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Seventy-ninth year

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New York

President:	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield	(United States of America)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Koudri
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Escobar Ullauri
	France	Mr. Dharmadhikari
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Mikanagi
	Malta	Ms. Gatt
	Mozambique	Mr. Bambissa
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
	Slovenia	Mr. Ponikvar
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Dame Barbara Woodward

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10 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; Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy, Senior Yemen Adviser, the European Institute of Peace.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Grundberg.

Mr. Grundberg: Allow me first to take this opportunity to welcome my new colleague at the helm of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher. I very much look forward to working with him. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to those Security Council members whose tenure will conclude at the end of the year. Their continued support in the Council has been critical to my efforts.

As 2024 draws to a close, we reflect on a year marked by immense turmoil and tragedy across the Middle East. Far too many have endured profound loss owing to violent conflicts, including in Yemen. With the past months' dramatic developments in Lebanon and Syria, it should be obvious to all that the Middle East is in urgent need of stabilization. That includes Yemen.

Let us not forget that Yemen has taken several positive steps in recent years. The United Nations truce agreement in 2022, the large-scale exchange of conflict-related detainees in 2020 and 2023 and the commitments made in 2023 by all sides to advance peace efforts under a road map under United Nations auspices demonstrate that diplomatic engagement by the United Nations, regional powers and international actors, remains the most effective pathway to achieving sustainable peace. It is critical that the parties, the region and the broader international community capitalize on these moments in order to not miss the chance to take clear steps towards peace.

Otherwise, especially in the context of a collapsing economy and falling living standards, Yemenis will continue to suffer. Nothing justifies that suffering. Ending the war is a choice — one that remains within reach of the parties. I urge the parties to actively engage with my efforts on the road map, which would deliver a ceasefire, economic measures such as the sustainable payment of salaries and preparing for an inclusive political process. I firmly believe that is still possible. However, action, compromise and a sincere focus on Yemen is imperative if they wish to alleviate the suffering of Yemenis and restore hope for a peaceful future.

Yesterday, on Human Rights Day, we were reminded of the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For Yemenis, that reminder is stark — as civic space continues to shrink in Yemen.

This month marks six months since Ansar Allah initiated a campaign of arbitrary detentions targeting personnel from international and national organizations, diplomatic missions, civil society and private-sector entities. While three detainees have been released, dozens of others — including a member of my team — remain arbitrarily detained. And some are still denied even the basic humane act of a phone call with their families. Those arbitrary detentions constitute a flagrant violation of basic human rights, causing profound anguish for their families left to grapple with uncertainty and fear for their loved ones' safety. I continue to call for their immediate and unconditional release, and I greatly appreciate the Security Council's unequivocal support for this message.

In parallel, my Office remains focused on the release of all conflict-related detainees. Some have been in captivity for 10 years, despite continuous efforts and numerous meetings through my Office with the parties' prisoner committees. I urge all to respect their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement and continue working together with my Office in good faith and deliver on this important humanitarian file. Negotiations should be guided by the agreed principle — all for all.

Yemen's economic crisis is deepening. Each month, I have warned the Council of the catastrophic consequences of the contraction, fragmentation and weaponization of the economy. The failure to pay public sector salaries and pensions has driven widespread poverty, while soaring inflation has left many families unable to afford basic necessities, including food.

During visits to Aden and Sana'a, my Office has underscored the critical juncture before the parties: either continue down the catastrophic path of unresolved conflict and weaponization of the economy in which everyone loses or collaborate on economic issues to pave the way for growth and other possible peace dividends. Through engagement with stakeholders, including the banking sector, we are exploring practical and tangible solutions to restore stability and foster dialogue on Yemen's economy, including the payment of salaries and restarting oil and gas exports in the interests of the population. That effort focuses on turning the commitments made by the parties in July into action that benefits all Yemenis.

We continue to witness insecurity in the Red Sea through the actions of Ansar Allah, as well as attacks on Israel. The air strikes of the United States and the United Kingdom in response have continued. These developments, which have persisted over the course of the year, have shrunk the space for my mediation efforts. I will encourage all involved to take the necessary steps to create a conducive environment for the conflict in Yemen to be resolved. Failure to do so will only encourage those who call for a return to war.

The fragile situation in Yemen persists along multiple front lines, with ongoing flare-ups in areas such as Al-Dhale, Al-Hudaydah, Lahj, Ma'rib, Sa'ada, Shabwah and Taiz, often leading to tragic losses of life. Recently, hostilities escalated in eastern Taiz, with reports of explosions and shelling near civilian neighbourhoods. Just last week, a drone hit a crowded marketplace in Maqbanah, Taiz governorate, killing at least six people and seriously injuring many others. I call on all parties to the conflict to adhere strictly to their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. Such incidents underscore the urgent need for a ceasefire agreement. To support de-escalation, my Office continues to engage with military and security officials from both parties, facilitating dialogue on current dynamics and exploring opportunities for confidence-building. During recent visits to Aden and Ma'rib, my colleagues held discussions with senior Yemeni Government military commanders to exchange views and address security challenges at the local level.

My Office is doing its utmost to listen and consult a wide spectrum of Yemenis. We have continued our political dialogue series with the Yemeni political parties and components in order to identify priorities and explore the parameters for a political settlement. A key takeaway from those sessions is the consensus on the need for a Yemeni-led process that places the population's needs at its core, fostering reconciliation and laying the groundwork for sustainable recovery. There is also widespread recognition that any future settlement must be inclusive, ensuring representation of all segments of society. To that end, inclusivity and the women, peace and security agenda remain central to our efforts. We recently co-sponsored the 7th Feminist Summit in Aden, along with several international organizations, sending a unified and clear message of support, solidarity and advocacy for Yemeni women's struggle for equality, ending discrimination and violence and building a comprehensive peace in Yemen.

Such spaces for dialogue between Yemenis of all political persuasions are crucial. It is worrisome that they are increasingly endangered by partisan interests aimed at closing diverse civic spaces or threatening participants attending meetings. Restricting civil society's work and perpetuating a climate of fear is an assault on the rights of Yemenis. It erodes the foundations needed for an intra-Yemeni peace process, emboldens spoilers and enables armed groups to continue committing human rights violations with impunity. Such intimidation and restrictions must stop.

Now more than ever, we need to work together to support Yemeni civil society actors and human rights defenders so that they are protected and empowered to carry out their work in safety and dignity and enable rights-based reconciliation. In that regard, I look forward to the briefing of Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy.

On the international stage, I have recently engaged in constructive discussions with Yemeni and international stakeholders in numerous locations. In all those engagements, I carried the same message: a peaceful resolution in Yemen is possible, and continuing international unity and support towards that goal is essential.

To navigate the challenges and translate opportunities into tangible progress, the unified support of the Council is paramount. Only through a shared commitment and decisive action can we create and maintain an environment conducive to effective mediation and realize the sustainable, inclusive and just peace that the Yemeni people have yearned for and rightly deserve. No matter what, Yemenis can count on the Organization's relentless work and support to enable them to realize those aspirations.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: I thank Special Envoy Grundberg for his continuing efforts for peace in Yemen.

As this is my first Security Council meeting as Emergency Relief Coordinator, I would like to start with some wider points.

As I said at the launch of our Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, we are facing a world on fire. More than 300 million people are suffering the devastating humanitarian consequences of conflicts, climate change and inequality. The humanitarian community, who I am here to represent, is doing an outstanding job of supporting people through these crises — 116 million so far this year. I want to recognize their courage in Yemen and around the world.

But they are overstretched, underfunded and under attack. And that is preventing us from saving lives. We therefore must do better. The Security Council has a vital role to play. So in these briefings, I will endeavour to provide concise updates on our response to humanitarian crises and practical recommendations.

On that basis, let me turn to Yemen. As my colleague described, 2024 has been a deeply challenging year. Yemen has remained under the shadow of internal conflict, while facing a new regional escalation of tensions, a deepening economic crisis and increased threats to the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian staff. Attacks from and on Yemen have risked damage to vital seaport infrastructure; endangered the flow of essential food, fuel and other imports, on which millions of Yemenis depend; and threatened an unprecedented oil spill. The economic situation across the country has deteriorated, with the World Bank predicting a further 1 per cent gross domestic product contraction in 2024, on top of the 54 per cent drop in real gross domestic product per capita since 2015.

In areas controlled by the Government of Yemen, the Yemeni rial has hit successive record lows throughout the year, as oil and gas exports remain obstructed. The cost of food in these areas has increased by 28 per cent compared to last year. Basic services have faltered. Families have less money in their pockets — increasingly turning to alternative ways to survive, including child marriage. A liquidity crisis has prevented people from accessing banking deposits, further straining fragile business operations and delaying major humanitarian programmes. A cholera outbreak has spread across the country, affecting more than 200,000 people. And floods displaced more than half a million people during a particularly severe rainy season exacerbated by the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian response continues to face severe constraints. Funding cuts have forced the closure of vital programmes. The total number of people in need has increased, since the beginning of the year, from 18.2 to 19.5 million. As my colleague underlined, it has been more than six months since more than 50 people working for the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and diplomatic missions were arbitrarily detained by the Houthi de facto authorities. While one United Nations staff member and two NGO personnel were recently released, this continued detention is unacceptable and a violation of international law. It has also significantly hindered our operations.

But despite the challenges, humanitarians and the humanitarian movement, working closely with communities, stayed and delivered a large-scale, principled response to an estimated 7.8 million people in 2024. We helped contain a cholera outbreak by providing assistance to more than 2 million people. We helped curb the spread of food insecurity by providing targeted emergency food distribution and livelihood support. We provided shelter materials, sanitation support, food and cash to more than 440,000 newly displaced people. And we continued efforts to improve the quality of the response, in direct consultation with affected people. For example, we identified sustainable water-management solutions, including through climate-sensitive, solar-powered water-supply systems that provide clean water to thousands. We expanded cash programming to reach more than 580,000 people. And the Yemen Humanitarian Fund channelled more than 60 per cent of funding through local organizations, including those led by women. That vital work will continue. We will include the people affected in the design and delivery of our support, especially the marginalized, women and girls, older persons and people with disabilities. Above all, we will stay and deliver, delivering support to address human suffering whenever and wherever it is found, based on need alone. To do that, we need three things from the Security Council.

First, we need the Council's sustained influence in securing full respect for international humanitarian law. That includes ensuring that infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the population in Yemen is spared. It is

particularly critical that Yemen's Red Sea ports remain operational and available for imports. They are lifelines for millions of people. It also includes supporting United Nations efforts to secure the immediate and unconditional release of all who have been arbitrarily detained by the Houthi de facto authorities and ensure the safety of United Nations and humanitarian staff.

Secondly, we need the Council's support for full humanitarian funding. This year, as highlighted in the Global Humanitarian Overview, our humanitarian partners need an estimated $2.5 billion to reach 10.5 million people across Yemen.

Thirdly and finally, Special Envoy Grundberg must be backed to secure a lasting resolution to the conflict in Yemen. That is essential to ending the decade-long cycle of humanitarian suffering. I look forward to working with the members of the Council for the civilians and communities we serve.

The President: I thank Mr. Fletcher for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Al-Omeisy.

Mr. Al-Omeisy: I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council. I also thank Special Envoy Grundberg for all his hard work and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for highlighting Yemen's many woes.

Right now, kidnapped United Nations staff are being held in Houthi prisons, which are notorious deathtraps. Former and current diplomatic staff who did nothing other than work to improve the lives of their fellow citizens are being tortured into confessing to crimes that they did not commit. Civil society and humanitarian workers, already accused of high treason and of conspiring against the State, are counting every second, knowing all too well that their accusers, the Houthis, are both judge and jury, and therefore that their prospects are grim. Some families are grieving the loss of their husbands and fathers after receiving the remains of their loved ones without much explanation. Others are anxiously awaiting the dreaded call. How do I know that? Well, I had the misfortune of experiencing it first-hand, and no human being, for whatever reason, should go through that hell. Let me first describe my harrowing personal experience and then offer my opinion on the way forward in Yemen.

I was kidnapped by the Houthis and forcibly disappeared for more than five months, taken from the street at gunpoint in broad daylight, blindfolded and shoved into a car. I was whisked away into the unknown, without due process or access to a lawyer. My family did not know exactly who had kidnapped me or where I was being held. Thrown into a completely dark cell, I had to crawl across the floor to find only a thin and filthy mattress and nothing else. I had never been in jail, and in a moment of panic, I started screaming and banging on the door. After what seemed like an eternity, the guards came with their flashlights, but only to beat me up in order to silence me. That scenario would be repeated, as I would inevitably reach a breaking point after so many hours in the dark, and I figured that a glimpse of light and a bit of human interaction, in the form of punches and being flogged with sticks, was better than being left alone in the dark with my demons and the feeling of being buried alive in that wretched coffin of a cell.

Between the solitary confinement, the ruthless guards and the vicious interrogation sessions, I would be lying if I said that there were not times when I hit rock bottom and contemplated taking my own life. That was especially the case during my interrogations, when my captors constantly threatened to kill me or to go after my family if I did not confess to trumped-up charges. It is actually a miracle that I made it out in one piece. I will never forget the day I was released and I got to hug my two boys after thinking that I would never see them again. Some said that I was extremely lucky, but the fact was that many organizations and individuals came to my aid, and it was the magnitude of the unrelenting campaign of sustained pressure on the Houthis that eventually forced them to let me go.

The Houthis continue to unlawfully detain humanitarian, United Nations and embassy personnel, as well as thousands of others, in a systematic campaign that is meant to terrorize locals into submission and to silence dissent. I was shocked to see the condition of some of my colleagues in videos produced by the Houthis, in which they were forced to confess to wild, scripted claims. I had worked with some of them for more than a decade, and I can assure the Council that all we did was try to help improve Yemeni lives through programmes that focused on education, cultural exchanges and development.

The Security Council should call out the Houthi proceedings and theatrical trials for what they are — a sham. It should also demand that the Houthis immediately release all detainees and end their practice of kidnapping and holding hostages for political gain. However, I also want to say very clearly that we need a concerted effort to promote dialogue and an inclusive agreement that works for all parts of Yemeni society, including the Houthis. Engaging all the parties

to the conflict, together with civilians, to work for stability and peace is the only way to break the cycle of violence and end the continued transgressions and violations of the most basic human rights.

One of the major reasons that we are here today is the failure to address the roots of the conflict — which are an almost systematic and deliberate erosion of State institutions and a weakening of the legitimacy of the Government. The Council cannot hope to dislodge the Houthis when so much is needed to support a viable and united power to fill the vacuum. The Pathways for Reconciliation in Yemen, a process initiated by the European Institute of Peace and led by local teams, was the largest and most inclusive effort in recent history to consult Yemenis about their needs, perspectives and rights in the quest for a lasting peace. A striking proportion of those consulted felt that they had no appropriate avenues in which to express their needs and aims.

A commitment to peace is only possible through genuine participatory engagement with society, beyond those actively engaging in hostilities or involved with conflict parties. The likelihood of obtaining a legitimate and sustainable settlement depends significantly on the inclusiveness of the process and the extent to which it engages beyond the elite voices of the powerful. There are no quick fixes, but we have an opportunity to adopt a more holistic and long-term approach that can enable a legitimate and inclusive political process, ensure social cohesion and restore State institutions with responsive governance, which would regain people's trust and confidence. The alternative is repeating past mistakes from more than three decades of conflict in Yemen. The time to act is now.

The President: I thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for his briefing.

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg for his briefing, but also his team, for all their work this year. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for his briefing and welcome him to the Council. I also thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for his briefing.

I will make four points.

First, I would like to thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for sharing his harrowing story and for his courage. His first-hand experience of detention by the Houthis highlights the utmost and fundamental importance of the Security Council clearly and unanimously condemning detentions of Yemeni staff working for the United Nations and for international and national aid organizations. We regret that that has thus far not been possible. For our part, the United Kingdom is clear and unequivocal in our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. Aid workers, as he made so clear, must be able to support vulnerable Yemenis without fear of unjustified detention or intimidation.

Secondly, the arms embargo, as implemented by resolution 2216 (2015), is essential to prevent the illicit transfer of weapons into Yemen. We must, therefore, enforce compliance with that resolution, and we call on Member States to increase funding to strengthen the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen. We also welcome the launch of the Yemen coast guard strategy to strengthen arms control and maritime security.

Thirdly, the depreciation of the Yemeni rial continues to threaten Yemen's economic stability and food security, with dire humanitarian consequences.

The Government of Yemen requires consistent and stable international support to improve institutional resilience and collaboration, as Mr. Al-Omeisy referenced. The United Kingdom therefore calls on the international community to ensure that the Government of Yemen is enabled to continue to build the economy and capacities in order to best support the needs of the Yemeni people.

Finally, we welcome the Council's constructive engagement behind the efforts of the United Nations and Special Envoy Grundberg, which has included the unanimous adoption of the renewal of the mandates for both the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement and the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014). We remain committed to supporting the Envoy's work to deliver an inclusive, sustainable and comprehensive peace in Yemen.

Mr. Mikanagi (Japan): I would like to thank the three briefers — Special Envoy Grundberg, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Mr. Al-Omeisy — for their briefings. In particular, I wish Mr. Fletcher all the best and great success for his new appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

His role is important, especially at this time of humanitarian crises around the world. That includes Yemen, where the population is suffering from persistent

food insecurity, epidemics and natural disasters. There is an alarming shortage of humanitarian funding for Yemen. The international community should scale up assistance to save vulnerable Yemenis. Japan will continue to play its part in the field of humanitarian and emergency assistance throughout the country.

The Houthis must secure a safe and unhindered operating space for aid workers, who are there to help the Yemeni people. In that regard, while we take note of the recent release of one United Nations staff member and two non-governmental organization personnel, the Houthis must immediately release all of the more than 50 others who have been detained for six months, in addition to four United Nations personnel detained since 2021 and 2023. Japan reiterates its rejection of any false accusations or so-called criminal prosecution against any of them.

Freedom of navigation is a cornerstone of global maritime transportation. The Houthis must immediately cease their reckless attacks against vessels and release the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its 25 crew members, who have now been held captive for more than a year. Those are consistent demands of the Security Council, as contained in resolutions 2722 (2024) and 2739 (2024) and the press statement issued last month (SC/15904).

Japan also condemns other Houthi threats to international peace and security, including the recent drone attacks on Israel. They must stop.

Today is probably the final briefing on Yemen during Japan's current term as a non-permanent member of the Council. Looking back on the past two years, this file had a bright moment in 2023, when the country seemed headed towards peace. But, unfortunately, now is a dark moment, when the peace process is protracted amid continued destabilizing actions by the Houthis and regional instability.

As the Special Envoy said, Yemen cannot wait forever for a peace road map. The citizens of Yemen have desired security, stability and prosperity for more than a decade. Japan calls upon the parties to prioritize the well-being of the Yemeni people and restore the momentum for peace talks. Even at this challenging time, we are encouraged to hear the powerful words of Mr. Grundberg — peace in Yemen is possible. Japan trusts him and sincerely hopes that his tireless efforts will yield tangible progress towards a lasting and inclusive peace in Yemen.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I too would like to thank Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their briefings. I also welcome Under-Secretary-General Fletcher to the Council. I also would like to thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for his testimony and for sharing his personal experience with us today.

It has been one year since the parties to the conflict made commitments to measures seeking to implement a nationwide ceasefire, improve living conditions and engage in preparations for the resumption of an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices. We deeply regret that that progress has not been realized and that escalating tensions in the region have hampered Yemen's path to peace.

Houthi attacks against merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and the region have also escalated tensions and impaired progress. Although the levels of violence are lower than the period prior to the truce, military escalations and armed clashes between the sides are deeply concerning. We call on the Houthis to cease their escalations in Yemen, the Red Sea and the region. We urge the parties to return to the negotiating table and recommit to the commitments made one year ago.

A sustainable political process in Yemen must be inclusive. Women and underrepresented groups must have a voice in shaping Yemen's political future. It is not an option for them to be left out. Regrettably, women in Yemen continue to face grave rights violations. Restrictions that limit women's freedom of movement and access to healthcare and education are unacceptable and must be lifted. We stress the importance of gender-responsive humanitarian action and urge all stakeholders to prioritize the needs of women and girls.

This month also marks six months since the illegal detentions of more than 50 United Nations personnel and staff from non-governmental organizations, civil society and diplomatic missions by the Houthis. Throughout our elected term on the Council, humanitarian workers and United Nations staff have been targeted at unprecedented levels across the world, in particular the national and locally recruited staff who are the backbone of humanitarian operations. Humanitarian workers must be able to perform their critical work free from fear of being targeted. Those arbitrarily detained must be immediately and unconditionally released. Such detentions are a violation of international law.

As we have heard today yet again, the needs in Yemen remain immense and growing. Millions of people are experiencing acute food insecurity and malnutrition, lack of water, healthcare and sanitation services, spread of preventable diseases and displacement. The parties' leveraging of economic means has escalated the dire

humanitarian situation, while Yemenis' vulnerability to the effects of climate change is also further aggravating those needs. Yemeni children are suffering disproportionately and account for more than half of the people in need. All parties to the conflict must comply with their obligations under international law to ensure the protection of children. Despite the difficulties, the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations have continued to operate on the ground, and the international community must support those efforts and scale up the funding for Yemen's humanitarian response plan. Now is not the time to scale back.

In conclusion, since this is the last mandated meeting on Yemen during Malta's tenure on the Council, I would like to thank Special Envoy Grundberg and his entire team for their efforts, as well as our colleagues at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who continue to work in very challenging circumstances. The international community must continue to support Yemen. We remain firm in our belief that peace is possible. We reiterate our call on the parties to the conflict to prioritize the people of Yemen and engage in negotiations to that end, and on the international community to continue to offer the necessary support.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely Algeria, Mozambique and my own country, Sierra Leone, together with Guyana (A3+).

We are grateful to Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their valuable briefings. We also thank Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy, Senior Yemen Adviser at the European Institute of Peace, for his compelling and very sobering contribution. And we welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in today's meeting.

Yemen is at the centre of a multidimensional crisis, encompassing ongoing conflict, the devastating effects of climate change, economic collapse and one of the worst humanitarian emergencies in modern history. The A3+ fully supports the efforts of the United Nations and regional actors, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, to reach a political settlement of the Yemeni conflict based on agreed-on frameworks. A Yemeni-owned and Yemeni-led political process remains key to achieving a sustainable and just resolution. We believe that a balanced, inclusive process that ensures the participation of women and youth can end the conflict, address the political stalemate and lay a foundation for meeting the needs of the Yemeni people. We call for the continued preservation of the gains made in peace talks and stress the importance of the ongoing mediation efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. Considering all of that, the A3+ is concerned about the possibility that Yemen may lose international attention amid the ongoing instability and heightened tensions across the Middle East. In the light of those circumstances, the A3+ would like to highlight the following key points.

First, we reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all United Nations and humanitarian personnel currently detained by the Houthis. The detention of such personnel, along with members of civil society and diplomatic staff, constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law. We urge the Houthis to cease the arbitrary detention of humanitarian workers, who often operate under challenging conditions to provide life-saving services. In that regard, we also condemn the Houthis' targeting of civilians and civilian objects, such as the recent drone attack on a market in Taiz governorate, which tragically killed six people and injured eight.

Secondly, the A3+ is deeply concerned about the worsening levels of food insecurity in Yemen. According to the World Food Programme, 62 per cent of households are unable to meet their minimum food needs, an alarming 30 per cent increase compared to the previous year. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2025*, published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on 4 December, predicts that food insecurity and malnutrition will remain persistently high, with an estimated 17 million people, nearly half of the population, facing severe food insecurity and 3.5 million experiencing acute malnutrition. To address the dire situation, we call on donor countries to significantly increase their contributions to the humanitarian response plan for Yemen for 2025 and to mobilize the necessary resources.

Thirdly, we are seriously concerned about the Houthis' continued attacks on commercial and maritime vessels, which pose significant risks to the environment and marine ecosystems alike. We strongly urge the Houthis to cease their attacks immediately.

Finally, the A3+ is alarmed by the escalating attacks on Yemeni territory by external actors, which threaten to further undermine the mediation efforts. Military intervention cannot resolve the Yemeni crisis. Only

diplomatic efforts and genuine political dialogue can pave the way for lasting peace and national cohesion. The ongoing conflict in Gaza, along with the situation in Syria and air strikes on Yemeni territory, has serious implications for the security of the Yemeni people and the prospects for a stable political process. The A3+ firmly believes that achieving an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza is essential to long-term peace in the region. We call on all parties to the conflict, as well as external and regional actors, to halt their military actions and choose the path of peace.

In conclusion, the A3+ remains committed to supporting the Special Envoy's diplomatic efforts to facilitate a Yemeni-led, Yemeni-owned political process under the auspices of the United Nations. We will continue to advocate for peace, justice and prosperity for the people of Yemen.

Mr. Dharmadhikari (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Hans Grundberg, and Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for their briefings. I would also like to thank Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy for his compelling testimony regarding local action in Yemen and to welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to today's meeting.

The Iran-backed Houthis have still not ceased their attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, despite the Security Council's adoption of resolutions 2722 (2024) and 2739 (2024). We reiterate the Council's call for the immediate and unconditional release of the *MV Galaxy Leader*, along with its crew, who have been held hostage for more than a year.

France reaffirms its commitment to Yemen's stability and regional security. We call on Iran to stop supporting destabilizing action in the Middle East. We will continue our engagement within the context of the defensive operation under the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy, Operation ASPIDES, to protect maritime security and freedom of navigation, in accordance with international law and in conjunction with its partners.

France welcomed the recent release of a United Nations staff member and two members of non-governmental organizations. However, dozens of local and international humanitarian personnel remain arbitrarily detained in violation of international humanitarian law, as Mr. Fletcher just reminded us. We are extremely concerned about the charges that are being brought against the detainees and call for their immediate release. The detentions are contrary to international humanitarian law in a context of increased needs, particularly in the light of the cholera epidemic. We urge the Houthis to do their utmost to enable humanitarian actors to vaccinate the most vulnerable people and to end the disinformation campaigns against these humanitarian actors, who are playing a vital role that benefits the entire Yemeni population. Food insecurity is now affecting every region in Yemen. Forecasts indicate that more than 1 million additional people could need humanitarian assistance in 2025. The Houthis must stop taking Yemeni civilians hostage. Yemenis are the primary victims of the restrictions they impose on humanitarian operations. France therefore calls for guaranteed safe and unhindered humanitarian access. The international community must continue to be prepared to respond to the civilian population's needs.

The regional context must not make us lose sight of the objective of building a lasting peace in Yemen. We reiterate our full support for Special Envoy Hans Grundberg in his efforts to prepare the necessary resumption of the peace process. Only a political solution will enable a complete and lasting cessation of hostilities and guarantee a dignified life for the people of Yemen. It is crucial to avoid any resumption of conflict on the ground. The Houthis must return to the negotiating table under the leadership of the Special Envoy. France stresses the importance of inclusive negotiations guaranteeing the participation of all of Yemeni civil society and women, in particular.

Mr. Escobar Ullauri (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher — whom I congratulate on his appointment — and Mr. Al-Omeisy for their briefings and welcome the Permanent Representative of Yemen to this meeting.

Years of conflict in Yemen have meant the loss of countless lives, the destruction of the country's infrastructure, the displacement of millions of people and widespread health emergencies. Access to essential services remains a daily struggle for the population, and economic collapse has left communities vulnerable to critical shortages of food, water and medical supplies. Added to that is the continuation of Houthi attacks against commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Israel, which are creating a cycle of retaliation that is dragging Yemen deeper into regional conflict and diverting attention from the dire domestic situation. Despite the complex situation, Yemenis remain hopeful of a peaceful resolution of the conflict and achieving the peace they

so long for to begin the reconstruction of their country. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, cannot ignore that aspiration. That is why Ecuador supports the efforts of Special Envoy Grundberg to open the way towards dialogue between the parties, maintain open channels of communication with the military high command and promote the de-escalation of tensions. It is imperative to maintain the parties' commitments to adhering to the road map, which consist of establishing a ceasefire throughout the country, addressing humanitarian and economic needs and preparing an inclusive political process.

As the World Bank has stated in a recent report, a peace agreement would be the most effective mechanism for the recovery of the economy, which has been seriously affected by the blockade of oil exports imposed by the Houthis and has cut off the Government from the resources needed to meet the basic needs of its people. It is also urgent to increase financial support for the humanitarian response plan, which remains underfunded, to alleviate one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, estimated to affect more than 19 million people by 2025, as Under-Secretary-General Fletcher mentioned. In that context, it is essential to facilitate access for humanitarian organizations and ensure the safety of their staff. I reiterate Ecuador's call for the immediate and unconditional release of all arbitrarily detained humanitarian personnel and its condemnation of the groundless legal proceedings initiated against them.

When Ecuador began its term as an elected member on the Council, Yemen was one of the issues for which there was optimism with regard to prospects of reaching a peace agreement. Unfortunately, internal factors and the military escalation in the Middle East have upended that optimism to the point that we are facing the real risk of a breakdown of the current fragile truce that still prevails. As this is my country's last statement on the subject of Yemen, I reaffirm the importance of the Council maintaining a consistent and unified message on the resumption of a Yemeni-led political transition that preserves the truce and enables a sustainable and lasting peace to be achieved.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Hans Grundberg for his briefing, as well as him and his team for all their invaluable work and collaborative efforts over the past two years. I would also like to warmly welcome Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and reassure him of Switzerland's cooperation. Even after our term has ended on the Security Council, we will certainly continue to support international humanitarian law. We will remain a major benefactor of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and international Geneva will be available to him as a humanitarian operational centre. Of course, I would also like to thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for his courage in sharing his suffering and his fate with us here in the Council today.

When Switzerland first addressed the Council on the situation in Yemen (see S/PV.9244), we welcomed the truce then prevailing between the parties. The road map presented by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg in December 2023 filled us with hope. We welcomed the parties' commitment to a road map aimed at implementing a ceasefire, improving living conditions in Yemen and paving the way for the resumption of an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices. Switzerland has supported that positive dynamic at every stage. Those positive developments now seem a long way off. For more than a year, we have seen a worrisome resurgence of attacks within and from Yemen, as well as in the Red Sea. The attacks of the past days, including a drone strike on Taiz that killed six civilians and wounded eight others, underline the urgent need for action. Those events remind us of our fundamental goal: an inclusive political solution, negotiated under the aegis of the United Nations. Escalation, like the status quo, does not provide a viable option. We therefore reiterate our full support for Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and his road map, which provides a solid basis for progress towards lasting peace. As in the past, we stand ready to host talks under the aegis of the United Nations.

Only a political solution will guarantee a peaceful future for the Yemeni people. We owe that especially to Yemen's children, who continue to suffer the devastating consequences of the conflict. The serious violations against them that have been documented — killings, attacks on physical integrity, recruitment, attacks on schools and hospitals and obstacles to humanitarian aid — demand decisive action. Those violations must stop. Switzerland is committed to that end through the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict in Yemen, which we co-chair with Norway. We also contribute to the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on grave violations. We call for the resumption of discussions on the exchange of prisoners, some of whom are minors. They must be given special attention. Their release is an absolute priority.

The effects of climate change, such as floods and droughts, also jeopardize the future of millions of Yemenis. Since 2015, extreme climate change events have

exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and have led to the displacement of 4.5 million people. Climate change acts as a risk multiplier, enhancing people's vulnerability, driving competition for resources and thereby fuelling conflict. Sustainable peace also depends on building community resilience and finding solutions to the combined impacts of conflict and climate change.

Mainly due to the armed conflict that has ravaged the country for more than a decade and exacerbated by climate change, the disastrous humanitarian situation is creating a breeding ground for violence. Against that backdrop, the role of humanitarian actors in Yemen is of crucial importance. However, their work is severely hampered, and their security remains precarious, as evidenced by the prolonged and arbitrary detention of humanitarian and United Nations personnel by the Houthis over the past six months. Switzerland strongly condemns those detentions and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained. As resolution 2730 (2024) states, those personnel are protected by international humanitarian law.

I will conclude with the following thoughts. The future is not etched in stone. Where there is political will, there is hope for change. The Council must maintain Yemen and, above all, the civilian population of Yemen, as a high priority, despite the regional turbulence. It must continue to work for peace in order to make it a tangible reality for future generations, and, to that end, it must remain united.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. We listened attentively to Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy.

There is growing concern about the stagnation in the Yemeni settlement. Despite almost two years of discussions on agreeing to parameters on normalizing the situation in this country, the desired result — the launch of a full-fledged political process — has yet to be seen. And that is despite the fact that the warring factions have expressed their readiness to bring the agreements reached to the signing of a corresponding road map. Meanwhile, the positions of various radical forces on the ground are being bolstered. There is a growing number of local incidents in the area of line of contact, and we cannot fully rule out the possibility of renewed hostilities.

It is clear that the situation in Yemen is affected by the skyrocketing turbulence in the greater Middle East, including the ongoing Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip and the developments in Lebanon and Syria. However, we see no reason why those conflicts should hinder the progress of inter-Yemeni negotiations. We are convinced that the Yemeni settlement must be advanced without regard to the situation in the Red Sea or regional events.

The window of opportunity will not remain open indefinitely. The longer the deadlock in the settlement remains, the greater the chances that the parties to the conflict will take unilateral steps, which is fraught with serious consequences for the Yemeni State. In order to avoid that extremely undesirable scenario, it is necessary to urgently intensify mediation efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. For our part, we stand ready to help in any way we can.

An inclusive dialogue involving all political forces in the country, including Ansar Allah, would help achieve the desired result. It would be a good complement to the comprehensive efforts undertaken by Special Envoy Grundberg to help stabilize the situaiton in Yemen. The ongoing process of rapprochement between the largest regional Powers — Yemen's neighbours — also creates a favourable background for resuming the normalization process. We call on all protagonists to continue along this path without wasting time.

With regard to maintaining the safety of international shipping in the Red Sea, our position remains unchanged: we strongly condemn any actions that impede freedom of navigation and pose a danger to commercial vessels. We call on Ansar Allah to refrain from attacking ships and to release the *MV Galaxy Leader* and its crew, whose members have been detained now for over a year.

The illegal regular shelling of Yemeni territory, carried out by the so-called "coalition" of the United States and its satellites, which continues to this day, should also stop immediately. Such belligerent steps, contrary to the arguments of Western aggressors, do not help to normalize the situation in Yemen itself or around it. They only delay the long-awaited peace in this country and strengthen the conviction of the Ansar Allah movement that pushing back against hostile external forces is bearing fruit. The history of Yemen shows that nothing can be solved in this country by force. Enough blood has already been spilled in the Middle East. Maybe it is time to gather stones rather than scatter them.

We cannot ignore the long-standing acute humanitarian crisis in Yemen. According to the Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, prepared by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, almost 20 million people in the country will need humanitarian assistance. Their living conditions remain dire due to socioeconomic turmoil and limited access to clean water, healthcare and education. The risk of malnutrition will also remain consistently high. An increase in the number infectious disease outbreaks, including cholera, is expected. The number of internally displaced persons is almost 5 million, mainly women and children. It is extremely difficult to correct this tragic situation. Without the combined efforts of the entire international community, a manifold increase in humanitarian funding and the removal of impediments to the work of humanitarian workers, it will not be possible to improve the living conditions of the Yemeni people.

In that context, we and our colleagues on the Council are concerned about the still unresolved situation of the locally hired United Nations staff detained in Yemen. It is unacceptable to take action that violates the privileges and immunities of United Nations structures and personnel. We need to have full clarity on the situation there and ensure humanitarian access to the detainees.

At the same time, we are against speaking to Ansar Allah using the language of pressure and threats. Instead, what is needed is painstaking mediation work on the ground, which would create conditions for the eventual release of the detainees.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher for their briefings. I also thank Mr. Al-Omeisy for sharing his personal experiences with us today. I also take this opportunity to wish Under-Secretary-General Fletcher every success in addressing global humanitarian needs and protection. I also warmly welcome Yemen's representative to today's meeting.

As we convene for the year's final briefing, we reflect on the lack of progress since the adoption of resolution 2722 (2024) in January, prompted by the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea.

In that regard, I would like to address the following points today.

First, reckless and unlawful Houthi attacks persist in the Red Sea and beyond, escalating to direct assaults on Israel, including Monday's drone strike on Tel Aviv. Those provocations not only jeopardize regional stability and stall Yemen's political process, but also disrupt global supply chains.

According to the recent report issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Red Sea merchant ship traffic dropped by 50 per cent this year. It is imperative for the Houthis to immediately cease their reckless provocations. Exploiting regional tensions since 7 October is unjustifiable.

We hope that the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement along the Blue Line and the recent historic momentum towards a political transition in Syria will have a catalytic impact on the dynamics of the Middle East, leading to stability and political progress in Yemen.

Secondly, over six months have passed since the Houthis' appalling arbitrary detention of more than 50 personnel from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and diplomatic missions. While some people were recently released, the detention of many others continues. We strongly condemn those unacceptable detentions that constitute a violation of international law. We would like to echo the Secretary-General's most recent call for the immediate and unconditional release of all the arbitrarily detained, including humanitarian personnel.

Thirdly, each month, we have been witnessing the declining humanitarian situation in Yemen. The latest report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirms that the floods displaced 100,000 families, exacerbating the shelter crisis and water scarcity. We urge the international community to refocus its sustained attention on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Republic of Korea is fully committed to continuing to actively contribute to supporting humanitarian needs, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders.

Fourthly, all United Nations Member States, including neighbouring countries, must faithfully implement all relevant Security Council resolutions, especially with regard to the arms embargo. In that connection, we urge United Nations Member States to pay close attention to the findings contained in this year's final report (S/2024/731) of the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), concerning Yemen. As Chair of the Yemen Sanctions Committee, the Republic of Korea will continue its constructive efforts to that end.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering support for Special Envoy Grundberg's steadfast efforts to tackle the multiple ongoing challenges and laying the groundwork for an inclusive Yemeni-led political transition under United Nations auspices. Although 2024 was a disheartening year, given the recent dramatic shifts in the region, we have a stream of hope for progress and positive developments in Yemen and the Middle East, as a whole, in 2025.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would first like to thank Special Envoy Grundberg, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and the civil society representative for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Yemen in this meeting. Since this is Under-Secretary-General Fletcher's first briefing to the Security Council, I welcome him and would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate China's firm support for the humanitarian work of the United Nations.

The recent dramatic turn of events in Syria has brought about new elements of instability and uncertainty to the entire Middle East region. The situation in Yemen and that in the Red Sea may suffer new shocks as a result. The ongoing exchanges of fire between Israel and the Houthis, as well as the recent message by Israel that it is contemplating a new, larger-scale strike on Yemen is a deeply worrisome and disturbing development. I once again call on all the parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from actions that would escalate the situation. I emphasize that the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Yemen should be respected.

I would like to reiterate that resolving the Yemeni issue ultimately depends on finding a political solution. The current stagnation in the peace process is not in the long-term or fundamental interests of the Yemeni people. All parties should demonstrate political will, take practical actions to gradually build mutual trust, create conditions for the resumption of dialogue and jointly promote a comprehensive Yemeni-led and -owned political process. China supports the mediation efforts of Special Envoy Grundberg and calls on all parties to support his work in order to ensure that the political impasse in Yemen is resolved as soon as possible.

At the same time, we are concerned about the fact that the tense situation in the Red Sea has not eased. We once again call on the Houthis to respect the right of commercial vessels of all countries to navigate the waters of the Red Sea, in accordance with international law; to cease their attacks and harassment; and to maintain the safety of shipping lanes in the waters of the Red Sea. We call on the parties concerned to exercise calm and restraint and to cease any actions that would escalate tensions.

According to the report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2025, 19.5 million Yemenis will require humanitarian assistance, and the country will face daunting challenges in food security and public health. The international community should increase its humanitarian and development investment in Yemen and work together to help to improve the humanitarian situation. China welcomes the recent release of the three detainees and calls on all the parties concerned to increase their engagement and communication to push for the release of all detainees as soon as possible.

Before I conclude, I would like to emphasize that it has been 14 months since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, and the negative spillover effects are increasing. Lebanon and Syria, as well as the Red Sea and Yemen, are all experiencing new turbulence. The Security Council should remain united and take measures to promote a permanent ceasefire in Gaza as soon as possible and a gradual de-escalation in the region in order to prevent more countries from being plunged into catastrophe. We are ready to work with all the parties and continue to make unrelenting efforts to achieve a political settlement in Yemen and to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.

Mr. Ponikvar (Slovenia): We are grateful to Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their briefings, as well as Mr. Al-Omeisy for his deeply personal testimony. We welcome the Ambassador of Yemen to the Chamber. As this is Under-Secretary-General Fletcher's first briefing to the Security Council, I take this opportunity to wish him every success. The work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is indispensable, and he can rest assured of Slovenia's support.

It has indeed been a turbulent year for the people of Yemen, a year marked by worsening food insecurity, economic turmoil, devastating flooding and the spread of disease. For many children, it has been a year in which they did not attend school. For many women and girls, it has been a year in which they suffered from sexual and gender-based violence. It has also been a year marked by ever-deteriorating conditions for humanitarian workers on the ground. We acknowledge the recent release of one United Nations and two non-governmental organization staff members following the unjustifiable wave of

detentions by the Houthis six months ago. While that is a relief, it is simply not enough. We once again call for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained humanitarian personnel and for the implementation of resolution 2730 (2024).

We commend OCHA and the broader humanitarian community for staying and delivering life-saving and life-sustaining services across the country. We note the prioritization exercise that is being undertaken by OCHA. It is regrettable that it has to happen, but we understand why: humanitarian personnel must be protected. We call for joint, principled humanitarian action in Yemen and sustained funding to the response plan as we head towards a new year.

In December 2023, the Yemeni parties took the significant step of committing to a set of measures to implement a nationwide ceasefire and work on a United Nations road map. Since then, however, they have not taken the necessary leap to build on those commitments and deliver a lasting peace. The devastating situation in Gaza, where a ceasefire is desperately needed, has undoubtedly hampered the efforts. And Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and against Israel have compounded an already dire situation. We continue to call for the immediate cessation of those attacks. We stress once again that there can be no military solution to this conflict. A return to war in Yemen is unimaginable. Diplomacy must prevail. Dialogue must prevail. That is why we fully support the work of the Special Envoy to preserve the space for mediation.

Yesterday marked International Human Rights Defenders Day, a time to reflect on the human rights situation across the world. Unfortunately, in Yemen, that remains a matter of serious concern. We emphasize the need for independent and impartial human rights monitoring and documentation of serious abuses and violations in Yemen. We also stress that accountability and transitional justice should be fully integrated into any future peace process. We recall the crucial role of women in promoting peace and security and welcome the convening earlier this month of the seventh Feminist Summit in Aden.

At a time of monumental change in the region, we hold on to the conviction that an inclusive peace in Yemen is possible. Slovenia once again calls on all the parties to the conflict to put the Yemeni people first, enabling them to finally rebuild their lives in 2025.

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

I want to start by thanking Special Envoy Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their briefings. Since this is Mr. Fletcher's first briefing to the Security Council, I want to congratulate him on his appointment and to welcome him to the fold. Both briefers once again stressed the recklessness of Houthi maritime attacks and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Houthi-controlled territory. I want to give a special thank you to Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy for sharing his heart-wrenching story, one that is unfortunately unfolding over and over again in Yemen as the Houthis continue to unlawfully detain countless individuals. I want to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Yemen here today.

We have discussed the Houthis' disturbing actions at length, yet those conversations have borne no meaningful change in the Houthis' behaviour. They have not heeded the appeals made in the Chamber nor the consensus enshrined in multiple products of the Council. Instead, they have ignored the clear demands in resolution 2722 (2024) to end their maritime attack and release the unlawfully detained crew of the *MV Galaxy Leader*. And they have failed to change their behaviour following the Security Council's press statements issued in December 2023 (SC/15513) and just this past month (SC/15904). On the contrary, the Houthis, with the help of Iranian-supplied anti-ship ballistic missiles, have only continued their reckless attacks, including on United States naval ships, a Turkish merchant vessel and a United Arab Emirates-operated container vessel. And they continue to target Israel.

The Houthis' slick social media propaganda is clear evidence that they care more about blustering to foreign audiences than helping their own people. Their videos are complemented by a concerted disinformation campaign intended to protect illusions of tactical success and weaken the resolve of regional partners and like-minded countries. That cannot and will not happen. Whether in the Council or through partnerships like Operation ASPIDES and Operation Prosperity Guardian, the multinational community stands firm in its resolve to counter threats to navigational rights and freedoms. To that end, the United States supports strengthening the capacity of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen to inspect vessels bound for Houthi-controlled ports, helping mitigate the flow of weapons from Iran to the Houthis. Right now, those transfers are happening at an unprecedented rate, not to mention in violation of multiple Security Council

resolutions. That must cease. What is more, and following the successful launch last month of the Yemen Maritime Security Partnership, we will continue to work with the Republic of Yemen's coastguard to control illicit activity along the country's coastline.

Finally, we will continue to push for accountability for the Houthis and those who support them. Enough is enough. We have already warned that sham proceedings that could lead to executions of unlawfully detained humanitarian, United Nations and diplomatic personnel are totally unacceptable. Last month the United States demanded that the Security Council call for the immediate release of all detainees (see S/PV.9782), people who are effectively hostages and desperately want to come home to their families, as Mr. Al-Omeisy was able to do. The United States was disappointed that some Council members once again stymied an effort to speak with one voice about those detainees — disappointed but not surprised. After all, it has become increasingly clear that Russia has its own political interests with the Houthis, an agenda that takes precedence over collaboration in the Council. We have seen disturbing evidence that Moscow is actively pursuing contacts with the Houthis and discussing weapons transfers. And now there are alarming reports that Russian armed forces have recruited hundreds of Yemenis to fight their unjustified war in Ukraine.

I am sure my Russian colleague will deny, deny, deny, just as Russia denied that any North Korean forces were fighting in the war on Ukraine and just as it denied that it would invade Ukraine in the first place. But the facts do not lie, and the fact is that despite Russia and Iran's nefarious meddling, the only way to resolve Yemen's conflict is through an inclusive political solution. Rather than continuing their assault on the Red Sea and surrounding waterways, the Houthis must de-escalate and return to a political process — one that achieves a durable end to the conflict and addresses Yemenis' calls for justice, accountability and redress for human rights abuses and violations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the Security Council presidency for this month and to wish you every success in your tasks. I also thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, for a successful presidency of the Council last month.

Our gratitude goes to Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and to Mr. Tom Fletcher, whom we congratulate on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. We wish him every success and look forward to working with him to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Yemen. I would also like to thank our brother Hisham Al-Omeisy and all the briefers for their insights.

We have repeatedly emphasized to the Council that peace in Yemen cannot be established without a genuine partner who renounces war, believes in equal rights for all Yemenis, rejects violence as a means of imposing a political agenda and places the interests of the Yemeni people above all other considerations. What is currently lacking in Yemen is peace in all its dimensions. That is because the Houthi terrorist militias, supported by the Iranian regime, have rejected every regional and international effort to put an end to the Yemeni crisis. They do not want peace and have not participated seriously in those efforts They are intransigent, opting for military escalation on every front and waging systematic economic warfare on the Yemeni people. All of that is taking place in the context of a fragile truce that the Houthi militias do not respect. The Security Council and the international community therefore need to review their response to the behaviour of those militias and their approach, which is destabilizing Yemen and the region.

In that context, the Yemeni Government reiterates its commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace process, based on the agreed terms of reference, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015). We reaffirm our support for Special Envoy Grundberg and for all initiatives and proposals aimed at resolving the crisis in Yemen in order to meet the aspirations and hopes of the Yemeni people. My Government greatly appreciates the efforts of our brothers in Saudi Arabia and Oman to revive the political process and thereby reach a political settlement, end the conflict and restore security and stability in Yemen.

The escalation by the Houthi militias in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait poses a threat not only to Yemen and its stability but to regional and international peace and security generally and to international freedom of navigation and trade. The threat is not new and did not come from a vacuum. The reason is that for years the international community ignored the Yemeni Government's warnings about the Houthi militias'

undermining of the Stockholm Agreement, including the Hodeidah Agreement. The Houthis continue to control the city of Al-Hudaydah and its ports, using them as a platform for attacking international shipping routes and commercial vessels, launching missiles, drones and sea mines and engaging in arms trafficking, in contravention of the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) and succeeding relevant resolutions. The fact is that those militias, supported by the Iranian regime, are seeking to undermine security and stability in the region and threaten international shipping routes — the lifeblood of the international economy — and all efforts and initiatives aimed at de-escalation and achieving a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Yemen. They are destroying the capabilities of the Yemeni people, prolonging the war, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and obstructing the peace process led by the United Nations.

Iran must stay out of Yemen and respect its sovereignty and identity while enabling its people to build their State and their better future that they all deserve. It is high time. The Iranian regime continues to provide the Houthi militias with experts, training and weapons, including ballistic missiles and drones, in flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, specifically resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2140 (2014). It also demonstrates contempt for the efforts of the international community and the Council to maintain regional and international peace and security. That means that in order for the Council to achieve that goal and address the Yemeni crisis, it must ensure that its resolutions are implemented, take a decisive stand aimed at deterring those who violate its resolutions and make them accountable for it.

The Yemeni Government calls once again on the international community to provide economic and development support for Yemen and to strengthen its security capabilities, including the capabilities of the Yemeni Coast Guard to tackle the security challenges that threaten international navigation in the Red Sea, Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden. We value the efforts of the United Kingdom and its announcement of a new package of support for the Yemeni Coast Guard as part of coordinated efforts to combat arms trafficking, piracy, terrorism and organized crime. Providing support for the Yemeni Government to address development and security challenges is in everyone's interest and represents an investment in the stability of the region and the world. We also emphasize the importance of activating the role of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism.

The Yemeni Government is facing difficult economic challenges as a result of being prevented from resuming its oil exports for more than two years owing to the terrorist Houthi militias' attacks and targeting of oil facilities, depriving the Yemeni people of their most important resource, which impacts the State's general budget and prevents the Government from being able to provide basic services to its citizens and pay salaries, depriving the national economy of hard currency and increasing pressure on the exchange rate of the national currency. The Yemeni Government calls once again on the international community to support it and help it find the means to resume oil exports. That is a vital resource that will allow us to fulfil our obligations.

In the light of the economic challenges, the Yemeni Government is seeking to implement a set of measures aimed at alleviating economic and humanitarian suffering, halting the deterioration of the economy and stabilizing basic services, including developing plans and setting priorities to find sustainable solutions for development and the provision of services, implementing a set of economic, financial and administrative reforms while promoting transparency and accountability and addressing corruption, which are current priorities. We are fully confident that the international community, our development partners from sisterly and friendly countries and international donor organizations will support the Government's plans and programmes in those exceptional circumstances to achieve economic stability and recovery, strengthen Government institutions and integrate development needs and priorities in all humanitarian interventions. In that regard, the Yemeni Government commends the development and humanitarian support from its brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian and economic effects.

Yesterday, the peoples of the world celebrated Human Rights Day. Meanwhile, the Houthi militias continue to commit crimes of abduction, suppression, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention against our people in the areas under their control. They have targeted densely populated areas, which has resulted in the killing of dozens of civilians, including women and children. The most recent of such crimes, the horrific crime in the Maqbanah district in Taiz governorate, in which the Houthi militias targeted a popular market with an Iranian-made drone, resulted in six people killed and eight wounded, including children. That crime is not an exception, but rather part of an ongoing systematic approach since the Houthi militias' coup d'état against

the State and part of the ongoing military escalation by those militias in a number of regions aimed at terrorizing and displacing the population, undermining de-escalation efforts and the possibility of achieving a peaceful solution to the crisis.

We have always called on the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to take firm and solemn positions towards the ongoing violations and crimes committed by the Houthi militias, which not only affect the Yemeni people, but also extended to the detention, abduction and forced disappearance of dozens of employees of United Nations agencies, international and local organizations, and diplomatic missions operating in Yemen more than six months ago.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed continued inaction on the part of the international community and the use of meek language that is not commensurate with the severity of the crimes and violations, which has encouraged those militias to persist in their practices that violate international humanitarian law, human rights law and national legislation. The Yemeni Government reiterates its call on the United Nations and the Security Council to step up efforts to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of those who have been abducted, humanitarian workers and all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons and end their suffering and that of their families, in accordance with the principle of all for all. In the light of the Houthi militias' continued targeting of relief and humanitarian agencies and obstructing their activities, the Yemeni Government calls once again on the United Nations and all international organizations operating in Yemen to move their headquarters to the temporary capital Aden in order to ensure the security and safety of their staff in a safe and appropriate environment in which to work and provide their humanitarian services to all Yemenis in all Yemeni regions without discrimination or impediments.

In conclusion, the Yemeni Government is awaiting the donor conference to mobilize funding for the 2025 humanitarian response plan for Yemen and calls on donor partners from sisterly and friendly countries and international organizations to provide generous support for the plan to bridge the funding gap, meet the existing humanitarian needs and avoid the disruption of life-saving assistance. We call on the international community to keep Yemen at the top of its priorities list, especially in the light of the multiple humanitarian crises in many countries.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.