



**Briefing to United Nations Security Council by Assistant Secretary-General at
the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Peace Operations,
Mohamed Khiari**

23 Aug 2021

Mr. President,

I am pleased to join you today to brief the Security Council on current developments in Yemen.

Unfortunately, since the last Council session on Yemen there has been no further progress in the UN's ongoing efforts to reach an agreement based on the four-point plan presented to the parties, which is comprised of: a nationwide ceasefire, the re-opening of Sana'a airport, the easing of restrictions on the flow of fuel and other commodities through Hudaydah port, and the resumption of face-to-face political negotiations between the Yemeni parties.

The Houthis have continued to condition the resumption of their participation in the political process on the opening of Hudaydah ports and Sana'a airport, as well as on the ending of what they call the "aggression and occupation". On the occasion of Eid al-Adha, the Head of the Houthi Supreme Political Council reiterated this stance.

Negotiations facilitated by Saudi Arabia on the Riyadh Agreement – which were focused on the return of the Prime Minister and other ministers to Aden have yet to resume following the Eid break in July. No date has been set for recommencing these efforts. Timely progress on implementation of the Riyadh Agreement remains vital to address the tensions in the south, particularly since the security situation in Aden and the southern governorates continues to deteriorate. The situation is compounded by continued problems with the provision of basic services, including electricity supply, despite the Saudi transfers of fuel grants. This has been accompanied by further protests and industrial action in Aden and other areas of the southern governorates. All stakeholders must cooperate to avoid further escalation.

Mr. President,

Military activity in Yemen continues to ebb and flow. Sporadic fighting has been observed in Al Jawf and Taiz, but Ma'rib appears to remain the key strategic focus. In Al Bayda to the south of Ma'rib, initial gains made by Yemeni forces supported by the Saudi-led Coalition were subsequently reversed by the Houthis, who have now moved further north around the border between Ma'rib and Shabwa governorates. Based on these continued evolutions in the military

situation, the main arterial routes to Ma'rib are now more seriously threatened. In light of this, we reiterate our call to all parties to completely and immediately cease such attempts to achieve territorial gains by force.

Following a brief lull in cross-border ballistic missile and drone attacks against southern Saudi Arabia, land- and sea-based infrastructure in this area have once again been targeted in recent weeks. There have also been continued reports of airstrikes being launched by the Coalition.

Mr. President,

The difficult economic situation is palpable throughout the country. The value of the Yemeni riyal in government-controlled areas continued to deteriorate, reaching a record low, trading at 1,000 riyals to 1 US dollar. The gap in exchange rates between Sana'a and Aden have also increased to approximately 400 riyals. The Southern Transitional Council recently threatened to enforce an independent local exchange rate in Aden and other areas under their control in southern Yemen, a situation which would likely further complicate efforts at cohesive economic recovery. The Houthis and members of the private sector have also opposed the Government's increase in the price of the customs dollar fee from 250 to 500 riyals for imports.

Lastly, I would like to address the concerning issue of fuel supply, which continues to worsen, particularly in Houthi-controlled areas. Only three commercial fuel vessels were given clearance to berth at Hudaydah Port since the beginning of July. Four fuel vessels remain in the Coalition holding area. All but one petrol station of the Yemen Petroleum Company in Houthi-controlled governorates have reportedly closed. And the Yemen Gas Company indicated that there are increasingly severe cooking gas shortages, with waiting times understood to be approximately one month to refill empty cylinders. This has significantly driven up prices in the parallel market. We reiterate our call on the Government of Yemen to urgently allow the entry of all essential commercial supplies –including fuel ships– to Hudaydah without delay. All parties must prioritize civilian needs and abstain from weaponizing the economy, particularly in light of the critical humanitarian situation in the country.

Mr. President,

The appointment of Mr. Grundberg as the new Special Envoy for Yemen presents an opportunity to build off the tremendous efforts of Martin Griffiths in his role as Envoy, to assess the overall mediation approach and to focus the work on overcoming the obstacles that remain ahead of us. In this regard, it is imperative to resume an inclusive, Yemeni-led political process to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. We call on all parties and stakeholders, including this Council, to extend their full support and cooperation to Mr. Grundberg in his upcoming efforts.

Thank you.