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# Security Council

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**9548**th meeting
Wednesday, 14 February 2024, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett | (Guyana) |
| *Members*: | Algeria | Mr. Koudri |
| | China | Mr. Zhang Jun |
| | Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| | France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| | Japan | Mr. Yamazaki |
| | Malta | Mr. Camilleri |
| | Mozambique | Mr. Kumanga |
| | Republic of Korea | Mr. Sangjin Kim |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Polyanskiy |
| | Sierra Leone | Mr. Sowa |
| | Slovenia | Mr. Žbogar |
| | Switzerland | Mrs. Baeriswyl |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| | United States of America | Mr. Wood |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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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. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; and Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

**Mr. Grundberg**: Allow me to state the obvious: we meet at a particularly challenging time for Yemen and for the region.

Until recently, we were making steady progress in our mediation. For almost two years, relative calm has prevailed along the frontlines, and key actors continued negotiations towards ending the conflict in Yemen. In late December 2023, the parties expressed to me their commitment to a nationwide ceasefire, measures to improve living conditions and restarting an intra-Yemeni political process. They also committed to work with my Office to operationalize these commitments through a United Nations road map agreement. I am grateful to the roles of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman in supporting the United Nations mediation.

However, the locus of attention has since shifted. The mediation landscape is now undeniably much more complex, and efforts to reach an agreement are being buffeted by different priorities and interests. Rising regional tensions linked to the war in Gaza, and in particular the military escalation in the Red Sea, are slowing down the pace of the peace efforts in Yemen. As much as I have tried to insulate the peace process from wider regional dynamics, the reality is that mediation efforts in Yemen cannot be neatly cordoned off. What happens regionally affects Yemen, and what happens in Yemen can affect the region. In response to Ansar Allah's repeated attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, the United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Nothern Ireland have struck weapons storage facilities, missile systems and other targets in Ansar Allah-controlled areas in Yemen. And in the coming days, also in response to Ansar Allah's military actions in the Red Sea, the United States is expected to designate Ansar Allah a specially designated terrorist group.

Let me be frank, these developments are concerning. Despite potential complications, my work will continue no matter what. It is therefore imperative that we protect the political space, that communication channels are kept open, and that all actors remain actively engaged with my efforts.

While the spotlight is on the Red Sea, I also want to draw the Council's attention to worrying developments inside Yemen. There is a sense of foreboding along several front lines, with reports of clashes, mobilizations and casualties, including in Shabwah, Al-Jawf, Marib, Saada and Taiz. I am also concerned about the growing din of public threats to return to fighting. Meanwhile, the scale of economic challenges across the country is simply staggering. Civil servants, especially in Ansar Allah-controlled areas, have not been paid their salaries in full, and people in Government-controlled areas face extended power outages and rising prices as a result of currency depreciation. In the past week, I have visited Aden, Mokha and Taiz. I have listened to Yemenis' concerns, particularly those related to the need to open roads and improve living conditions, and I have heard their hopes for the future. I have also consistently signaled the importance of maintaining calm on the front lines and protecting the progress made so far.

Although the path to peace now faces more challenges, my mediation approach is flexible enough to adapt to different scenarios and challenges. In addition to Yemen, I have travelled extensively in the region in the past weeks, including to Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. My discussions have focused on the need for a conducive environment for resolving the conflict in Yemen. Amid today's shifting sands, I see three things that need to happen in the immediate term to create an off-ramp for this dangerous escalatory cycle.

First, we need to see regional de-escalation. The United Nations is engaging with relevant stakeholders to encourage prioritizing the use of diplomatic channels

to that end. The Secretary-General has called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and has warned that he is gravely concerned about a further spillover of the conflict. I reiterate his call, and I am engaging the Yemeni parties and relevant regional actors to support de-escalation in the Red Sea in order to protect the mediation space in Yemen.

Secondly, the Yemeni parties must cease their public provocations and refrain from military opportunism inside Yemen at this delicate juncture. Escalation in Yemen is a choice. Making that choice comes with a price — one that Yemenis will pay in even greater losses of lives and livelihoods. The parties must refrain from any actions that risk that outcome. I am encouraged by the fact that in my latest exchanges, I have received assurances that all the parties prefer a path to peace.

Thirdly, and because Yemen is not a footnote to a wider regional story, the parties need to refocus on safeguarding the progress that has been made so far towards reaching an agreement. The regional escalation does not negate the urgent needs in Yemen for establishing a nationwide ceasefire, paying public-sector salaries, resuming oil exports, opening roads, ports and airports, launching reconstruction and other elements that have been under negotiation. The parties still need to engage in sustainable dialogue structures under United Nations auspices to achieve those measures and address other priorities. My Office has been engaging the parties on the details of a ceasefire mechanism that would bring them together, building on the military coordination committee established during the truce. We have also continued to prepare for the creation of a joint economic committee facilitated by the United Nations to support the implementation of agreed economic measures and negotiate other short- and long-term priorities. Ultimately, peace is a political project, so the backbone of all of this must be a credible, internationally supported, intra-Yemeni political process. Through that process, Yemenis will decide how to durably end the war and to build a new political future.

There is no reason for Yemenis to be condemned to conditions of war, poverty and repression. The United Nations road map under discussion presents an alternative future. Instead of maintaining a zero-sum mindset of war and extraction, the parties can cooperate to generate transformative benefits for all Yemenis. For example, a durable, nationwide ceasefire would save lives and enable the revival of economic life. Opening roads and removing double taxation would enhance civilian safety and lower the prices of essential goods. Resuming oil and gas production and export would generate significant finance flows, enabling civil-servant salary payments and the delivery of public services. All of that would ensure that Yemenis have better access to health, education and other essential needs and services.

With the advent of peacetime, international donors could support rebuilding houses and infrastructure and developing sectors such as renewable energy. Foreign direct investment could help Yemen move from aid dependency to investment-driven post-conflict reconstruction. Yemen would have greater access to grants and lending from international financial institutions. More internally displaced people could return home. And crucially, a political settlement would ensure that Yemenis could participate safely and freely in civil and political life. It should also ensure that State institutions are accountable to the priorities and needs of Yemenis.

Yemenis deserve nothing less. We have seen successful peace processes in other contexts unlock many such gains. And in Yemen, there is a compelling alternative to the path of conflict and economic ruin. We are working towards an agreement that enables the parties to come together, negotiate political, economic and military and security priorities and make a difference in the lives of the Yemeni people. That is the pathway to shared and common recovery.

Every member of the Security Council wields influence. What they say and do matters. And Yemen deserves their full attention. Although their vantage points vary, they have a collective responsibility to protect the mediation space and ensure that Yemenis have a real chance at peace. I will continue to rely on the Council's concerted support.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Wosornu.

**Ms. Wosornu**: I thank Mr. Grundberg for his update.

While Yemen's terrible conflict and associated human suffering has dragged on for more than nine years, we must maintain hope for a political solution. However, people in Yemen are watching with alarm as the crisis spreading across the region brings with it the

risk of renewed violence. That is a cause for concern for the people in Yemen and the humanitarian community serving them. In these uncertain times, we are thankful that Julien Harneis has assumed his new role as the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen. He has the full support of Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths in fulfilling his essential duties. Of course, I also want to thank Peter Hawkins of UNICEF for serving as the Coordinator Ad Interim, as well as the previous Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, David Gressly, for all his work.

Last year, some progress was made in mitigating the humanitarian situation — an indication of the positive effects of the United Nations-brokered truce and subsequent cessation of hostilities, as well as the humanitarian response. However, the humanitarian appeal for 2024 that we and our partners released two weeks ago paints a picture of massive, continuing humanitarian need. For example, in 2024, more than 18 million people in Yemen — more than half the country's population — will need humanitarian assistance and protection services. We anticipate that 17.6 million people will be severely food-insecure. An estimated 2.7 million women and 5 million children under the age of five will need treatment for acute malnutrition. The situation will unfortunately continue to deteriorate without urgent and sufficient attention.

In 2023, we received $1.72 billion of the $4.3 billion — just 40 per cent — of the funding requested for the Humanitarian Response Plan. We are truly grateful for donors' support and contributions to the humanitarian response, and indeed to the people of Yemen. This year, our response is more targeted and prioritized. Our plan has been informed by area-based consultations with local authorities, humanitarian and development actors and most importantly with the people we serve — the people affected in Yemen. It is also better aligned with some of the development efforts that are under way. As a result, this year's humanitarian appeal requires $2.7 billion to reach 11.2 million people across Yemen. We have gone down from an ask of $4.3 billion to one of $2.7 billion.

As a matter of priority, we urge the international community to augment its efforts to ensure that the World Food Programme and its partners have the resources necessary to urgently resume food distribution in Houthi-controlled areas and initiate a retargeting and registration exercise. Without sufficient resources, we may see a sharp deterioration in the food security situation in some areas in the coming months. Some 2.4 million children and 900,000 women will face an elevated risk of morbidity and mortality due to malnutrition-related complications. Additionally, and in parallel, fully funding the United Nations development framework, estimated at $1.3 billion, should be a priority in ensuring a transition towards more sustainable solutions.

As we said when we spoke to the Security Council last month, we are watching closely to assess the impact of the hostilities in the Red Sea on the humanitarian situation and on our humanitarian operations. We are receiving reports that transport costs to the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Aden have significantly increased since November due to the ongoing hostilities. The World Food Programme has reported increases of as much as 110 per cent for containerized shipments to Yemen, while other humanitarian organizations have seen freight rate increases as high as 318 per cent. While the humanitarian community is also concerned about the potential adverse effects of the recent designation of the Houthis as a specially designated global terrorist entity, we note that general licences are designed to safeguard many transactions necessary for humanitarian activities and essential commercial imports.

Nevertheless, we fear that there may be an effect on the economy, including on commercial imports of essential items that the people of Yemen depend on more than ever. Humanitarian aid cannot make up for gaps in the supply of commercial goods, and such effects may reverberate across the country. Yemen's already fragile economy and general economic state cannot handle any further major shocks. In Government-held areas, the value of the Yemeni rial has deteriorated even further, reaching its lowest point in more than two years, at 1,514 to the United States dollar, and eroding the purchasing power of the average family more than ever. We welcome the 30-day delay in implementing the Houthi designation, which has enabled consultations within the humanitarian community and the private sector to mitigate its potential impact. More broadly, humanitarian organizations are putting in place business continuity plans and engaging with a broad set of actors on the ground to minimize the impact of regional tensions on the humanitarian response and on the people of Yemen. I echo the Secretary-General's call for resolution 2722 (2024) to be respected in its entirety and for avoiding acts that could further worsen the situation in Yemen.

As the possibility of a return to conflict and increased humanitarian needs grows, we must remember that Yemen is at the forefront of yet another crisis — the global climate crisis. It is the third most vulnerable country in the world to climate change and one of the least prepared for climate shocks. By 2060, the United Nations Development Programme predicts that owing to climate change, extreme poverty could be more than 25 per cent higher than it would otherwise. Climate-induced natural hazards are already worsening the effects of the annual rainy season, along with droughts, water scarcity and desert locusts. Heavy rains and flooding affected around 580,000 people last year and resulted in a reported 2,381 injuries and 47 deaths. Climate-related emergencies not only compound pre-existing risks, they also drive new needs. More than three quarters of the people newly displaced in Yemen last year were displaced because of severe weather events. Climate change emergencies accelerate the humanitarian crisis by driving displacement and increasing protection concerns. They threaten the lives, livelihoods and well-being of households. The impact on women and girls, whose access to essential services and protection services is more limited, can be particularly severe. Yemen will need much more international support to prepare for and mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis. That includes adequate access to climate financing, assistance in streamlining national preparatory systems and investment in climate-resilient development activities and initiatives.

Let me end with three points. First, 2024 can still be the year that Yemen turns the page on the tragedy and suffering produced by years of conflict and economic deterioration. Secondly, we urge the Council to offer its full support to the humanitarian community to improve its ability to respond to the current urgent crisis and help the people of Yemen transition towards self-sufficiency. Lastly, we ask Council members to urge all involved to choose the path of de-escalation and peace.

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

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

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Director Wosornu for their timely briefings.

We are very grateful to the Special Envoy for his timely visit to Yemen, including Aden and other cities, and to other areas in the region. We are cautiously encouraged to hear about the support of the parties for peace and very much welcome the flexibility expressed in his approach. We therefore encourage the Council to continue to provide unwavering support to the Special Envoy during this process. We should work together to safeguard the gains that have been made and support further progress. And we emphasize the importance of seeing the Yemeni parties continue to engage constructively with the United Nations. As Mr. Grundberg said, the Yemeni people deserve nothing less than recovery and sustainable peace in Yemen. There is no military solution to the conflict.

As Ms. Wosornu outlined, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating, and the needs for this year remain high, with 18.2 million people in need of assistance and with women and girls especially vulnerable. Yemen continues to be one of the most food-insecure countries in the world. As we heard, the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2024 is a stark reminder of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. The plan aims to reach 11.2 million Yemenis most in need. The United Kingdom has committed more than $110 million in humanitarian aid during this financial year, and we echo Ms. Wosornu's call to the international community to consider providing further funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen.

Despite repeated calls to de-escalate, the Houthis have continued illegal and destabilizing attacks in the Red Sea, disrupting maritime shipping and freedom of navigation in the region and risking further regional escalation. As we heard from Ms. Wosornu, the disruption to shipping in the Red Sea caused by Houthi attacks is driving up the costs of global shipping, including the cost of food supplies and humanitarian aid in the region. Furthermore, those illegal and unjustified attacks risk exacerbating the humanitarian suffering in Yemen. That is why we have taken necessary, proportionate and legal action in self-defence, alongside the United States and with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand, against targets tied to the Houthi attacks.

In conclusion, let me underscore our commitment to the peace process in Yemen and to the Special Envoy's personal efforts to bring sustainable peace to its people.

**Mr. Kim** (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I too would like to thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Ms. Edem Wosornu, the Director of Operations

and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their informative briefings.

More than a month has now passed since we adopted resolution 2722 (2024), whereby the Security Council firmly condemned the Houthis' attacks on commercial vessels and demanded an immediate halt to them. The Republic of Korea feels strongly that free navigation must be ensured in all cases, and we are therefore greatly concerned about the Houthis' threats and attacks against commercial vessels in the Red Sea. However, despite the international community's consistent messages, the Houthis have repeatedly attacked commercial vessels, including with dangerous missile attacks on two ships just last week. That is unacceptable and unjustifiable, regardless of any excuses. Resolution 2722 (2024) clearly notes Member States' right in accordance with international law to defend their vessels from attacks, including attacks that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. The Republic of Korea once again strongly urges the Houthis to cease its dangerous provocations.

The Yemeni people have suffered acutely over the past decade due to the seemingly never-ending conflict in their country. It is worrisome that according to the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan, 18.2 million Yemenis — more than half of the entire population — are still in need of humanitarian assistance. It is also concerning that food insecurity and the adverse effects of climate change are worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. Rather than further destabilizing the region with their groundless attacks in the Red Sea, the Houthis should focus on tackling the ongoing struggles of the Yemeni people by cooperating with the relevant parties, including the United Nations and other international organizations, in order to establish sustainable peace and development in Yemen. They should also heed the international calls for improving the human rights situation in northern Yemen.

My delegation supports Special Envoy Grundberg's current efforts to bring about a brighter future for Yemen despite the extremely difficult situation. In that connection, we believe that a permanent ceasefire and a resumption of a Yemeni-led political process are essential to ending the suffering of the Yemeni people. Any military attempts inside Yemen should therefore cease immediately, and meaningful engagements between the parties should be resumed. The Republic of Korea fully supports a Yemeni-led political transition process with the inclusive participation of all groups that have been marginalized so far, such as women and young people. We also support the ongoing engagement of key countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Oman, towards the realization of a final agreement.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings and welcome the presence among us today of the representative of Yemen.

The Houthis must stop their destabilizing action in the Red Sea. France reiterates its condemnation of the attacks on commercial ships that they have carried out in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, attacks that are continuing, as the latest report of the Secretary-General on the subject indicates. Through those armed actions the Houthis bear full responsibility for the escalation. We call on them to desist and to immediately release the *Galaxy Leader* and its crew, whom they have held hostage since 19 November 2023. Resolution 2722 (2024), which the Security Council adopted on 10 January, recalls that the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms must be respected, and that in accordance with international law, States have the right to defend their ships against attacks. The resolution must be fully respected and applied. France will continue to assume its responsibilities and to contribute to maritime security in that area, in conjunction with its partners in the region, in order to prevent any escalation. We are already deploying military assets under our national mandate. We welcome the launch of the European Union's Operation Aspides in the Red Sea, which represents a contribution to maritime security in the region.

The serious violations of international law committed by the Houthis in the Red Sea should not distract attention from the situation inside Yemen. Faced with rising tensions in certain governorates, the partial truce, which has been punctuated by various incidents, must be transformed into a complete and lasting cessation of hostilities. A lasting ceasefire will enable the improvement of the humanitarian situation. With almost half of the population in a situation of food insecurity, the humanitarian response must not suffer from the concrete consequences of the tensions in the Red Sea. It is the Yemeni people, particularly in areas controlled by the Houthis, who are the primary victims of the tensions in the Red Sea, as humanitarian organizations point to rising costs. The Houthis have also continued to obstruct access for humanitarian

partners on the ground, and their responsibility for the deteriorating humanitarian situation is clear. It is essential to maintain the delivery of humanitarian aid to the civilian population of Yemen at a reasonable cost.

France supports the United Nations mechanisms acting to promote greater stability and security in Yemen, such as the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen, which is effectively combating arms trafficking in the Red Sea. It must be strengthened and better financed.

Finally, France reiterates its full support for the Special Envoy and his tireless efforts to define an inclusive road map. The peace process has been disrupted by the irresponsible behaviour of the Houthis in the Red Sea, but the intention is to continue working according to the road map defined by the Special Envoy. France welcomes his efforts and the efforts and mobilization in that regard by Saudi Arabia, Oman and other regional actors.

The Security Council must continue to work to achieve a peace plan. That is the only path towards a comprehensive, inclusive political solution that takes full account of the concerns and interests of all Yemenis. The full, equal, substantial and effective participation of Yemeni women in political negotiations must also be guaranteed. France calls on the parties, and the Houthis first and foremost, to act responsibly with a view to reaching a political agreement with the new Yemeni Prime Minister, whose appointment we welcome.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Ms. Wosornu for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to this meeting.

For some time now, the parties concerned have stayed closely engaged on a political solution to the Yemeni issue, working diligently to end the suffering of the people. The political process has therefore made some positive progress. China commends Special Envoy Grundberg, the Yemeni parties and the countries of the region concerned for their endeavours.

However, it is worrying that the ongoing escalations in the Red Sea, in particular the sustained military actions by certain countries against Yemen, have aggravated the security risks in the area and dealt a heavy blow to Yemen's political process. We call on the Houthis to stop attacking commercial vessels. We also stress that the Council has never authorized any country to use force against Yemen. No country should distort or abuse international law or Security Council resolutions to provoke new tensions in the Red Sea.

At this crucial moment, we hope that the Yemeni parties will put the interests of the people first, demonstrating resolve, eliminating interference and steadfastly advancing the political process towards a final victory. We support the Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned principals in advancing the political process. We support the work of Special Envoy Grundberg in his ongoing efforts and look forward to seeing countries with major influence on the Yemeni situation continue to play a constructive role. Yemen remains beset by one of the world's gravest humanitarian crises. Its people are in urgent need of food, clean water, health care and other basic necessities. China is highly concerned about the fragility on the humanitarian front. We call on the international community to increase humanitarian and development input to Yemen in order to effectively improve the humanitarian situation on the ground.

A political settlement of the Yemeni issue is closely linked to its regional environment. As we speak, the Gaza conflict is spilling over. The Red Sea situation is escalating, and the Middle East is therefore on the verge of extreme danger. The pressing priority for us all is to push for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and take tangible, effective and responsible measures to prevent the conflict from spreading to the wider region. In particular, the countries concerned should heed the strong appeals of the international community, especially countries and peoples in the region, cease obstructing the Council's actions and genuinely join efforts to bring about an early ceasefire in Gaza.

Alongside the rest of the international community, China stands ready to continue to work tirelessly for a political settlement of the Yemeni issue and the maintenance of peace and stability in the Middle East.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, and the Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in the country. Of course, as we have done in the past, we could have focused our statement today on the internal agenda in Yemen, namely the prospects for a settlement and the results of negotiations. Regrettably, however, those processes have been complicated by a

new and destructive factor that cannot be ignored, which is the ongoing aggression of the so-called coalition led by the United States and the United Kingdom, with the participation of several of their satellites, against the sovereign country of Yemen.

The large-scale strikes that began on 11 January against that territory in the Middle East are still going on. The Western countries' actions are a direct violation of international law. Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which they base it on, does not apply to a situation involving commercial vessels. The right to self-defence cannot be invoked to ensure freedom of navigation, especially when we are allegedly talking about protecting vessels flying third-country flags. And the Security Council has authorized no use of force under Chapter VII of the Charter. This warped interpretation of resolution 2722 (2024) is also unacceptable. The resolution does not give any permission to commit acts of force in Yemen. This dangerous approach that the West is taking increasingly often undermines the authority of the Security Council and the entire United Nations and leads to the destruction of the entire global security architecture.

We note with regret that, following in the Americans' footsteps, the European Union has decided to go down the same vicious path and announced its own so-called "defensive operation", Aspides, which, according to Brussels, will begin as early as 19 February — that is, next week. I want to stress that the Russian Federation categorically condemns attacks on and the interception of commercial vessels, as well as any steps that impede freedom of navigation. We have conveyed messages to that effect to the leadership of the Ansar Allah movement, urging it to focus on the domestic agenda in Yemen and finalize the relevant agreements. However, this dubious Western adventurism is creating additional risks to the intra-Yemeni process and is not making navigation in these waters any safer. On the contrary, the West's destructive steps will only spread further chaos across the region. Needless to say, these lawless attacks on Yemen are having a negative impact on the already difficult humanitarian situation in the country, where there is already a severe shortage of food and medicines. According to United Nations estimates, only 39 per cent of the $4.3 billion requested to support Yemenis in need in 2023 was delivered. If our United States and British colleagues genuinely want to help, they should immediately end their military activity against Yemen and focus on providing real assistance to the ordinary people throughout the country.

I must recall the root cause of the situation that has emerged — that is, Israel's brutal military operation in the Gaza Strip, which has provoked a chain reaction in the entire Middle East, including the actions of the Ansar Allah movement. An immediate ceasefire in Gaza will help stabilize the situation in the Red Sea, and in turn a de-escalation in those waters will unblock the efforts of Special Envoy Grundberg, who in the circumstances has been forced to revert to shuttle diplomacy rather than being able to complete his work on the road map for an inter-Yemeni settlement. Our support for Mr. Grundberg's efforts remains steadfast. We understand the extent to which United Nations mediation has been complicated by the short-sighted actions of our friends in the West, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. Practically speaking, each new strike on Yemen results in another wave of escalation and makes the prospects for normalization more distant.

Russia has been sincerely seeking to help the Yemeni people reach an agreement, and we have redoubled our own mediation efforts to that end against the backdrop of the aggressive actions of Washington and its satellites. We have maintained our contacts with leading Yemeni political forces and key regional partners, continuing to emphasize the need to reach long-term stabilization as quickly as possible through inclusive inter-Yemeni dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations. We call on partners to maintain a focus on the peace process. We are convinced that ultimately all Yemeni stakeholders, including the Ansar Allah leadership, want to continue the dialogue. But they do not just need our help. They need us not to interfere or create additional problems for a Yemeni settlement through ill-considered actions.

**Mr. Camilleri** (Malta): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Director Wosornu for their comprehensive briefings and tireless efforts.

Considering the mounting tensions in the region, it is vital that the parties to the conflict in Yemen remain dedicated to finding a political agreement that can lead to sustainable peace. The establishment of a United Nations road map will be crucial to ensuring the fulfilment of the commitments made by the parties in December 2023. More specifically, they include the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, the improvement of living conditions and engagement in

preparations for a resumption of an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process, under United Nations auspices.

The humanitarian emergency in Yemen is a critical concern for Malta and must remain a priority for the Council. Nine years into this conflict, a staggering 18 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection services. We welcome the appointment of Julien Harneis as Resident Coordinator for Yemen and thank his predecessor, David Gressly, for his dedicated service. The United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for 2024 is a lifeline for millions of Yemenis. We call on donors to support the United Nations in their efforts to deliver essential humanitarian aid. The food and security situation is equally worrying. More than 12 million people lack sufficient access to safe drinking water, resulting in an alarming increase in cholera and other infectious diseases. The chronic impediments to access for humanitarian workers are exacerbating Yemeni civilians' suffering. We want to remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law. Restrictions on women aid workers' freedom of movement limit access to basic services among Yemen's most vulnerable. In that regard, we reiterate our call on the Houthis to lift the *mahram* requirements with immediate effect.

Nearly 2.5 million children are out of school. A further 8 million are at risk of leaving the education system due to the destruction and repurposing of school buildings or to internal displacement. All parties must refrain from action that impedes access to education. They have the responsibility to safeguard, protect, respect and promote the right to education, in line with resolution 2601 (2021).

As we have heard today, Yemen is not only experiencing one of the world's worst humanitarian and development crises, it is also one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. That has been underscored by the damage and disruption caused by recent natural disasters, including excessive flooding. Malta reiterates its call for synergies to be met with concrete solutions, with a focus on strengthening early-warning and anticipatory reactions and climate-resilient agriculture and food systems.

Malta is also deeply concerned about the impact of recent escalations in the region and their implications for Yemen's road map to peace and the humanitarian situation. As recognized in resolution 2722 (2024), the Houthis must immediately cease all attacks on commercial shipping and release any personnel or vessels that are being detained. Furthermore, we reiterate that all Member States defending their vessels must do so in accordance with international law.

Malta calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and prioritize diplomatic channels so as not to further escalate the current situation.

In conclusion, the international community must safeguard the hard-won gains made towards peace in Yemen. We call on all parties to remain dedicated to agreeing to a United Nations road map for a formalized ceasefire and political process and to guarantee the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. We must continue to support the people of Yemen and ensure that, after nearly a decade of conflict, their path to peace is protected.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Director Wosornu for their briefings today. Let me also welcome Yemen's representative to this meeting.

The United States also welcomes the Secretary-General's report published last week on Houthi threats to maritime security. That reporting on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, as requested by resolution 2722 (2024), makes clear the extent of that threat and the need for the Council to continue to demand that the Houthis cease their attacks.

In response to attacks on United States naval vessels, the United States has taken necessary and proportionate measures in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence, as described in letters provided to the Council on 12 and 26 January and 6 February. As we indicated in our letters, those strikes, taken in self-defence, are aimed at disrupting and degrading the Houthis' ability to continue their reckless attacks against vessels and commercial shipping in the Red Sea, the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden.

It also bears repeating that the United States does not desire more conflict in the region.

We call again on the Houthis to release the crew of the MV Galaxy Leader. It has been nearly three months since the Houthis took the 25-member crew and their ship hostage, and every day that their detention continues is unacceptable.

Iran cannot deny its role in enabling and supporting the attacks carried out by the Houthis, given Iran's long-term material support for and encouragement of the Houthis' destabilizing actions in the region.

Since 2014, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has provided the Houthis a growing arsenal of advanced weapons that they have used to attack commercial shipping in the Red Sea. The provision of that materiel violates resolutions 2140 (2014) and 2216 (2015).

Between 2015 and 2023, the United States and its partners interdicted at least 18 vessels illicitly smuggling weapons to the Houthis, seizing ballistic, cruise and anti-ship missile components, unmanned aircraft and other weapons.

And just weeks ago on 11 January, while conducting a flag verification boarding, United States Navy forces interdicted a vessel illegally transporting advanced lethal aid, including advanced Iranian-manufactured ballistic and cruise missile components, from Iran to resupply Houthi militants in Yemen.

We call again on every Member State — and especially those with direct channels to Iran — to press Iran's leaders to rein in the Houthis and stop those lawless attacks and abide by their obligations under Security Council resolutions.

The Houthis are trying to apply a chokehold on global shipping through the Red Sea. As a result, people around the world are facing increased costs for goods and supplies. Rerouting a ship around Africa adds roughly 10 days and $1 million in fuel costs for each one-way voyage between Asia and Europe.

The Houthis also continue to lay siege to cities in Yemen and prevent the transfer of food, water and humanitarian aid to civilian populations, laying bare the hypocrisy of their claims.

Last month, the United States announced the designation of Ansar Allah, commonly known as the Houthis, as specially designated global terrorists, effective 16 February. As the world's leading donor of humanitarian assistance for Yemen, we delayed the designation's effective date to consult with stakeholders on minimizing the impact those actions might have on the humanitarian situation. In addition to existing humanitarian carveouts that mitigate the humanitarian impact on the Yemeni people, the United States also announced new general licences to support continued access to essential goods and services in Yemen.

The United States seeks to narrowly target the Houthis' terrorist activities, while mitigating any humanitarian harm on the people of Yemen who deserve the chance for a better future. To that end, we congratulate His Excellency Ahmed Awad Binmubarak on his appointment as Yemen's Prime Minister and thank outgoing Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalek Saeed for his service to the Yemeni people. We commend both for their sustained commitment to a United Nations-led, Yemeni-Yemeni political process aimed at bringing the Yemen conflict to an end.

It is important that any intra-Yemeni peace framework not only support dialogue between the Houthis and the Government, but also include broad engagement with Yemeni civil society and other stakeholders. Their calls for justice, accountability and redress for human rights abuses and violations must be not only heard but also addressed. For that reason, we continue to call for the release of our own locally employed staff who have been detained by the Houthis in Sana'a for more than two years and all others unjustly detained in Yemen.

Above all, the United States remains committed to achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity for the Yemeni people.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank our two briefers for their briefings and their tireless efforts, including the recent efforts of the Special Envoy, to promote peace and protect civilians in Yemen. I would also like to welcome the representative of Yemen to this Security Council meeting.

As we have heard, this year has just begun, and Yemen once again finds itself at a crossroads. While hopes for a peaceful settlement remain, recent regional dynamics have led to additional risks. We all know that regional de-escalation would have a positive impact on Yemen. Similarly, a lasting peace in Yemen would have a stabilizing effect on the region, including for security in the Red Sea. That is why the gains of the discussions under way must be preserved. The parties must fully commit themselves to an inclusive process under the aegis of the United Nations. In that respect, without the sustained commitment of all actors, including the significant participation of women, the peace proposals will be unattainable and there will be no way to ensure lasting security in the country. As Ms. Yasmeen Al-Eryani of the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies

told the Council last May (see S/PV.9323), "Yemeni women, young people and every other social group are fully capable of rebuilding the country and shaping its future".

Furthermore, Switzerland calls on all parties to exercise caution and restraint, as well as to strictly respect international law and redouble diplomatic efforts to that end. Any further deterioration in the situation would have devastating human and economic consequences. We have seen that for ourselves: the last decade of war has had a severe impact on many sectors of Yemeni society, not least education. Yemeni civil society has told us clearly that millions of children now carry guns instead of school bags. That situation is unacceptable. That is why we call on all parties to implement their action plans to put an end to and prevent serious violations against children.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Switzerland recalls that the parties are obliged under international humanitarian law to authorize and facilitate the rapid, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. In that respect, as we regularly underscore, humanitarian personnel are protected by international humanitarian law and must be able to work regardless of any question of nationality. Switzerland applauds the commitment of the women and men who work in one of the most difficult environments in the world. Their commitment makes it possible to bring vital assistance to millions of people. As the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stressed, that aid is essential, especially in view of the particularly alarming level of food insecurity in Yemen.

The Yemeni population is caught up in successive and cumulative crises, climate change being one of the most serious. Combined with the conflict, the increase in natural disasters is pushing people to leave their homes, thereby exacerbating the current humanitarian crisis. That is why we need not only to step up humanitarian aid, but also to strengthen early warning systems. Lastly, the structural shortage of water resources needs to be tackled. In particular, preventing future water-related conflicts will require political measures that address water-related challenges.

The Council and the countries of the region must redouble efforts to contribute to an environment conducive to peace talks and to respond to growing humanitarian needs. In that context, Switzerland would like to reaffirm its full support for Special Envoy Hans Grundberg. The Yemeni people can wait no longer.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I thank our briefers today — Special Envoy Grundberg and Director Wosornu. I also congratulate Mr. Julien Harneis on his appointment as Resident Coordinator. As this is our first open briefing on Yemen, I wish to extend Slovenia's full support for the work of their respective Offices. I also want to welcome the representative of Yemen to today's meeting.

I will begin today by addressing the humanitarian crisis in Yemen — one of the world's worst. This has been brought into sharp focus by the 2024 humanitarian needs overview and response plan, published earlier this month. And, as Director Wosornu just informed us, Yemen remains one of the most food insecure countries following years of conflict, displacement and the increasing effects of climate change, leading to droughts and flooding. The impact of the country's water scarcity on access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is alarming. And we are horrified that Yemeni children, in particular, are at daily risk from landmines and other unexploded ordnance. All of this is compounded by a challenging humanitarian funding situation and a precarious security environment for aid workers on the ground.

I start by raising this issue today as, amid broader regional conflagration, the suffering of the Yemeni people through nine long years of war should not be overlooked or forgotten. The Yemeni people must remain our primary incentive for finding a solution to this protracted conflict.

For some time, a solution had appeared within reach. We welcomed the encouraging update from the Special Envoy, as announced in December, that the parties had made a commitment to reaching a ceasefire and developing a United Nations road map. It is disappointing, but not unexpected, that the deterioration of the situation across the region is affecting the peace process in Yemen at the moment.

We fully back continuing United Nations efforts to translate the truce into a nationwide ceasefire respected by all parties. We recognize the need for an inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue and political settlement, and we stress the importance of underrepresented groups, such as women and youth, having a meaningful voice in this process.

Slovenia welcomes the efforts of the Special Envoy to continue to engage with all stakeholders, now needed more than ever, and we encourage those with influence over the parties to use it wisely and to foster constructive dialogue.

Last month we adopted resolution 2722 (2024) condemning Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, which have, regrettably, continued. I reiterate Slovenia's call for those attacks to cease.

In conclusion, we urgently call for the long-overdue peace for the people of Yemen to remain a top priority for all. We call for the Security Council to stay united in that endeavour. And we emphasize the need to prioritize diplomatic efforts, first and foremost.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, as well as by Ms. Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). I also welcome the representative of Yemen to today's meeting.

I reiterate my appreciation for Special Envoy Grundberg's work in advancing a dialogue process based on a commitment to democracy, good governance and national reconciliation in Yemen and encourage him to continue such efforts. I take this opportunity to wish the new United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Mr. Julien Harneis, success in his duties.

My delegation is concerned about the impact that the escalation of violence in the Red Sea, provoked by the Houthi attacks on commercial vessels, could have on the development of a road map for negotiations. We believe that intra-Yemeni political dialogue, under the auspices of the United Nations, is the only viable path to sustainable peace in Yemen.

Ecuador reiterates the need to comply with resolution 2722 (2024) and calls on the Houthis to cease their attacks on commercial vessels and to release all crew members who have been detained.

After almost nine years of war, more than half of Yemen's population — 18.2 million people — need humanitarian assistance, which, according to OCHA's 2024 humanitarian response plan, requires a budget of $2.7 billion. Today, more than ever, the Yemeni population needs the support of the international community. A further escalation of the conflict would reverse the slight improvement that the humanitarian situation in Yemen experienced in 2023 as a result of the truce.

Attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea have caused an increase in transport prices and delays in shipments of essential goods, such as fuel and food.

Projections for the situation in Yemen show that the population will experience acute food insecurity levels in areas controlled by the Government of Yemen, increasing from 41 per cent to 45 per cent, equivalent to 4.56 million people. In addition, humanitarian organizations could be forced to stop their operations in areas where hostilities have occurred, affecting vulnerable populations that require their assistance.

My country reiterates the call of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for the parties to refrain from actions that could result in a new armed conflict, which, in addition to undermining the fragile peace process and the limited humanitarian progress, could exacerbate regional tensions.

**Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to Special Envoy Grundberg and to Ms. Wosornu, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their informative briefings. My appreciation also goes to the Secretariat and the International Maritime Organization for their preparation of the report, in accordance with resolution 2722 (2024).

Today, I would like to focus on three issues: the ongoing crisis in the Red Sea, the peace process and the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

First, we have been witnessing an extraordinary number of reports of the Houthis launching or attempting to launch missiles, drones and other advanced weapons towards vessels in the Red Sea and its vicinity. The Houthis' continued threats to maritime security and navigational rights have led to a sharp decrease in trade via the Suez Canal, as the Secretary-General recently informed the General Assembly. Many commercial ships are now being forced to take the more costly, energy-intensive and time-consuming route around South Africa for their travel between Asia and Europe. Businesses around the world, including in my country, have already experienced a negative real-life impact due to that disruption of global supply chains.

I have voiced grave concern about this problem several times in the Chamber, and the Security Council unequivocally pronounced the same in resolution 2722

(2024), but Japan once again condemns the Houthi attacks and demands their immediate cessation.

Likewise, we condemn the seizure of the Japanese-operated *Galaxy Leader* and demand the immediate release of the vessel and its 25 crew members, which the Houthis have been illegally holding for nearly three months.

Secondly, moving to Yemen's peace process, Japan commends the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy, as well as the critical role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, despite the current very difficult circumstances. Japan believes that political stability is crucial for Yemen, as it will not only enhance the country's national security but also lay a foundation for improving the economic and humanitarian situation. We will continue to support the work of the Special Envoy and to hope that the United Nations road map he and his team are preparing can bring lasting peace to Yemen.

The people of Yemen have been suffering from a devastating humanitarian situation over nine years of conflict. Japan is seriously concerned about the possibility that the delays and increased costs of imports resulting from the growing security risks in the Red Sea will only worsen their plight. We are also deeply concerned about the severe malnutrition and food shortages across the country. We sincerely hope that the World Food Programme (WFP) can resume its vital operations as soon as possible. Given the current significant shortfall in humanitarian funding, Japan recently decided to make an additional contribution of more than $18 million to Yemen from its current supplementary budget. That includes a contribution of approximately $2 million to the WFP to increase its ability to provide emergency food assistance to the most vulnerable people in Yemen. Japan remains committed to improving the humanitarian situation in that country.

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

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council plus one, namely, Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and my own country, Guyana (A3+1). I want to welcome and thank United Nations Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Ms. Edem Wosornu, the Director of Operations and Advocacy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings. We also welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in today's meeting.

At the outset, the A3+1 would like to reiterate its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen. We recognize the positive engagement and commitment of the Government of Yemen to the international and regional efforts to end the conflict and resume the political process under the auspices of the United Nations. The situation in Yemen requires collective effort to consolidate the commitment and support of the United Nations system and regional actors in the pursuit of a comprehensive and lasting peace. In that vein, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Julien Harneis as United Nations Resident Coordinator for Yemen and as the new Humanitarian Coordinator in the country. The people of Yemen deserve peace, security and stability in advancing their political and economic future.

The facilitating role of the United Nations Special Envoy, and the efforts made by Saudi Arabia and Oman with a view to facilitating a resumption of an intra-Yemeni political process under the auspices of the United Nations, are vital to ensuring an inclusive political process in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We therefore welcome and express our full support for the ongoing consultations with all relevant parties and stakeholders as part of the framework for a comprehensive peace process. The A3+1 stresses the importance of preserving the recent commitments announced by the parties in December 2023 and the ongoing discussions around a United Nations road map that would operationalize a nationwide ceasefire, resume an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices and address key priorities for the benefit of the Yemeni people. Further, we stress that it is important for the parties to provide the space for the full, effective and meaningful participation of Yemeni women and civil society at every stage of the peace process, noting their long-demonstrated willingness and capacity to engage in national efforts at all levels to resolve the conflict.

The A3+1 calls on the Houthis to adhere to the peace process in the country and to sustain the goal of maintaining a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire. Maintaining a comprehensive ceasefire built on the truce of April 2022 would stimulate and bring sanity to the peace process itself and to other relevant layers that are complementary to the process. In that context, we urge the Houthis to cease hostilities and to refrain

from threatening commercial vessels and endangering international navigation and innocent lives.

After nine years of conflict, the humanitarian needs in Yemen remain immense. A political agreement leading to a sustainable peace is the only long-term solution to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The A3+1 is deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in the country, which is seriously affecting women and children. The conflict has affected humanitarian relief and destroyed critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and health clinics, and it has killed many. We call on the parties responsible to remove the barriers affecting the flow of humanitarian aid and the ability of humanitarian workers to perform their duties. We note that 18.2 million Yemeni people will need humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2024, with 17.6 million facing food and nutrition insecurity. In that vein, we would welcome the resumption of food supplies to the country by the World Food Programme (WFP) and call on all the parties concerned to support the WFP in that endeavour.

The A3+1 stresses that the parties have a legal obligation to ensure that humanitarian personnel are allowed to carry out their work unhindered and free from harm. Hostage-taking and other threats to their existence and ability to effectively carry out their duties, including by denying them freedom of movement, must cease. We urge strongly for the release of all humanitarian workers and for an immediate end to all forms of intimidation employed to discourage them from carrying out their vital work.

The crisis in Yemen has raged for too long, tearing apart the fabric of the nation. On one side, forces loyal to the internationally recognized Government fight to maintain order, while on the other, the Houthis are challenging their authority and controlling significant swathes of territory, including the capital, Sana'a. The relentless conflict has left behind a trail of destruction, displacement and despair.

We want to spotlight the urgent need for funding to support the humanitarian operations. It is worrisome to us that the humanitarian funding portfolio has yet to achieve its desired target. We therefore call on international partners and donors to make meaningful contributions to the fund. The support from Member States will sustain the lives of millions of Yemenis who are in need. Funding must also go beyond humanitarian assistance to include development programmes in Yemen. Together we can continue to support the resilient people of Yemen and take decisive steps towards resolving what remains one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The continued deterioration and downward trend of the situation in Yemen, including the humanitarian crisis and the shocking economic conditions, together with the actions perpetrated by the Houthis, must be addressed. We urge the Houthis to refrain from using arbitrary measures that could exacerbate the suffering of the population. The A3+1 is concerned about the escalation of the use of force in the region in a situation that is already volatile. The continued attacks on Yemeni soil will affect humanitarian aid and worsen the security situation in the country. The spate of air strikes risks endangering the peace talks and the renewed commitment by the parties. We urge due caution in avoiding any action that could undermine or derail the efforts of the Special Envoy towards the goal of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in Yemen. We ask all involved to exercise maximum restraint, prioritize diplomatic channels over military options and call for de-escalation.

It is imperative to underscore that the Middle East is at a crossroads, with the current situations in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria escalating to a point where regional spillover from the conflict in Gaza could become a reality. It will be prudent for all parties to exercise restraint and abstain from further escalating tensions. A wider regional conflagration in the immediate circumstances must be prevented by all means necessary, and diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation should be ramped up. We urge for maximum restraint and immediate steps aimed at de-escalating the tensions in the Middle East. And we reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, which is of paramount importance in ensuring regional stability. Stability and security in the region must be the top priority. The root causes of the conflict must be addressed, and all efforts in that regard must be pursued with equal attention, dedication and commitment. We must use all existing diplomatic tools and mediation processes to secure the release of hostages and all civilians who remain in captivity and collectively achieve a humanitarian ceasefire to end the conflict in Gaza. The A3+1 reiterates its support for an inclusive, nationally led and owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations, with the clear goal of reaching a lasting and comprehensive peace in Yemen. We reaffirm our

strong support and commitment to the work of the United Nations Special Envoy, the good offices of the Secretary-General and the efforts by Saudi Arabia and Oman aiming to facilitate the resumption of an intra-Yemeni political process for attaining security, stability and lasting peace in Yemen.

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*): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Madam President, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you and your friendly country every success. I also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the friendly nation of France, for France's successful presidency last month. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and to thank Mr. Hans Grunberg and Ms. Edem Wosornu for their briefings.

Peace is the reason for our presence here. However, in the current Yemeni political landscape peace in all of its dimensions has eluded us. Wars and conflicts devastate countries and societies while peace establishes security, stability and development. Today, peacebuilding in Yemen is an inevitable necessity and is in the interests of Yemenis, the region and the international community. The Presidential Leadership Council and the Yemeni Government once again emphasize how important it is for our people to achieve peace, justice, equality and development. Our goal is to achieve all of that in the interests of the people and to turn the page on our devastating wars and conflicts.

The Presidential Leadership Council welcomes every initiative and all good offices aimed at achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace based on the agreed political terms of reference — that is, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015). In that context, we reiterate our full support for the regional and international efforts and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

We also commend the sincere efforts of our sister nation of Saudi Arabia to revive the political process under the auspices of the United Nations in order to address the crisis in Yemen, achieve peace, restore security and stability and alleviate the suffering endured by the Yemeni people. Those efforts have been met with rejection and intransigence by the Houthi militias, who have also initiated a military escalation on various fronts where a fragile truce held. The militias have refused to comply with the provisions of the truce, including by continuing the unjust siege of the city of Taiz and failing to comply with their commitment to open up the roads, causing all kinds of suffering and crises for the more than 3 million people in Taiz. The siege represents a policy of collective punishment, a full-fledged war crime and a grave challenge to the calls of the international community and the Security Council for an end to the war and for a resumption of political dialogue.

There has been escalation by the Houthi militias in the Red Sea. That is not new. In General Assembly meetings His Excellency Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, President of the Presidential Leadership Council and the Yemeni Government, has warned on more than one occasion against the militias' continued control of the Red Sea ports, with Iran's support, as well as against the threats to international navigation. Repeated warnings about this are also included in the reports issued by the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) against Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. There are pages of evidence and proof of those aggressions and attacks. Unfortunately, the warnings went unheeded by the international community, and we are seeing the consequences of that in the escalation that is happening today. We also want to warn against the flow of Iranian weapons to the Houthi militias and the risks that poses to regional and international peace and security. It will prolong the conflict in Yemen and escalate the humanitarian crisis.

We reaffirm the Yemeni Government's sovereign right to protect its territorial waters and to promote security and stability in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, as well as in the region. That will be possible only by providing the Yemeni Government with support and building its capacity to secure international maritime trade in its waters, restore ownership of State institutions and regain authority and control throughout Yemen, including over the cities and ports that are currently being used as launch pads for threatening the security and safety of international navigation.

The Yemeni Government holds the Houthi militias responsible for dragging Yemen into an arena of international conflict for propaganda purposes and

with false allegations. They have nothing to do with support for a solution to the just Palestinian question. The Government points out that certain policies among members of the international community regarding the Yemeni crisis have contributed to reinforcing the militias' control and encouraging them to continue their acts of aggression, which constitute threats to regional and international security and stability. We once again urge the international community to take a realistic approach, correct any false narratives and revise its efforts to address the situation in Yemen. The Yemeni Government welcomes the decision of the friendly Government of the United States to designate the Houthi militias as an international terrorist group. They constitute a terrorist organization that must end its violations and crimes against the Yemeni people and abandon its terrorist behaviour and violence. They must accept political solutions aimed at achieving peace in Yemen and cease threatening the security and stability of the country and the region.

The recent escalation in the Red Sea will have grave economic and humanitarian consequences, including an increase in the economic and humanitarian burdens that are undermining the national sovereignty and interests of the Yemeni people. The costs of maritime shipping, insurance on goods and foodstuffs have risen in a country that is enduring the worst possible humanitarian crisis. Eighty per cent of the needs of the people in areas under the control of the Houthi militias are dependent on foodstuffs and goods imported through Al-Hudaydah port and the Red Sea. We caution against continuing the attacks, which will bring global trade in the Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandab Strait to an almost complete halt, along with all export and import operations in Yemen, which will also worsen the economic and humanitarian situations in Yemen and the lives of its people.

The Government of Yemen has been working to implement multiple economic and financial reforms, with support from our brothers, friends and development partners in promoting those reforms, improving the economic situation and limiting the humanitarian and economic fallout resulting from the Houthi militias' escalation and targeting of vital oil facilities. I reiterate before the Security Council that they target vital oil facilities.

The Houthi militias' attacks have prevented the Yemeni Government from resuming its export of oil for more than a year and a half, thus depriving the Yemeni people of their most important resource. That also affects the State's general budget, which has meant that the Government has not been able to provide basic services to citizens, including the payment of salaries. This has prevented the national economy from benefiting from the flow of hard currency, put more pressure on national currency's exchange rate and entailed disastrous economic and humanitarian consequences. It constitutes a policy of starvation and systematic economic war waged by those militias against the Yemeni people.

The Yemeni Government calls on the international community to help it to find the ways and means to return to exporting oil, that vital resource of crucial significance, thus enabling it to fulfil its obligations and commitments. The Yemeni Government reiterates its call on humanitarian organizations, including United Nations agencies, to transfer their funds destined for Yemen via the Central Bank of Yemen in the temporary capital, Aden, in order to facilitate the stabilization of the national currency, support the economy and increase food stocks.

We commend the continuous financial and economic support provided by our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates aimed at supporting the Yemeni Government's efforts to implement its plans and address the existing economic challenges, as well as their humanitarian interventions and implementation of a number of development projects, which have significantly contributed to easing the humanitarian suffering of the population. We are deeply grateful to our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for transferring their second instalment of $250 million to support the State's general budget and the Government's efforts to fulfil its obligations.

The Yemeni Government fully supports and stands in solidarity with the humanitarian community against the arbitrary measures taken by the Houthi militias to expel United Nations and humanitarian relief agency personnel, including British and United States nationals. Those immoral actions add to the Houthis' huge toll of grave violations of the freedom of humanitarian action. The Presidential Leadership Council and the Yemeni Government affirm that they will provide all the necessary facilities and guarantees for the work of international organizations and humanitarian relief agencies operating in the temporary capital, Aden, in order to enhance their presence and facilitate their

humanitarian operations in the various governorates of Yemen, without restrictions.

The escalation and terrorist operations in the Red Sea compelled the United Nations Development Programme to suspend its operations to save the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker. That operation will resume as soon as the security situation in the Red Sea stabilizes. The current state of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker is cause for alarm. Despite the progress achieved in the implementation of the first phase of the recovery operation, including the transfer of more than 1.14 million barrels of crude oil to another tanker, there are serious fears that the tanker's huge amount of oil will remain in a very dangerous area controlled by lawless militias. The attacks have created financial and operational challenges in carrying out the rescue operation and averting a disaster.

The Presidential Leadership Council reaffirms its consistent position in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people and their just cause. It condemns in the strongest terms the brutal Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank. We once again call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to ensure the protection of civilians and to save more lives, including those of women and children, who have been enduring a daily hell in Gaza. We also call for measures facilitating the entry of sustained, unimpeded humanitarian assistance to Gaza and protecting the Palestinian people from that criminal aggression, as we categorically reject the forcible displacement of Palestinians from their land.

We firmly condemn and reject the statements made by the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupation Government regarding plans to continue the Israeli aggression and storm the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. Such plans are aimed at continuing the killing of the Palestinian people and forcibly displacing them, committing crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing and expelling hundreds of thousands of Gaza people from the Strip, in flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. That is a dangerous escalation of the situation which will have catastrophic repercussions on security and stability in the region.

We call on the Security Council to fulfil its duty and shoulder its responsibilities to stop that aggression and those crimes committed against the defenceless Palestinian people, most of whom are women and children. Those violations, which are being perpetrated daily, are being met with a deafening silence. If the international community and the Council do not act now in response to the brutal crimes being committed by the Israeli occupation forces, when will they act and stand up for their principles and positions and maintain their credibility?

We reaffirm that a just and comprehensive peace in the region will not be achieved until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable rights and establish their independent, sovereign Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Palestinian State must be recognized, and without that solution the region will not enjoy peace and stability.

**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 11.40 a.m.*