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Tuesday, 23 July 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Nebenzia	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
	China	Mr. Fu Cong
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mrs. Paolini
	Guyana	Ms. Benn
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	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 (*spoke in Russian*): 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. Joyce Msuya, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: As I brief the Security Council today, the trajectory of the development in Yemen has since the beginning of the year moved in the wrong direction and, if left unaddressed, could reach a tipping point. The regional dimension of the conflict in Yemen is getting more and more pronounced. Escalation in the economic sphere has been translating into public threats to return to full-fledged war. Ansar Allah is escalating its crackdown on the civic space and on international organizations. While the parties have displayed willingness to engage in dialogue on the economic sphere, which I welcome, I reiterate my warning to the Council that we risk a return to full-scale war and all the predictable human suffering and regional implications that entails. We have a common interest and responsibility to avoid that.

It has been almost seven weeks since Ansar Allah arbitrarily detained 13 United Nations colleagues and dozens of personnel of international and national organizations, civil society and private sector entities, many of whom support the work of the United Nations. Among those who were arbitrarily detained, there are at least four women. From my contact with family members, I know they are frightened about the fate of their mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, sisters and brothers who are currently detained. Nearly two months have passed without knowing where they are or under what conditions they are being held; nearly two months and we have not heard from any of them. Four other personnel from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO have been held even longer, since 2021 and 2023, respectively.

Let me be clear: all the detained personnel are people who day in and day out work for their country, for Yemen. They provide humanitarian assistance to those in need. They protect the heritage of the country. They work on mediation, development, the promotion of human rights and peacebuilding. If it were not for those staff members and their organizations, the effects of the war on Yemen's population would have been even worse. Therefore, I repeat my earlier demand to Ansar Allah to immediately and unconditionally release them and refrain from detaining any additional United Nations, non-governmental organization and civil society staff members.

Seven months of an escalatory trajectory reached a new and dangerous level last week. I am deeply concerned about the recent military activities in the region, including a drone attack on Tel Aviv by Ansar Allah on 19 July and the subsequent Israeli retaliatory attacks on Al-Hudaydah port and its oil and power facilities on 20 July. I remain deeply concerned about the continued targeting of international navigation in the Red Sea and its surrounding waterways. Recent developments suggest that the threat against international shipping is increasing in scope and precision. Commercial shipping vessels have been sunk and damaged, civilians have been killed, the crew of the *MV Galaxy Leader* remains arbitrarily detained and international trade has been disrupted. Meanwhile, the United States and the United Kingdom have continued to carry out strikes on military targets in Ansar Allah-controlled territory. It is alarming that there are no signs of de-escalation, let alone a solution. Those most recent developments show the real danger of a devastating region-wide escalation.

The situation along the front lines also remains a source of concern. Over the past months, we have witnessed an increase in military preparations and reinforcements. This month, clashes have been reported along numerous front lines, including Dali', Al-Hudaydah, Lahj, Ma'rib, Sa'adah and Taiz. While the levels of violence have been relatively contained compared to the period before the 2022 truce, the recent trend of escalation, accompanied by continuous threats

of a full-scale return to war, demonstrates how volatile the situation is.

While I am concerned about the overall trajectory that Yemen is on, I am nonetheless encouraged that, last night, the parties informed me that they have agreed on a path to de-escalate a cycle of measures and countermeasures which had sought to tighten their grip on the banking and transport sectors. That understanding follows months of intense engagement from my Office to seek solutions and warn against the serious risk to the Yemeni people that the deepening weaponization of the economy would have posed. I welcome the parties' decision to choose a path of dialogue and I look forward to engaging further with the parties in order to support them in implementing their commitments with regard to the banking sector and Yemenia Airways. The aim remains a unified currency, a unified and independent central bank and a banking sector free of political interference. I would also like to recognize the role that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has played in reaching that understanding.

However, I can and will caution that we have been here before and that the parties have a choice to make. There are underlying issues to be addressed. Stop-gap measures might serve as a Band-aid, but will not provide for sustainable solutions, nor will they reasonably pave the way for a nationwide ceasefire and a political process without sustained dialogue. The parties' commitment to de-escalation and dialogue, as reflected in the understanding they reached last night and the broader understanding they reached in December, must translate into readiness to negotiate directly. Engaging in good-faith dialogue is the minimum requirement to meet their responsibilities to the Yemeni people and a real test of their genuine intention to follow a path of peaceful conflict resolution.

While my United Nations colleagues and I continue our tireless efforts towards the release of our personnel and that of the humanitarian aid and civil society workers, we are also determined to see the release of the thousands of conflict-related detainees. They have been waiting years to be reunited with their families. I therefore consider it a positive sign that the parties met and discussed in Oman, under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the release of conflict-related detainees on the basis of the all-for-all principle, as agreed in Stockholm in 2018. The meeting made substantial progress, but unfortunately not yet on an agreement for an all-for-all release. Our efforts in that regard will continue, and I would like to thank the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the meeting as part of their valuable support to my mediation efforts.

I am tasked by the Council to support the resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people. Yemenis demand peace; they demand economic prosperity, basic services, good governance and justice and reconciliation. But as of late, rather than being able to focus on finding a sustainable and just solution for the benefit of all Yemenis, the situation has forced me to focus on the short term. New issues are constantly arising, hence considerable efforts go into convincing the parties to either refrain from implementing escalatory measures or, as a consequence of escalatory measures, to return to the status quo ante.

The challenges I have outlined today make it all the clearer that the only way to move forward in Yemen is to find mutually acceptable solutions through dialogue and negotiation. The alternative is more fragmentation and more suffering. My Office and I will remain as determined as ever to continue to assist, encourage and provide every opportunity for the parties to find solutions through dialogue. But ultimately the choice is theirs. Beyond echoing the Secretary-General's recent call for the utmost restraint with regard to Yemen, I urge the parties to engage in good faith with my Office and to engage in a long-term approach to de-escalate and to prioritize the well-being of Yemenis. That will allow us to preserve the space necessary to continue the work towards a nationwide ceasefire and the resumption of a political process as part of the previously agreed commitments, to be operationalized in a United Nations road map. I continue to depend on the Council's full support in all of those efforts.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Grundberg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Msuya.

Ms. Msuya: Allow me to thank Special Envoy Grundberg for his update. I take particular note of progress in de-escalating measures on the banking front and on re-initiating work towards a road map under United Nations auspices. This comes at a critical time.

We are very concerned about other events that have unfolded over recent days, including Houthi

attacks on Tel Aviv and the subsequent Israeli strikes on Al-Hudaydah. Those developments further increase risks of a regional spillover and a return to full-scale conflict in Yemen. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all concerned parties to refrain from attacks that could harm civilians and damage civilian infrastructure. Following the strikes on Al-Hudaydah on Saturday, the Houthi de facto Ministry of Health reported nine deaths and 83 people with injuries, including some with severe burns. No humanitarian workers were among the casualties.

As Council Members heard yesterday (see S/PV.9691), the full impacts on the functioning of Al-Hudaydah port are not yet clear. We are, however, aware of reports of damage to port infrastructure. The port is a lifeline for millions of people across Yemen. Much of Yemen's basic items are imported, including up to 85 per cent of its food supplies. The majority of those imports arrive through Al-Hudaydah. There are no viable alternatives to receive commercial imports at scale — Al-Hudaydah port must remain open and operating. Infrastructure that plays such an indispensable role must be spared.

I would like to address broader threats to the safety and security of humanitarian workers in Yemen — an issue with serious implications for the humanitarian response. It has now been nearly two months since the arbitrary detention by the Houthis of 13 United Nations and 5 international non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel, alongside scores of others from local and national NGOs, civil society and the private sector. All of them are Yemenis. To date, no charges have been laid against any of our detained United Nations and NGO colleagues. No access or contact has been provided to their organizations, the United Nations or legal representation. And we have no information on the whereabouts of the detainees or their condition. While the Houthis have offered assurances of their well-being, no opportunity has been granted for independent or direct corroboration of that.

These events have taken a terrible toll on our colleagues in Yemen. We are doing everything we can to support them, but many of our staff — and of course the families of those detained — are terrified. Concerted efforts continue at all levels to secure the release of those arbitrarily held. The United Nations is undertaking constant and determined advocacy with the Houthis, Member States and all those with influence, including in relation to the four United Nations personnel previously detained in 2021 and 2023.

As the Secretary-General underscored, our detained colleagues were dedicated to alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people. I reiterate our demand for their immediate and unconditional, release. And we urge the members of the Council to stand with us and provide all necessary support to secure the liberty of our colleagues.

These events are undermining humanitarian access and programming, as well as our ability to assist millions of people in need across Yemen. Alongside rapidly spreading misinformation and disinformation targeting the international community, the detentions have caused widespread fear and anxiety among humanitarian workers. And without the necessary guarantees for the safety and security of our staff and respect for principled humanitarian action, we cannot operate at the scale required.

This is particularly serious as levels of food insecurity and malnutrition continue to surge across the country. A staggering one in every two children under the age of five are now estimated to be experiencing chronic malnutrition or stunting. Food deprivation levels have increased by 14 per cent since the start of the year — from 51 per cent to 58 per cent of the population. In Houthi-controlled areas, nearly 1 in 10 households rely on alms to obtain food. That deterioration in food security and rates of hunger has been fuelled by the prolonged pause in World Food Programme food distribution in Houthi-controlled areas, coupled with ongoing economic deterioration across the country.

Where food has been distributed, we have seen marked improvements. In May, the World Food Programme rolled out an emergency distribution to more than 600,000 people in Hajjah and Al-Hudaydah governorates. Interviews with approximately 200 households that have received this assistance confirm an 84 per cent improvement in food consumption. If we are to prevent food and nutrition insecurity from worsening further in the coming months, it is critical that food distribution resume across Houthi-controlled areas.

Alongside improved access and the security of staff, adequate funding for all humanitarian programming is a key requirement, yet low funding levels continue to hamper our work. In the first four months of this

year, a lack of funds meant that humanitarian partners providing nutrition assistance reached only 315,000 people, out of the 2 million who were targeted. And an average of just 2.8 million people each month received food assistance out of the 12.8 million targeted. Even those whom we are able to reach are being affected by underfunding. Many are having to make do with reduced rations — approximately 40 per cent of what they need. As a matter of urgency, I once again urge donors to step forward with additional funding for those critical programmes.

Ultimately, the stabilization of food insecurity and malnutrition rates in Yemen — and an improvement in humanitarian conditions across the board — depend on a manifest improvement in the economic situation. Over the course of the conflict, Yemen's gross domestic product (GDP) has shrunk by more than half. And recent analysis by the World Bank has found that GDP contracted even further in the past year. The value of the rial in Government-held areas has continued to fall to record lows, recently reaching more than 1,800 rials to the United States dollar. That has driven already sky-high food prices even farther out of reach for millions of people. The cost of the minimum food basket in Government-controlled areas is the highest it has ever been.

It is in that context that today's announcement by the Special Envoy — of measures to bring the parties together on economic and other issues — is even more important. I urge the parties to seize that opportunity to find sustainable solutions to those challenges. Millions of people across the country depend on it.

The humanitarian community is committed to staying and delivering in Yemen — as best it can, for as long as it takes. But amid growing hostilities, an escalating threat environment and shrinking humanitarian operating space, that work is becoming much more difficult. I urge the Council to do everything in its power to maintain unity, de-escalate rising tensions and support the humanitarian response in Yemen.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Msuya 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): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings.

I will make three points.

First, we call on the Houthis to stop their escalatory behaviour, which threatens the prospect of stability in Yemen and the region. We once again condemn the Houthi attack on Tel Aviv, which resulted in an Israeli civilian killed and 10 other civilians wounded. We are deeply concerned about the risk and the consequences of escalation in the region, and we call for all parties to exercise restraint. We also remain deeply concerned by the Houthis' detention of United Nations personnel and of the staff and former staff of non-governmental organizations and diplomatic missions. We echo the calls from Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya on the Houthis to immediately and unconditionally release those held. In addition to the personal distress for the individuals and their families, those detentions have also severely impeded the delivery of vital aid to those most in need and further constrained the humanitarian community working across Yemen. All humanitarian, United Nations and diplomatic staff should be free to operate safely and securely throughout Yemen.

Secondly, the United Kingdom has been clear that the continued flouting of the arms embargo under resolution 2216 (2015) is unacceptable and serves only to fuel further regional tensions. The increasing reports of ships entering Al-Hudaydah without reporting to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM) for inspection is deeply worrisome because the inspection of vessels is fundamental to stopping illicit arms entering Houthi-controlled areas, while also ensuring the import of commercial goods. We must continue to provide unwavering support to UNVIM and ensure it has the necessary funding to stop the smuggling of illicit arms.

Finally, we welcome the commitment of the parties to de-escalate economic tensions and to start convening meetings to discuss all economic and humanitarian issues based on the road map. The United Kingdom reaffirms that the only way to peace in Yemen is through dialogue and engagement with the Special Envoy. It is important that we remain unified in support of his efforts to secure an inclusive and sustainable peace in Yemen. We continue to urge all parties to de-escalate tensions and preserve space for negotiations.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council plus (A3+), namely

Algeria, Guyana, Mozambique and my country, Sierra Leone.

The A3+ thanks the Special Envoy, Mr. Hans Grundberg, and the Acting Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Joyce Msuya, for their comprehensive updates and valuable insights on the security and humanitarian situation in Yemen. We also welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in this meeting.

At the outset, the A3+ welcomes the report of the agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis on several measures to de-escalate tensions in relation to the banking sector and Yemenia Airways. That is indeed a welcome development and a step in the right direction on the path to genuine and lasting peace in Yemen. However, despite that most welcome development, the A3+ expresses its deep concern at the provocative actions, ongoing military operations and air strikes, including against multiple locations in Yemen, in particular in the province of Al-Hudaydah.

We are extremely alarmed by the security situation in the Red Sea, with several attacks by the Houthis on shipping vessels having been recorded in June and reached unprecedented levels since December. In that regard, we call on the Houthis to immediately cease all attacks, which undermine navigational rights and freedoms and regional peace and security. We continue to call on the Houthis to respect and implement all resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 2216 (2015), which demands, inter alia, that the Houthis "refrain from any provocation or threats to neighbouring States" (*resolution 2216 (2015), para. 1*).

We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid further escalation. The use of force will only exacerbate the situation and risk undermining the efforts of the Special Envoy for Yemen to relaunch the political process. In that regard, a prompt response and diligent action are needed to address the wider conflicts in the region, with an urgent ceasefire in Gaza, which cannot be overstated, as it remains key to the stability of the Middle East.

The ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, now in its tenth year, demand our urgent and unwavering attention. The severe hardships inflicted on the civilian population make Yemen one of the world's most dire humanitarian crises. More than 18 million people need aid, with 17 million facing severe food shortages. Half of the population lacks access to drinking water, leading to cholera outbreaks and a severe malnutrition crisis where nearly half of all children under five suffer from moderate stunting.

We acknowledge the positive impact of the World Food Programme's one-off food distribution in eight districts in Hajjah and Al-Hudaydah during May, which temporarily reduced severe food deprivation and the reliance on severe food-coping strategies.

The crisis in Yemen requires a significant scaling up of humanitarian efforts. We urge United Nations agencies, donor countries and international organizations to fully fund and mobilize resources for the 2024 Yemen humanitarian response plan. Current international aid falls dismally short of addressing the immense suffering of the Yemeni people.

The combined effects of conflict, economic instability and climate change-induced droughts and floods continue to devastate Yemen's agricultural infrastructure and livelihoods, worsening the critical food and water crisis.

The A3+ remains deeply concerned about the rights of women and girls, especially in Houthi-controlled areas, and calls for the lifting of restrictions on their freedom of movement and access to education and health care.

The A3+ strongly condemns the arbitrary detention of United Nations staff members and aid workers by the Houthis. Those actions are flagrant violations of international law and must be unequivocally condemned.

We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees and urge the Houthis to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We extend our gratitude to Oman for hosting the ninth meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the implementation of the Detainees' Exchange Agreement and call on all parties to cooperate with the Special Envoy for Yemen to finalize the release plan for all conflict-related detainees, as per the Stockholm Agreement following the all-for-all principle.

The A3+ acknowledges Saudi Arabia's vital financial and political support for Yemen. We note, however, the scale of the crisis demands a coordinated international response.

We reaffirm our support for the Yemeni-led and -owned peace process based on agreed references for a political settlement. We fully support the United

Nations efforts, as well as regional and international initiatives, towards a political resolution.

In conclusion, we urge the international community to intensify efforts to secure a ceasefire in Yemen. We also demand that the parties guarantee unhindered humanitarian access to aid workers and uphold human rights and international humanitarian law. Diplomatic efforts must be intensified to bring all parties to the negotiating table in search of a peaceful solution. The people of Yemen need peace and cannot afford any further delays.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya not only for their briefings but also for their great commitment.

"This is our sanctuary — I now feel a sense of relief", said 60-year-old Aziza, in 2023, after repairing her house in Aden with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 2024, unfortunately, such testimonies are likely to be rarer.

As we have heard, on the political front, the situation in Yemen and the region is becoming increasingly volatile. The utmost restraint is needed. We all spoke at yesterday's emergency meeting. Today, on behalf of Switzerland, I would like to reiterate the call made by the Council in its resolution 2739 (2024). We urge all parties to the conflict to redouble their diplomatic efforts and to favour dialogue over violence. At the same time, the progress made in discussions under the auspices of the United Nations must be preserved. Otherwise, there is a very significant risk of a return to violence. In that respect, we welcome the agreement between the parties to allow banks to continue operating, as well as the decision in principle to increase air traffic. We thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its engagement in that regard. That agreement is an important step towards creating the climate of trust needed to give new momentum to the talks initiated by the Special Envoy.

On the humanitarian front, the situation remains extremely worrisome, as we have also heard. Prolonged displacements, the economic crisis exacerbated by the parties' economic retaliation measures, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the collapse of basic services are all contributing to a multifaceted humanitarian crisis, marked in particular by growing food insecurity and malnutrition. Half of Yemen's population — more than 18 million people — are in need of emergency humanitarian aid. Recent figures show that 58 per cent of Yemeni households do not have enough to eat, a hitherto unprecedented level, and the proportion of stunted children is among the highest in the world. Families are forced to choose between feeding or educating their children. Dropping out of school, early marriages and the recruitment of child soldiers are fuelling tomorrow's crisis.

The work of humanitarian actors in Yemen is key to breaking that spiral. Yet they are under pressure on many fronts. On the one hand, as we have heard, the safety of humanitarian actors is not guaranteed. Switzerland strongly condemns the prolonged and arbitrary detention of humanitarian and United Nations personnel by the Houthis, for two months now. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. As stated in resolution 2730 (2024), humanitarian personnel are protected by international humanitarian law. On the other hand, the work of humanitarian actors is being hindered, particularly in the south of the country, by access restrictions and other bureaucratic measures. Switzerland urges all parties to guarantee rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians in need.

Aziza's relief must not be a mere reprieve. We must all commit ourselves to making it a lasting one. The Council must remain mobilized and support the Special Envoy in his efforts to obtain an agreement between the parties to the conflict. Switzerland will continue its commitment in that direction.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I also thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Emergency Relief Coordinator Msuya for their briefings. I welcome the Yemeni Ambassador to this meeting. I also welcome the recent renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement.

Following the drone attack in Tel Aviv, claimed by the Houthis, last Friday and subsequent Israeli strikes of targets in Yemen, we are concerned about the potential for the situation in Yemen to rapidly deteriorate. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, and we reaffirm our support for the United Nations-led peace process.

It has been almost two months since the arbitrary detention by the Houthis of 18 humanitarian workers from the United Nations and international

non-governmental organization (NGO) community, as well as many more from Yemeni NGOs and Yemeni civil society. As we have just heard from Special Envoy Grundberg and Coordinator Msuya, those individuals remain in detention today, with no access and limited information about their well-being. That is a deeply troubling development. The fact that we have not had any positive movement on this since our most recent Council discussion (see S/PV.9680) is alarming.

The Houthis cannot commit to protecting the well-being and dignity of the Palestinians suffering in Gaza while simultaneously denying the same rights to their own people in Yemen. They cannot claim to be a responsible player, while simultaneously disregarding the basic principles of humanitarian action for a population that is reliant on humanitarian aid. We call for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained by the Houthis, and we call on all actors in Yemen to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The broader politicization and weaponization of the humanitarian and economic space in Yemen is a matter of great concern for Slovenia. We have heard on numerous occasions in the Chamber that millions of Yemenis rely on humanitarian assistance daily, and we know that the country is heavily dependent on imports and remittances. For Yemenis, worsening food insecurity is sparking other crises — crises of protection and education, for example, which especially affect women and children.

We therefore call for an end to disinformation and misinformation campaigns, unilateral economic and banking measures and Red Sea attacks, which are driving up costs and causing delays for humanitarian actors and importers. We urge dialogue between the parties, with the Special Envoy, and therefore welcome today's announcement that an agreement was reached last night between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis to de-escalate in relation to the banking sector and Yemenia Airways.

In spite of the very challenging landscape, we have seen other small chinks of light in recent weeks, with encouraging progress in Oman on the release of conflict-related detainees and the opening of additional roads for the first time in many years. Those developments are incremental and hard-won. We acknowledge the efforts made by a variety of actors, from the Special Envoy's Office to the International Committee of the Red Cross, countries of the region and — crucially — local mediators, to take steps forward on a range of sensitive issues. We hope to see further progress on those issues in the near future.

In conclusion, Slovenia hopes that the parties to the conflict in Yemen will abandon what the Special Envoy has described as a zero-sum mindset. At a volatile time in the region, we call for all actors to avoid inflammatory and threatening statements and actions, and to engage constructively with United Nations efforts towards finalizing a road map and reaching an inclusive intra-Yemeni process. A return to war will not serve the Yemeni people or the people of the region.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings, and I welcome the new representative of Yemen to this meeting.

In my remarks, I will focus on four points.

First, my country is following with concern the escalation of violence provoked by the Houthi attacks against Israel. Such attacks, along with the continuation of hostilities in the Red Sea, which are contrary to international law and have no justification whatsoever, threaten to undermine the space for mediation for the implementation of the road map, exacerbate the regional conflict and entrench the humanitarian crisis suffered by the Yemeni population. It is urgent that the Security Council maintain a unified position of condemning the Houthi attacks and demanding their immediate cessation. In addition, the Council must ensure the implementation of the arms embargo established under resolution 2216 (2015).

Secondly, I note the conclusion of the ninth meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees' Agreement, which agreed to the release of Mohammed Qahtan and to a follow-up meeting to finalize the names of the detainees to be released. Ecuador joins the calls for the parties to refrain from arbitrary arrests and reiterates its concern about Houthi detentions of humanitarian workers, as well as the crew of the *MV Galaxy Leader*, who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Thirdly, as Special Envoy Grundberg warned in his previous briefing (see S/PV.9654), Yemen's banking sector continues to be affected by the simultaneous

operation of two monetary authorities. That situation significantly impacts Yemen's economy and its people's purchasing power, which could exacerbate food insecurity, which already affects more than two thirds of the population, including approximately 2.4 million children.

Fourthly, Ecuador welcomes the intensified efforts of humanitarian organizations to address the cholera outbreak, as well as the meeting held on 14 July between United Nations representatives and Yemeni officials in Aden to discuss the humanitarian challenges facing the country.

Nevertheless, the humanitarian response plan is funded at less than a quarter of the required budget. Financial support to humanitarian organizations is essential if we are to meet the pressing needs of the population.

In conclusion, and despite the increase in tensions, Ecuador reiterates that intra-Yemeni political dialogue, under the auspices of the United Nations, is the only path to sustainable peace in Yemen. We therefore reiterate our support for the work of Special Envoy Grundberg.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their informative briefings and their dedicated work.

Ten years into the conflict, the situation in and around Yemen remains highly complex and difficult, which is amplified by the alarming developments over the past few days.

Fr today's meeting, let me focus on four points.

First and foremost, as we stated yesterday (see S/PV.9691), Japan would like to reiterate our strong condemnation of the recent Houthi drone attack on Tel Aviv. We are seriously concerned about the current situation and call for no further escalation. The Houthis must immediately stop their threats and hostile rhetoric against Israel, which are further destabilizing the Middle East.

Secondly, Japan unequivocally condemns that the Houthis have detained more than 10 personnel from United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and many others supporting humanitarian activities and have denied access to the detainees for over a month. Such detentions directly impede critical aid delivery in Houthi-controlled areas, where the Yemeni people are suffering from dire shortages of food, medicine and other basic human needs, as Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya stated earlier.

We demand that the Houthis immediately and unconditionally release not only those detained last month, but also other United Nations and diplomatic mission staff who they have held in captivity for years. The Houthis must also stop their disinformation campaigns and other impediments to humanitarian aid workers, who are working tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of Yemenis.

Thirdly, Japan is outraged by the ongoing Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and its surrounding waters. Those persistent and ruthless attacks have killed innocent civilians, sunk commercial vessels and disrupted global maritime transportation. We also express our indignation over the Houthis' ongoing detention of the 25 crew members of the *MV Galaxy Leader* for more than eight months. Once again, the Houthis must immediately cease their threats against international shipping and unconditionally release the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its crew, pursuant to resolutions 2722 (2024) and 2739 (2024).

Fourth and lastly, Japan deeply regrets that the peace process has long stagnated, even if the resumption of negotiations on the release of prisoners, as well as the latest announcement that the Government of Yemen and the Houthis agreed on several measures, are positive developments. We urge all parties concerned to create a conducive environment for peace talks under United Nations auspices. Japan will continue to support the work of the Special Envoy towards the achievement of lasting peace in Yemen.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings and welcome the presence of the representative of Yemen at today's meeting.

Settling the situation in Yemen requires both political and diplomatic efforts. China hopes that all the parties concerned will stay the course in working for a political solution, building consensus, meeting each other halfway, jointly promoting a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned comprehensive political process and resolving tensions and differences through dialogue and negotiation. The international community should provide assistance and play a constructive role in that regard. Thanks to the good offices of Special Envoy

Grundberg, the Yemeni Government and the Houthis recently held talks on prisoner exchanges, while yesterday the parties in Yemen reached an agreement regarding the financial and airline sectors. China welcomes those positive developments. However, the ongoing tensions in the Red Sea are unsettling. We once again urge the Houthis to respect the right of navigation under international law for commercial vessels in the Red Sea, cease their attacks and maintain safe navigation in the Red Sea. At the same time, we also call on other involved parties to maintain restraint and halt any actions that may exacerbate tensions.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains grim. The international community should scale up its humanitarian and development assistance to Yemen and support and help the people and the Government of Yemen in developing the country's economy and improving living conditions there. We are seriously concerned about the detentions of United Nations personnel in Yemen and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

The tensions in the Red Sea are a sombre manifestation of the spillover of the Gaza conflict, and the recent attacks between the Houthis and Israel have led to an increasingly precarious escalation. China calls for the full and effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on Yemen and for the promotion of an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. All parties should exercise restraint, avoid further escalation and work to prevent the entire region from being plunged into an even greater catastrophe.

China remains committed to working with the international community and making unremitting efforts to achieve a political settlement of the Yemeni question and maintain peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mrs. Paolini (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Grundberg and Ms. Msuya for their briefings. I also welcome the presence at today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of Yemen.

As we underscored yesterday (see S/PV.9691), the Houthis must immediately cease their destabilizing activities in the region, which are unacceptable. France reiterates its firm condemnation of the drone attack on Tel Aviv on the night of 18 and 19 July, for which the Houthis claimed responsibility. We extend our condolences to the victims' loved ones, and our thoughts go out to the wounded in solidarity. The Houthis, backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, must immediately cease their attacks, which are fuelling regional escalation, including in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The Council has condemned the attacks, including through its adoption of resolutions 2722 (2024) and 2739 (2024). States have the right to defend their ships against such attacks in accordance with international law. Through those actions, the Houthis bear a heavy responsibility for the escalation in the region. We call on them to cease and to immediately release the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its crew, who have been detained since November 2023. Within the framework of the European Union's Naval Force Operation Aspides, France will remain committed to guaranteeing maritime security and freedom of navigation in line with international law and alongside its partners.

The Houthis' irresponsible behaviour has also had disastrous consequences for the Yemeni population. They are waging an economic war against the legitimate Government and diverting humanitarian aid to the areas under their control. In June they made unprecedented and arbitrary arrests of workers from the United Nations and local and international non-governmental organizations. France firmly condemns those acts and demands the workers' release. Such serious activities hinder the work of the organizations on the ground, which are subject to the numerous restrictions imposed on Houthi-controlled territory to the detriment of the civilian population. Women, in particular, are the target of those restrictions. It is unacceptable that the Houthis have forced the World Food Programme to suspend its activities responding to the civilian population's urgent needs. They must stop abusing their own population, whom they are stifling economically and threatening on a daily basis. Together with United Nations agencies, we must consider how civilian populations in Houthi-controlled areas can be given access to humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian workers must be able to carry out their operations freely and safely.

On the security front, a full and lasting cessation of hostilities is essential to preventing any resumption of conflict on the ground. The Houthis must stop undermining the efforts of the Special Envoy, whom France fully supports in implementing his political road map. Yemeni women's meaningful participation in the negotiations must be ensured.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings. The United States

shares their assessment that the Houthis' actions in Yemen and the region are increasingly challenging peace and stability. My delegation is hopeful that any agreement reached by the parties will result in true de-escalation on the part of the Houthis. Yemenis need the support of the international community, and yet the Houthis continue to take steps that make that more difficult. As we discussed yesterday (see S/PV.9691), the Houthis have launched approximately 200 missiles and drones towards Israel in recent months, with no regard for civilian lives. Their drone strike in the heart of Tel Aviv on 19 July, using what appears to be an Iranian-made Samad-3 uncrewed aerial vehicle, is just another case in which the Houthis have flouted the Council's demands for an end to such attacks and to Iran's violations of the United Nations arms embargo.

Turning to the issue of the recently detained humanitarian personnel, we repeat our call for their immediate release and condemn the Houthis' actions. Sadly, it is not the first instance in which the Houthis have detained international personnel, foreign nationals and religious minorities. Without justification, they have detained a number of United States local staff for more than two and a half years, four United Nations staff for more than two years and 25 *MV Galaxy Leader* crew members for more than eight months. Four members of the Yemeni Baha'i community also remain in detention after more than a year. We reject the notion that the Houthis should be given time to conduct so-called investigations before releasing people who have been illegally detained. The Houthis are not a Government and have no capacity to investigate anything. Their efforts to use disinformation to distract from their own failures reflect their blatant disregard for the Yemeni people. At this time, we believe that the United Nations and the international community cannot continue business as usual.

We believe it is time for the Security Council to speak with one voice and demand the immediate and safe release of all detained Yemeni personnel working for the United Nations, national and international non-governmental organizations, diplomatic missions and civil society. At the time of their detention, they were all working to improve the lives of the Yemeni people by bringing life-saving assistance to their country. The facts are known and the Secretary-General has been clear about what the Houthis must do. It is time to support his call for their immediate and unconditional release. We must support the United Nations agencies operating in Yemen as they determine the necessary next steps to protect their personnel in the light of the deteriorating security environment. We must also come together to demand that the Houthis cease their reckless attacks in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the surrounding waterways in violation of resolution 2722 (2024). Their increasingly brazen and opportunistic attacks call into question their intention to abide by a future United Nations road map for peace.

The Houthis and their Iranian sponsors are responsible for putting the possibility of a political resolution of Yemen's conflict in jeopardy. We must keep up the international pressure on them. We must also take steps to deny the Houthis the weapons and supplies, particularly the critical materiel, that they have long received from Iran, in contravention of the United Nations arms embargo established in resolution 2216 (2015). We were pleased that the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement was extended last month, allowing it to continue ceasefire monitoring patrols in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen. We once again call for strengthening the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism and urge more countries to step up and provide financial assistance to support its critical mandate. It is unacceptable that numerous vessels have docked at Houthi-controlled ports without inspection in the past year. Violators of the arms embargo should know that the Council is determined to enforce its resolutions and impose costs for supplying arms to the Houthis. As members of the international community, we must also redouble the efforts to stop the illicit smuggling of weapons.

Yemen has long deserved a better future, and just a year ago we were hopeful that the country would begin to see it. But that goal remains elusive, and the path to peace and prosperity is now at risk because of Houthi actions.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Msuya for their briefings.

As we emphasized yesterday (see S/PV.9691), Malta remains deeply concerned about the escalations caused by recent developments. We firmly condemn the drone attack on Tel Aviv on 19 July for which the Houthis claimed responsibility and call on the Houthis to immediately cease all such attacks, as well as their

attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Israel's retaliatory air strikes in and around the port of Al-Hudaydah left many victims and casualties while causing considerable damage to civilian infrastructure. That is concerning. We once again underscore that all parties are obliged under international law to protect civilians. Al-Hudaydah port is a lifeline for millions of people in Yemen who rely heavily on imports of essential items such as food, medicine and fuel. It is essential to ensure that it is open and operating. Moreover, it is located in a densely populated urban centre that is home to thousands, and any military campaign in its vicinity could have devastating consequences for civilians. The ongoing military action in the region threatens to disrupt ongoing mediation efforts and is hampering progress towards a formal nationwide ceasefire and a broader political solution to the conflict in Yemen. A resumption of an inclusive Yemeni-led and -owned political process, with the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women, remains key. Given the risks of broader conflict in the Middle East, it is essential for all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate and pursue peaceful solutions to all disputes.

Malta condemns the Houthis' arrests and arbitrary detentions of United Nations personnel, members of civil society and staff working for non-governmental organizations and diplomatic missions in Yemen. They should all be released immediately and unconditionally. All the parties to the conflict must comply fully with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, including the prohibition against the arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The situation is having far-reaching ramifications for the delivery of humanitarian aid into and throughout Yemen, at a time when the country is suffering from heightened levels of food insecurity. We call on all parties to ensure unimpeded and timely humanitarian access to the people in need and a safe operating environment for humanitarian actors. We further call on the international community to support a robust response to Yemen's humanitarian crisis and to urgently scale up the funding for Yemen's humanitarian response plan. Malta welcomes the convening of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees' Agreement. We call on the parties to continue to engage on the matter in order to fulfil their commitment under the Stockholm Agreement to releasing all conflict-related detainees and those arbitrarily detained. We also welcome the Council's recent renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement, which does crucial work in support of the Agreement.

The economic war that has been waged by parties to the conflict has fragmented and destabilized Yemen's economy and currency, actions that have caused inflation to rise and the prices of essential goods to surge, in a major driver of suffering. We were all pleased with the announcement last night that the Government of Yemen and the Houthis had agreed on several de-escalation measures in relation to the banking sector and the Yemenia Airways. We support the Special Envoy's view that there is a need for the parties to collaborate on building an economy that benefits all Yemenis and supports the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire and a resumption of an inclusive political process.

In conclusion, Malta is deeply concerned about the political, humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen. We urge the parties to engage constructively with the Office of the Special Envoy on the commitments made under the United Nations road map and echo the Secretary-General in expressing our deep appreciation for the invaluable work done by United Nations personnel and partners to try to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I too would like to express my gratitude to Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General Joyce Msuya for their informative updates. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in today's meeting.

As I said yesterday (see S/PV.9691), the Middle East remains in danger of an escalation of conflict. The situation in and around Yemen is now deteriorating further, as we continue to witness the Houthis' dangerous actions. In that regard, the Republic of Korea once again strongly condemns the Houthis' drone attack on Tel Aviv and their ongoing attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and the broader region. We call on them to immediately cease all such illegal and reckless activities, which only complicate the strenuous efforts being made to reach a peaceful political settlement in Yemen. In addition, we demand the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees, including United Nations staff, the staff of international and national non-governmental organizations and diplomatic personnel. Arbitrary detentions are simply

unacceptable in any circumstances. We also strongly urge the Houthis to ensure the safety of all the detainees and provide access for their families, as holding them incommunicado without due process amounts to enforced disappearance.

The Republic of Korea is seriously concerned about the deteriorating economic conditions in Yemen. The Houthis' hostile economic measures, together with the countermeasures subsequently taken by the Yemeni Government, are exacerbating the liquidity crisis. As Ms. Msuya described in detail, the potential banking and financial sector crises, coupled with the ongoing currency depreciation and decreased purchasing power, could further restrict the Yemeni people's access to vital commodities such as food, fuel and medicine. In the medium and long term, the tit-for-tat escalation could pose an increased risk of heightened food insecurity and hunger for the Yemeni people, disproportionately affecting women and children. In that regard, we welcome the financial de-escalation deal between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis, which was just announced this morning. We hope that both parties will live up to their commitments to all Yemeni people. Despite that positive development and taking into account the dire humanitarian situation on the ground, we still believe that the international community must refocus its sustained attention on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen.

The Korean Government has continued to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need in Yemen in order to enhance food and nutritional security. At last year's pledging events for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, we announced our humanitarian aid of $18.5 million, including in-kind contributions of rice. This year we will continue our active contributions to support Yemen's humanitarian needs. Achieving economic stability across Yemen is crucial for realizing a peaceful political transition and comprehensively addressing the dire humanitarian situation.

In that context, we reaffirm our unwavering support for Special Envoy Grundberg's tireless efforts in tackling these ongoing challenges through his continuous engagement on the ground, on both the political and economic fronts, and in furtherance of an inclusive Yemeni-led political transition under United Nations auspices. It is imperative for all Yemeni parties, especially the Houthis, to commit to a faithful negotiation process and lay the groundwork for a concrete and sustainable political settlement to forge a brighter future for the Yemeni people.

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

We thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ms. Joyce Msuya, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in the country.

We are gravely concerned about the current situation in Yemen, primarily the humanitarian aspects. According to United Nations estimates, more than 18 million people — or two thirds of the country's population — are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. The armed conflict, albeit of relatively low intensity, and the resulting economic instability have put a significant strain on ordinary citizens. The most substantial impact has been on the agricultural and food sectors — the only ones that could have just barely kept the situation afloat. Food prices have risen so much that they have become unaffordable for the most vulnerable segments of the population. There is an ongoing major funding shortfall for humanitarian programmes. This year, only 23 per cent of the United Nations response plan funds have been mobilized.

As the Yemeni settlement process has been stuck in deadlock for the past six months, the situation on the ground is also rapidly deteriorating. The number of clashes along the contact line continues to increase. The incidents remain local for now, but we view the trend as potentially explosive. We could easily fail to notice when the point of no return has been crossed and Yemeni stakeholders finally abandon a constructive approach and give up their attempts to develop acceptable normalization parameters and the resumption of a lasting and comprehensive ceasefire in order to move to a full-fledged political process in the country.

It is crucial to continue active and inclusive political and diplomatic efforts with all parties to the Yemeni conflict. We are prepared to continue providing the necessary assistance to Special Envoy Grundberg in that regard, while maintaining close contact and encouraging the parties to exercise restraint and reach agreements. We also believe it is important to continue the practice of small steps aimed at overcoming mistrust between the parties. That includes the need to update

the relevant international legal parameters so that they reflect realities on the ground.

The situation in Yemen is exacerbated by the unrelenting turbulence in the Middle East as a whole, which is experiencing shocks due to Israel's unprecedented brutality in Gaza. Last week, we witnessed a Houthi attack on Tel Aviv and an Israeli retaliatory strike on Al-Hudaydah. During the Council's discussions on this issue yesterday (see S/PV.9691), we witnessed the selective blindness of our colleagues, who persistently tried to ignore the elephant in the room. While there is no justification for the actions of Ansar Allah or their attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, one cannot ignore the fact that the initial and main reason for the spillover of the Yemeni crisis beyond the borders of that country is the ongoing slaughter in Gaza, which has already claimed nearly 40,000 innocent Palestinian lives.

We have consistently and unfailingly advocated the establishment of an immediate, unconditional and comprehensive ceasefire in the enclave, as well as the release of hostages and detained Palestinians. Ending the violence in Gaza will allow the region to breathe a sigh of relief and lay the foundations for a transition to long-term peace and stability. In our view, this cause-and-effect relationship is self-evident, and there is no point in denying it. Yemen will finally be able to focus on its domestic agenda, resolve its political differences and move to addressing the dire humanitarian situation in the country.

Under those circumstances, the support of the international community is key for Yemen and its people. Certain States, however, instead of working to calm the situation, are trying to put out the fire with fuel and pushing the use of force. That applies, first and foremost, to the situation in the Red Sea, where the so-called "coalition" led by the United States and the United Kingdom is carrying out open aggression against Yemen. And even though attacks on the territory of this sovereign Middle Eastern country have continued for almost six months, they have had no impact on the military capabilities of the Houthis, as clearly evidenced by their attack on Tel Aviv. Moreover, they have had the opposite effect. The movement has gained credibility in the region, and the intensity of strikes against commercial vessels has increased. Was that the goal that the United States and its allies were pursuing?

Russia firmly rejects the use of force to influence the Yemeni parties. At the same time, we have consistently advocated the need to ensure the safety and security of international navigation and condemn any actions that jeopardize the safety of vessels. In particular, we call for the release of the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its crew. At the same time, we are convinced that the path to de-escalation in the Red Sea includes ending the violence in Gaza and promoting an inter-Yemeni settlement, especially given that both of those goals are stipulated in the relevant Council decisions.

We once again urge our Western colleagues to focus on the implementation of those goals rather than digging themselves deeper into futile military escapades that can only rapidly weaken their credibility in the region, which has already been undermined by their blind support for Israel.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success. I also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the friendly Republic of Korea, for his presidency of the Council last month. I would like as well to thank Mr. Hans Grundberg and Ms. Joyce Msuya for their briefings.

The Yemeni Government condemns in the strongest terms the Israeli aggression and Israel's violation of the sovereignty of Yemeni territory in a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and all international norms and regulations. We hold Israel fully responsible for any repercussions that result from its aerial strikes. We warn the terrorist Houthi militias of the dangers of continuing to hold Yemen and its people hostage while dragging them into futile battles to serve the interests of the Iranian regime and its expansionist project in the region. Moreover, we warn Iran and Israel of any attempt to transform Yemeni territory, through rogue militias, into a battlefield for their wars and destructive projects in the region. We call upon the Council and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities to protect and preserve international peace and security. The only path to achieving that goal is through supporting the Yemeni Government to establish control over all our national

land and to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially resolution 2216 (2015).

The Yemeni Government reiterates its commitment to the peace approach and its continued support for international and regional efforts, especially the intensive mediation efforts made by our brothers in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the sisterly the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the efforts made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. All those efforts aim to achieve a just and comprehensive peace built on the agreed terms of reference of the political solution, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant United Nations resolutions, foremost of which is resolution 2216 (2015).

We call upon the Houthi militias to stop importing external interference; to abandon their destructive approach; and to put an end to all forms of military violence and escalation, along with their ongoing attempts to abort peace efforts, to prolong the war in Yemen and the region and to jeopardize regional and international peace and security. We warn the Houthi militias against comprehensively escalating the situation once again and returning to square one. That would only exacerbate human suffering, which has gone on for too long; would destroy what remains of the basic necessities of life and scarce livelihoods of the Yemeni people; and would undermine international and regional efforts to end the war and resume the path of peace, stability and development.

The Houthi militias continue to perpetrate violations against humanitarian and relief workers in the areas under their control. The most recent of those incidents is the kidnapping and detaining of dozens of employees of the United Nations agencies and international and national non-governmental organizations working in Yemen. Those include men and women who were kidnapped from their homes and whose properties were looted and families were terrorized. They were forcibly disappeared, and their fate has not yet been disclosed, despite more than a month having passed since that incident took place. That is a violation of international humanitarian law, national legislation and a direct threat to the life and safety of those employees. We are warning the Security Council of the dangers of turning a blind eye to those violations, through which the Houthi militias seek to serve their political agenda and to utilize humanitarian assistance to further their security and military goals, transforming the areas under their control into a prison for all those who oppose its policies.

My country's Government reiterates its call for the offices of the United Nations and those of international organizations to be moved to the temporary capital, Aden, so as to reduce the pressure imposed by the militias on them and ensure a suitable and secure environment in which to perform their duties, away from interference and without obstacles or constraints, so that relief and humanitarian assistance can be delivered to those who need it and to the most vulnerable.

I regret to say that, in our view, the measures taken by the United Nations offices in Yemen to protect their personnel and save their lives so far have not been sufficient or even what was expected and have not been commensurate with the level of the danger that threatens their lives and freedom. We call upon the Security Council and the United Nations to exert pressure on the Houthi militias to take urgent measures to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers and release the hostages and detainees without conditions.

Since 25 June, the Houthi militias have held four of the seven aeroplanes belonging to Yemenia Airways, along with their crews. That is in addition the obstacles and violations perpetrated by the militias against Yemenia Airways, the national airline carrier which transports passengers to and from Yemen, since flights from Sana'a airport were resumed. The terrorist Houthi militias have continued to freeze the company's accounts — totalling more than $100 million — since March 2023. As a result of those violations and practices by the Houthis against the national airline, the company providing insurance for Yemenia Airways, AXIS Specialty LLC, has informed us that it will stop operating flights to and from airports operated by the Houthi militias and through the airspace under their control because that airspace is considered high risk from an insurance perspective and is a threat to passenger and aviation safety. If flights continued to operate, their liability coverage would change from 100 to 81 per cent, which would impose additional losses and burdens on Yemenia Airways, making them unsustainable, thereby affecting Yemenis across the country and preventing them from travelling to and from Yemen and further exacerbating the economic burdens and the humanitarian crisis.

Council members are aware that the current problem with Yemenia Airways is one of the consequences of resuming flights to and from Sana'a airport as part of the humanitarian truce, supported by the United Nations since April 2022. Therefore, we call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary measures to compel the Houthi militias to put an end to those practices and violations and to immediately release the aeroplanes and their technical crews and the frozen funds, so that the shutting down of the flights operated by the national carrier to and from Yemen and the exacerbation of the suffering of Yemenis can be averted.

The coup that the Houthi militias have launched against the Yemeni State and the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the aspirations of the Yemeni people for security, stability and development has created a disastrous economic and humanitarian situation and has pushed millions of Yemenis below the poverty line and towards hunger. The coup has destroyed the infrastructure, killed hundreds of thousands of Yemenis and exacerbated the internal displacement, resulting in more than 4.5 million internally displaced persons. Yemen has lost approximately 23 years of development gains, and 80 per cent of its population are no longer receiving basic social services. Our gross domestic product has shrunk by nearly half; our economy has lost more than $126 billion, according to the most conservative estimates; and the production and export of oil has stopped because of the Houthi attacks on oil facilities and oil export ports. That has deprived the Yemeni people and Government of their most important resources and main source of income.

Faced with that catastrophic situation, the Yemeni Government is working to resume the reforms in the areas of the economy, finance and Government services to confront those challenges, improve livelihoods and contain the deterioration of the national currency and regulate spending. We also seek to support the decisions of the Central Bank of Yemen aimed at protecting the banking sector and ending financial distortions, as well as enhancing the oversight of banks and their foreign transactions. Furthermore, we seek to fulfil disclosure requirements pertaining to combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism. However, there are opportunities to make some progress, especially in the light of the support given by regional and international partners, within the framework of a comprehensive programme for realizing economic recovery, reconstruction and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Yemeni Government welcomes the announcement by the Special Envoy about cancelling recent decisions against certain banks and the banking sector and on the resumption of flights through Sana'a International Airport and to other destinations as needed. We believe that the initiative is also a way to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. We hope that the declared agreement will provide the necessary conditions to establish a constructive dialogue to put an end to all the Houthi destructive practices against the banking sector, the national economy and currency and to fulfil the obligations contained in the road map, foremost of which is the resumption of oil exports.

In conclusion, we express our deep regret with regard to the stalled negotiations on the exchange of prisoners and detainees, recently held in the Sultanate of Oman, and we regret that no chances for an exchange were available because of the intransigence of the Houthi militias. We call on the Security Council and the international community to shoulder their humanitarian responsibilities and bring pressure to bear on the Houthi militias to address that humanitarian issue. We confirm our firm position that all prisoners, detainees and forcibly detained persons must be released in accordance with the all-for-all principle.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): 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 11.30 a.m.