future there will be a better hearing of them.

Humanitarian organizations must be enabled to better operate in the space in order to avoid exploitation by groups. Otherwise, we would be discussing the imprisonment of entire populations in order to exploit the humanitarian response to their crisis.

As for the concerns we are hearing about the definition of terrorism being lacking, terrorism is recognizable on an intuitive human level. An attack on an airport, such as the one for which we saw evidence in the United Arab Emirates, constitutes terrorism. The shooting of dozens of civilians at Westgate mall in Kenya in 2013 qualifies as terrorism whether or not the United Nations has an official position in that regard.

Let us stand together against terrorism. Let us lower the incentives for cross-border attacks by groups that we are trying to push into national stabilization and peace processes. I am very happy that resolution 2624 (2022) passed today.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking the United Kingdom for its work as the penholder on resolution 2624 (2022). Ghana voted in support of the resolution, extending for another 12 months the Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, because we believe it is important to maintain the sanctions regime in Yemen in the current context of the difficult and worsening security, political, economic and humanitarian situations, despite our misgivings on aspects of paragraph 1.

Our belief that we must preserve the sanctions regime echoes the genuine concerns that have been raised over the unintended consequences that the language of consent could have on the wider implications of how we deal with terrorism, the efforts to support an inclusive political process in Yemen, as well as the challenges that may be posed to the humanitarian and economic fronts in that country.

As we have said in the Council and know from the situation in the region, a military solution to the conflict cannot replace the need for dialogue and diplomacy. Only a political settlement, true and inclusive Yemeni-led and -owned political process facilitated by the United Nations in support of regional actors can deliver a comprehensive and lasting peace for the people of Yemen.

We therefore urge the continued collective support of the Council in the difficult task of bridging the differences among all the parties in order to enhance confidence-building measures and facilitate dialogue towards the resumption of the political process.

We remain concerned about the recent military escalations, alarming increase in civilian casualties and air strikes on civilian infrastructure. We reiterate the call for an immediate nationwide ceasefire and urge the parties to end the hostilities.

Finally, let me express the hope that our differences on this matter will not steer us away from our higher ambition of working with the people of Yemen in order to find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the crisis.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since the beginning of the year, the situation in Yemen has continued to deteriorate, conflicts and confrontation have intensified and hostilities have continued to escalate. China is deeply concerned about those developments.

We condemn all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, call for an immediate stop to the cross-border attacks on, and security threats to, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and support the two countries' efforts to defend their national security.

Using the opportunity of this renewal resolution and given the new developments in the situation, the Security Council just updated sanctions measures and the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen. China's position on the issue of sanctions has always been consistent. We keep a close eye on the impact of sanctions measures and hope that resolution 2624 (2022) can lead all parties to the conflict to renounce the military option and actively support the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy so as to return to the right track of political negotiations as soon as possible. China supports the Special Envoy's active efforts to stay engaged with all parties in order to promote the Yemeni peace process.

In the meanwhile, the United Nations and other agencies should continue to carry out humanitarian operations across Yemen in order to alleviate the suffering of its people. We would like to reiterate that the Panel of Experts should conduct its work in strict accordance with the mandate conferred upon it by the Security Council, uphold objectivity and impartiality and provide information that is accurate and mutual.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Norway is greatly concerned by the serious military escalation of the conflict in Yemen, which has grave consequences for the civilian population and infrastructure, and we remain alarmed about the ever-worsening humanitarian situation. The reduction of food rations for 8 million people and the announced disruption of critical humanitarian programmes is unacceptable.

Norway reiterates its condemnation of the cross-border attacks in the region against the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. My country supports the imposition of targeted sanctions that can help support a path towards a political settlement and contribute to the protection of civilians. Joint Council action to limit the Houthis' capability to carry out attacks and harm civilians is therefore welcome. We also commend the important work done by the Panel of Experts on Yemen and fully support the extension of its mandate.

However, throughout the negotiations on resolution 2624 (2022) we voiced our concern over the introduction of terrorist labelling and designation. We

remain worried that using such terminology, absent a clear definition, may have a negative impact on United Nations efforts to facilitate a political solution in Yemen. Furthermore, we worry about the precedent with regard to other conflicts on the Council's agenda, as well as potential legal ramifications.

Norway is also worried about unintended humanitarian consequences of this new language and that it could negatively affect United Nations efforts to address large-scale humanitarian needs throughout Yemen.

The resolution acknowledges the need for all parties to engage towards a political solution and includes language aimed at safeguarding humanitarian action and not exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation. However, it stops short of addressing our key concerns, and that is why Norway abstained.

There is no military solution to this conflict, and we call upon all parties to prioritize the needs and interests of the Yemeni people by fully cooperating with Special Envoy Grundberg without delay.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Albania welcomes the adoption of resolution 2624 (2022), which we supported. We commend the penholder, the United Kingdom, for the excellent work on the text and congratulate the members of the Security Council on the outcome.

We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), which I am honoured to chair, and of the Panel of Experts on Yemen. We welcome the call for a nation-wide ceasefire, for which we have repeatedly been calling. We welcome the clear and outright condemnation of terrorist acts by the Houthis on the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. They must not be tolerated, and the perpetrators should be held accountable.

The resolution emphasizes that there is no military solution to the current conflict in Yemen. That is our firm position. Albania believe that the text supports an inclusive, Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process, as well as the work of the mandate of the Special Envoy.

We look forward to the full implementation of this resolution to further guarantee more security for Yemen, its people and the whole region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

While we supported the adoption of resolution 2624 (2022) today, at the same time we would like to note that restrictive measures alone cannot be seen as a way to resolve the conflict and should not result in exacerbating the already critical humanitarian situation in Yemen. The relevant exemptions to the sanctions regime must work. Donors and humanitarian actors must be given full explanations in that regard, including through the United Nations.

In taking this decision, we were largely guided by the outcome of the consultations between Council members and Special Envoy Hans Grundberg on 24 February. We hope that intensified political and diplomatic efforts will lead to peace in Yemen and an easing of tensions in the region. We call on Hans Grundberg to step up efforts within his mandate, establish contacts with all the parties and present an appropriate road map for a resolution to the Security Council as soon as possible.

For its part, Russia will continue to do what it can to promote a Yemeni settlement and a general normalization in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.