



**Briefing to the Security Council
UN Special Envoy for Yemen – Martin Griffiths**

18 July 2019
(As delivered)

Thank you very much **Mr. President**, and thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in the Yemen peace process.

Since the previous briefing of this Council, I have been privileged to meet Ministers and senior officials engaged on Yemen in many countries and many capitals. I have been reassured in every case by their unanimous desire to see progress towards a political solution, and to see it quickly. The unanimity of the international community mirrors, of course Mr. President, the same unanimity we see and cherish in this Council.

I was equally impressed, during these meetings by a common appreciation of the primacy of a political solution. All those with whom I spoke were clear that progress in realising the objectives of the Stockholm Agreement, made last December, is crucial for the chances of political negotiations to end the war. Hodeida, of course, is at the epicenter of these objectives.

Our way forward then is clear and supported by international consensus and it is: implement the Hodeida agreement and with that experience and that record, engage swiftly the parties on a settlement the outlines of which, I think, are well known to all.

Before I turn to the facts on the ground, Mr. President, I would add, perhaps two elements of essential contextual importance. The first, and certainly the most important of these, is the dire and worsening humanitarian situation about which we will all hear from my colleagues Mark Lowcock and David Beasley. The second is the frightening prospect of war in our region. To all I met I found a strong desire to keep Yemen out of any such conflict, should it transpire. A desire I share deeply.

Last week, I had the privilege to meet President Hadi, an opportunity for me to renew my commitment to the cause we share, returning Yemen to a peace defined by the resolutions of this Council, including resolution 2216. And I have also just last night returned from a visit to Sana'a, where I was able to discuss ways to advance the implementation of the Stockholm agreement as well as the political process.

Mr. President,

We are facing a crucial moment for the destiny of this war. And we need to think now together of the realities and opportunities which define our chances of making a move on peace.

First, the redeployment of some Coalition forces in parts of Yemen. As senior Coalition officials have themselves confirmed, this act is intended to place “peace first” at the centre of their efforts to restore peace and stability in Yemen. This is a reminder of the view, already expressed, that peace will come on the back of promises made in Stockholm, now becoming promises kept in Yemen.

Secondly, Hodeida is, as I have said, central as the gateway to the political process. It gives me enormous pleasure to congratulate both parties whose meeting under the leadership of my distinguished colleague General Michael Lollesgaard this week on a UN vessel was a notable success. A meeting held in, as Michael referred to it, open waters in the Red Sea. The parties, meeting in close quarters over two days - the first meeting in joint format, Mr. President, since February - agreed together the operational details of all redeployments envisaged in our talks in Stockholm. This is an important breakthrough and an encouraging sign of progress. Nevertheless, a major hurdle remains: agreement on local security forces in particular as well as attention to the issue of revenue. These issues will require hard work, flexibility and a conviction – as in the Stockholm agreement - that any solution is a temporary one since a more permanent solution lies in the comprehensive agreements to be negotiated by the parties later. I shall redouble my efforts with the parties in the coming weeks to come up with an agreement to satisfy both, and I am calling on all the parties to muster the needed political will to make this happen with all speed.

If I may Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank General Michael Lollesgaard for his collegiality, perseverance and wisdom. Under his leadership, UNMHA, his mission, has served as a credible, effective and impartial arbiter that has contributed significantly, very significantly, to the peace process.

Progress in Hodeida will allow the parties to work together whether on tripartite monitoring, collection of revenues, or on common assessments of possible ceasefire violations.

My hope, of course, is that progress in Hodeida will finally allow us to focus on the political process and I hope that we will see this before the end of this summer. Yemen, indeed, as we have observed before, has no time to waste.

Thirdly, in Taiz we have noticed limited progress, but progress nonetheless, in opening up Taiz to civilian life and humanitarian access. The first sign of this hope, we have some reference to this in recent meetings, will be the prospect of the opening of one humanitarian crossing. We will be exploring with the Taiz committee established in Sweden, these opportunities in the coming days and how we can benefit all of it, for a city that yearns after many years for security, peace and stability more than anything else. I hope also that Taiz could benefit from the support of local led community initiatives to bridge the divides of war. Women’s Groups have a very distinguished history in this activity in Taiz, and I hope we will all benefit from their example.

Mr. President,

There are of course remaining challenges.

We were all dismayed by last week's announcement in Sana'a of the imposition of death sentences on 30 prisoners. The Secretary-General, as we all know, objects to the death penalty in all circumstances. Their sentences are now on appeal and I have urged both due process and ultimately clemency in the spirit of humanity.

I am also concerned that the political and security landscape in Yemen – whether on the front lines or in other areas – is becoming increasingly fragmented. As the war continues, there is a considerable risk that there will be further tensions, and that it will become increasingly more difficult to reconcile these tensions and to resolve them, the longer this war continues.

There are also continuous acts of political and military provocations that can hold back the peace process.

Although the Hodeidah ceasefire broadly continues to hold, remarkably, military operations as we have been frequently reminded, have continued on several other frontlines, as well as on Yemen's border to the North with Saudi Arabia. I am particularly alarmed by the continued attacks by Ansar Allah on civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia.

Yemen, Mr. President, is near the front lines of a potential tragedy arising from the tensions in the region. It's not in the interest of Yemen to be dragged into a regional war. All parties should desist from any actions that take Yemen in that direction. We need to prevent this to reduce regional tensions, to save lives and to give Yemen a prospect for peace rather than an enlarged war.

Mr President, we have to see de-escalation of violence now, if these ambitions are to be achieved.

Finally, **Mr President,**

I can't help hoping that Yemen might be nearing the end of its war. I realize I am often accused of optimism. I happily stand guilty to that charge. But it was not me but a very senior and very wise official in the region who recently said that this war can end this year. I take that as an instruction and I hope today with your permission Mr. President, I have been able to share my views as to how we can begin to meet that aspiration.

Thank you very much