

# United Nations

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



# الأمم المتحدة

مكتب المبعوث الخاص للأمين العام  
للأمم المتحدة لليمن

**Briefing of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen  
Mr. Martin Griffiths  
Open session of the UN Security Council  
19 February 2019  
(As delivered)**

**Mr. President,**

Thank you very much, thank you for the opportunity provided to me to brief this Council. Since I last talked to you, a few weeks ago, we have made some significant progress in the implementation of the agreements reached in Stockholm towards the latter part of last year. The parties have now confirmed to Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard and to me their agreement to the first phase of the Hudaydah redeployment plan. Naturally, I welcome the agreement that they have reached and the commitment it shows by the parties to implement the Stockholm agreement, and the promises made in that meeting in early December.

Under the leadership of Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard, the parties have agreed to redeploy from the ports of Saleef and Ras Isa in a first step, followed by a redeployment from Hudaydah port itself and critical parts of the city of Hudaydah associated with humanitarian facilities in Step 2. This will facilitate humanitarian access to the Red Sea Mills, where as we know, a significant tonnage of grain is waiting to be distributed to the people of Yemen. I am grateful to both parties who have made concessions to allow this to happen. I call upon them immediately to start implementation of this agreement without further delays and to agree on the details of the second phase of redeployments in Hudaydah, which we hope will lead to the demilitarization of that city.

This agreement would not have been possible without the strong leadership of Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard. He has led these negotiations with patience and persistence. I personally am very grateful to him for these qualities.

It would not have been possible either without the strong commitments demonstrated by the parties. Despite deadlines being missed, the parties have constantly shown their commitment to implement the agreement and have consistently assured me of that commitment. I am under no illusion about the challenges that we face. But perhaps for one day at least, we can be heartened rather than dismayed by challenges and I am heartened by both parties recurrent reminders to me and to my colleagues, that this is a unique opportunity.

**Mr. President,**

Since I last briefed this Council, I have had the privilege of meeting three times with H.E President Hadi on a wide variety of issues of concern to him and of course to us. I am grateful for the flexibility he has shown and perhaps more importantly even, the guidance he has provided to me

# United Nations

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



# الأمم المتحدة

مكتب المبعوث الخاص للأمين العام  
للأمم المتحدة لليمن

and my colleagues on negotiations on Hudaydah. The progress we announce today is a beneficiary of these exchanges. I rely upon him to continue to give me the benefit of his advice going forward.

I should also add that the numerous almost daily meetings that we have held with the Coalition have been and continue to be invaluable to show, to illuminate issues on the table and to allow us progress towards their resolution.

## **Mr. President,**

There is a momentum on Yemen. The agreement reached in December of last year by the parties in Stockholm was described, I think reasonably, as a breakthrough. It was a major shift and it showed to the people of Yemen that something was indeed happening. There have as I reported before, been signs of increased civilian activity in Hudaydah and the people of the city are already at this very early stage seeing tangible benefit from the significant and consistent decrease in hostilities in that area as a result of the Stockholm agreement.

The agreement reached on Phase 1 is a sign that the parties are committed to keep up the momentum of which I speak. It demonstrates to me at least that the parties are able to deliver on their commitments to turn words into tangible progress on the ground. It reinforces trust, that essential commodity among the parties, and finally perhaps most importantly, it shows political will. With the beginning, possibly even today or tomorrow, of the implementation of that part of the Hudaydah Agreement, we now have the opportunity Mr. President, to move from the promise made in Sweden to hope now for Yemen. An agreement on redeployments is also important for the broader humanitarian effort in the country. As I am sure Mark will be describing to us in a minute, in the past few days, Mark and I together have already underlined the parties' responsibility to give the World Food Programme access to those Red Sea Mills, and that grain tonnage which holds enough food to feed 3.7 million people for a month.

## **Mr. President,**

In recent weeks and in order to make progress on agreements made in Sweden, I have paid many visits to Sana'a and to Hudaydah, meeting there each time with Mr. Abdul Malik al-Houthi and his colleagues in the Ansar Allah movement. I am glad to report to this Council that he has always engaged positively with me on all the discussions we had on Hudaydah, on the vital logistical issues necessary for the introduction of UN mission into Hudaydah, on the release of specific individuals and the general release of prisoners. I am grateful for his commitment to support all our efforts. I was only yesterday just in Sana'a and it is clear to me that the commitment from Ansar Allah towards the implementation of the Hudaydah agreement is indeed genuine and is indeed therefore most welcome.

# United Nations

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



# الأمم المتحدة

مكتب المبعوث الخاص للأمين العام  
للأمم المتحدة لليمن

**Mr. President,**

We have also been very busy these past weeks, in seeking agreement for the release and exchange of prisoners. You will remember perhaps that an agreement on this, on a mechanism to provide for such release and exchanges was in fact the first agreement between the parties and made before we went to Sweden last December. In recent weeks, we have held two substantial and substantive meetings here in Amman from which I speak between the parties. I am grateful to the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and indeed personally to H.E the Foreign Minister for allowing those meetings to take place.

With ICRC, the co-chair of the Supervisory Committee, we were able in these meetings and in discussions bilaterally with the parties to make progress towards what we hope will be the release of the first batch of prisoners. I should stress here that as was always the intention of that prisoners' exchange agreement to which I referred, the parties, and their leaders as they have expressed directly to me on more than one occasion, seek the release of all prisoners on all sides, on both sides of this conflict. All for all as many of them remind us is the watchword for this process, and this remains our commitment, our responsibility as it is theirs. I would like to think that we are not far off from agreeing and realizing the release of a first batch and I am very grateful to both parties for their prompt support for this move. We still have some work to do before it can be finalized not least to ensure that it is clearly part of a larger process to provide for the release of those who remain in prison. I hope that the parties can push these particular efforts forward to reunite thousands of families and relieve the humanitarian burden on those who have indeed been detained in this conflict.

I hope you will allow me to express my gratitude to Peter Maurer, my good friend, and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross who took time out from his extraordinarily busy schedule to open one of those meetings in Amman, the most recent of the two. The involvement of his organisation guarantees the probity and professionalism of the process.

**Mr. President,**

Both parties have again reaffirmed to me their commitment to the Statement of Understanding on Taiz agreed in Stockholm. You remember I referred to this perhaps in my last briefing, how significant and almost iconic is the importance of Taiz in this conflict and how essential is it that we can improve freedom of access and movement of people in that area. I will focus all our efforts also on meaningful steps to make a difference. We need to agree on small steps now, not big steps later. No-one is suggesting that the process will be straightforward: Taiz is a place which has witnessed some of the worst parts of the conflict. But we like to think that we have a good chance of seeing some tangible progress in the coming weeks.

# United Nations

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



# الأمم المتحدة

مكتب المبعوث الخاص للأمين العام  
للأمم المتحدة لليمن

**Mr. President,**

I have said before to this Council on more than one occasion I am afraid, that Hudaydah is the center of gravity of the conflict. And perhaps so it is. But in truth, our primary interest, and in that sense the real center of gravity of this conflict for us, has to be moving towards a political solution. The agreement about Phase 1 of redeployment in Hudaydah as confirmed today gives us permission I like to think to look ahead beyond agreements made in Stockholm. While we need tangible progress very clearly, before we may move forward, we can now perhaps imagine how we would begin to address those serious substantive difficulties. I believe indeed we have an obligation to focus our minds on finding that political solution. We need to start talking about the future. The beginning of a discussion on political and security arrangements would constitute in our view a major step forward and an important statement of intent from the parties that they are determined, together and with us and with your support to bring this conflict to a close.

Members of this Council will recall that the Stockholm agreement was only ever intended to be a preliminary step, a humanitarian step of great moment but not the end of the story. Indeed, the parties, civil society, women's representatives, and the international community have repeatedly reminded me, as you did when we met last on this subject, that a comprehensive solution is the only way to put an end to this conflict. I note in particular the growing support of southern groups to our efforts and their clear desire for a peaceful settlement to the conflict and for their broader concerns regarding the future of the country.

We have therefore an overriding responsibility to build on momentum created in Stockholm towards resolving the conflict. I say this without I hope being naïve about the difficulties that we will face and continue to face in implementing promises and agreements. There will be setbacks, but we need to look beyond these to the horizon that is before us. Next week – as I am sure Mark will tell us - we will be reminded in Geneva of the financial needs of humanitarian programmes in Yemen, and their extraordinary dimensions and the courage of those colleagues who daily fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. This reminder in Geneva reminds us here I would like to suggest that the cost of the war, if our collective efforts fail Mr. President, will continue to rise steeply at the tragic expense of the people in Yemen.

**Mr. President, Thank you very much**