



**Office of the Special Envoy  
of the Secretary-General for Yemen**

**OSESGY**

**Briefing by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to the UN Security Council**

**16 August 2023**

Thank you **Madam President**.

**Madam President**, thank you for the opportunity to update this Council on recent developments in Yemen and my efforts to mediate an agreement between the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah that sets Yemen on a path to sustainably end the conflict.

Allow me to start my briefing by reiterating my condemnation of the murder of the World Food Programme staff member, Moayad Hameidi, in Taiz governorate on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July. I offer my heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. Let me be clear: humanitarian workers should never be a target. Any loss of life in humanitarian service is an unacceptable tragedy for the United Nations and for the people who benefit from the humanitarian community's lifesaving assistance.

While the United Nations family mourns the loss of Moayad, I am greatly relieved about the recent release of our five UN colleagues, who were kidnapped in Abyan governorate in February 2022. I would like to express my gratitude to all who contributed to securing their release as well as my solidarity with the other UN staff who are still held without due process in Yemen. In this regard, let us not either forget the plight of conflict-related detainees who continue to face the unbearable sorrow of separation from loved ones. I encourage both parties to continue to work closely with my office to achieve the unconditional release of detainees based on the "all-for-all principle." I look forward in this regard to the briefing of Amat Al Salam Al Haj from the Abductees Mother's Association.

**Madam President**, turning to my mediation efforts, I have continued my engagements with the Yemeni parties and the regional member states. Last week, I visited Riyadh, where I held meetings with the President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, and other senior Yemeni officials, as well as senior Saudi officials. This week, I travelled to Muscat, where I held meetings with Ansar Allah representatives and senior Omani officials. Additionally, my Office has held meetings over the past two weeks with Government officials in Aden and Ansar Allah representatives in Sana'a. The sides continue to display general willingness to seek solutions, but this still needs to translate into concrete steps, in particular, a clear agreement on the way forward that includes restarting an inclusive Yemeni political process.

**Madam President**, despite the expiration of the truce last October, hostilities on the frontlines have not returned to pre-truce levels and civilian casualty numbers have significantly declined.

However, intermittent fighting and exchanges of fire have continued on some frontlines, particularly in Taiz, Ma'rib, Dhale', Hodeida, Shabwa, and Sa'ada.

Against this backdrop, there have been public threats to return to war. This rhetoric is not conducive to maintaining a fruitful mediation environment. I call on the parties to refrain from escalatory rhetoric and to continue to use and build on dialogue channels established under the truce through the Military Coordination Committee to de-escalate incidents.

**Madam President**, allow me now to turn to the increasingly dire economic situation. The parties continue to resort to antagonistic economic measures to weaken the other side. But these tactics primarily hurt civilians, while increasing the atmosphere of mistrust. The Government is still being prevented from exporting petroleum products, its major source of revenue, and intra-Yemeni trade in goods and services remains curtailed due to restrictions and the imposition of exorbitant fees and taxes. Basic service provision is deteriorating further, power stations are shutting down due to a lack of fuel, and electricity cuts in Aden are reaching 18 hours per day, amid the summer's stifling weather. As always, Yemeni citizens, including women and girls, continue to bear the brunt of these measures and their consequences.

Amid these terrible conditions, the support pledged by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of 1.2 billion US dollars earlier this month is a welcome step. But there will be no lasting improvement in the situation until the parties come together to discuss and agree on sustainable solutions to Yemen's economic and fiscal challenges.

The expansion of flights to and from Sana'a airport also remains a pressing concern to relieve some of the pressure on Yemeni civilians seeking to travel for medical care, educational and business opportunities, or to reunite with loved ones. This also means protecting the operational continuity of Yemenia Airways. Moreover, last month, Yemenis in Taiz commemorated eight years of conflict-related road closures in and around their governorate. This grim milestone is another reminder of the dire need for road openings in Taiz and other governorates to facilitate the freedom of movement of Yemenis who have faced restrictions to accessing their basic needs and engaging in economic opportunities.

Political and economic instability are fertile grounds for violent extremist groups. I am concerned by reports that activities of violent extremists have recently increased in Abyan and Shabwa governorates. This is yet another reminder of the consequences of the long-term absence of a political settlement to the conflict.

**Madam President**, the fragility of the situation and its impact on Yemeni women and men highlight the urgent need to reach a consensus on the way forward. My Office is working to convene the parties to address some of their immediate priorities to build confidence and move toward an inclusive and sustainable political settlement. Trust levels are low, and partial solutions risk being perceived as reversible and providing only temporary relief. For this reason, I continue to pursue a more comprehensive approach that addresses both the immediate and longer-term political, economic, military and security issues.

On economic issues, my Office continues to explore options with the parties on how to best respond to the needs of all Yemenis, including regular public sector salary payments nationwide, improved service provision, affordable basic commodities, a functional banking system, and facilitating commercial activity. The issue of salary payments, including the question of revenue sources, remains a central issue for which the parties need to find a mutually agreeable solution. Economic resources must not be perceived as a zero-sum game. Instead of competition, the parties should cooperate to broaden and expand economic opportunities for the welfare of all Yemenis.

In addition, building on the achievement of the truce, my Office continues to engage all sides on the technical elements required for a sustainable nationwide ceasefire. Over the past few weeks, my Office has held meetings in Sana'a and Aden with military officials and local security actors. This included meetings with Ansar Allah's representatives to the Military Coordination Committee, following earlier work with the Government representatives. I commend all sides for continuing internal preparations for a ceasefire, and I encourage them to make progress toward a more formalized ceasefire.

**Madam President**, at the heart of my mediation efforts remains the resumption of an inclusive, Yemeni-owned political process under United Nations auspices. The political process should provide a platform for a plurality of Yemenis from across the country to collectively discuss and determine their own future. It should also pave the way for reconciliation and efforts to address grievances. The recent intensification of the voices of civil society, women, and youth on the challenging issues of reconciliation, grievances and injustices underlines once again the importance of the inclusion of a range of Yemenis in the political process.

On the occasion of International Youth Day, which was observed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, I would like to celebrate Yemeni youth for their critical contribution to peace. Young people make up the majority of Yemen's population. After years of war, many Yemeni women and men have lost their entire adolescence to the conflict. In consultations organized by my Office, Yemeni youth often highlight challenges related to limited access to employment and education, as well as political inclusion, and particular restrictions on participation in public life for young women. Yet, despite the challenges, young Yemeni women and men continue to lay the foundation for peace with their determination, resourcefulness, and strong belief in a better tomorrow for their country. My Office will continue efforts to create space for the perspectives and voices of youth, along with other segments of Yemeni society.

**Madam President**, the continued unity and steadfast support of this Council, and international community more broadly, have been a pivotal asset for my mediation efforts. Similarly, the recent progress on FSO Safer has shown how concerted international support and multilateral cooperation can bring tangible results. The removal of the oil from the FSO Safer to a new vessel has prevented an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. I would like to congratulate the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, David Gressly, and the UNDP and their partners for reaching this great milestone. I would also like to commend the role of the Government of Yemen and Ansar Allah in facilitating this operation.

Looking ahead, this Council's support will continue to be vital to encourage the parties to maintain the conducive environment for discussions on the way forward and to move toward a just and sustainable peace that meets the aspirations of Yemeni women, men, and youth.

**Thank you, Madam President.**