

Speech: Escalation is not in the long-term interest of any of the parties

Thank you very much Mr President and as it's the first time that I personally take the floor during your Presidency, I'd like to welcome you to the position and pledge the United Kingdom's support for Kuwait during this month and to thank your predecessor.

This is a very difficult set of issues as we've heard very graphically today. I want to start by making crystal clear how much we support the UN. We support the Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. We support General Lollesgaard. We support the head of OCHA and we support the head of the World Food Program. And I think I speak for all the Council when I say that based on our discussions so far. So when things don't happen on the ground that ought to happen on the ground, the people responsible for that, the people responsible for not moving forward, for blocking access, for preventing aid getting through to starving people, need to know that they're not just acting against the people of Yemen and against the United Nations, they're acting against this Council in its manifestation in New York and the fact that the Council is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. So I really do call on all the parties to redouble their efforts to work with these representatives of all of us, of the United Nations, on the ground. And I would draw the audience's attention to the fact that the Council was able to speak with one voice to this effect in its 10th of June statement. So I repeat all parties have a duty to cooperate with the manifestations of the United Nations on the ground. I'll come back to the aid question and diversion later if I may.

I wanted to talk about the military escalation. At one level, it's remarkable that the Hodeidah agreement has held as long as it has. And we need it to continue to hold, so we need Martin Griffiths and General Lollesgaard to be able to continue their very important work because whatever the problems in Yemen, the fact that the agreement holds is very important to us. But the recent escalation in tension is extremely worrying. I want to condemn the Houthi attack on Abha airport. Twenty six civilians were injured. And I want to express concern about the seeming link between the Houthis and Iran. And I'd like to use this occasion also to urge all parties to show restraint from retaliatory military actions. Escalations are not in the long-term interest of any of the parties. It's not in the interests of regional stability and security. And it's certainly not in the interests of the people of Yemen.

On Hodeidah, the initial redeployment of Houthi forces from the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa is very welcome. But we do need the Houthis to complete the process by clearing mines and removing military manifestations. But we need both parties to engage constructively with the UN, as I said earlier, on expediting implementation of the Hodeidah Agreement. And a return to military operations really will be catastrophic for the Yemeni people.

We all know, I think the Council has been very clear that a political

settlement is the only way to bring long term stability to Yemen. And we mustn't lose sight of how to enable these broader political efforts. I think we all know that a resumption of the political process needs to take place in parallel to further implementation of the Stockholm agreement. I was very interested in what Martin had to say about the prisoner exchanges and detainees. And given the importance of this single issue to overall progress, I have to say I'm a bit mystified as to why more progress can't be made. So I hope we can pick this up in consultations.

On the economy, the UN mediated a meeting in Oman between the Central Bank of Aden and Sanaa, i.e. both branches, on enacting the revenue managing elements of the Stockholm Agreement. I want to endorse what the Special Envoy said about the importance of improving Yemen's economy and ensuring the payment public sector salaries across the country. And we encourage both parties to continue to engage with the Special Envoy on this issue and to meet again to pursue an agreement. But I also wanted to reinforce the importance of donor countries being able to support the UN in this regard, both on the foreign exchange point, and also as we heard from Mark Lowcock, on the humanitarian aid and its disbursement point. There's a cruel irony in the fact that Yemen is the worst humanitarian disaster the world is currently faced with, and the appeals are under-funded. So between us, and appealing also to the wider UN membership, that's something we need to put right. For the UK's part, we've made available over half of our \$250 million support and we're going to bring forward further funds where we can.

Mr President I'd like, if I may, to turn to the humanitarian point. I think Mark's figures are shocking. If this war continues till 2022 the number of deaths is truly, I don't think there are enough superlatives to describe how awful this will be, and it's already awful enough. So I think we on the Council need to redouble our efforts to help support humanitarian access.

The issue that David Beasley raised with us of the manipulation of aid, it's cynical, it's evil in a way. And the Yemeni people, when all of this is over, the Yemeni people will remember who tried to starve them of assistance. So not just for the sake of the people but for the sake of the future stability of Yemen, it's extremely important this gets sorted out, and it gets sorted out quickly, and I think what David said about there being factions within factions as to who supports the impartial delivery of aid and who doesn't. But I hope other people on the Council will be able to join me in supporting the World Food Programme's efforts and calling on the Houthis to comply with UNSCR 2451 and facilitate unhindered humanitarian access. I think that's so important that there's a strong message today. I note that not all the problems are coming from Houthi controlled areas, and it's important to call that out, but if I've understood David correctly, there is a way of resolving those other issues on the ground, meaning that the Houthi problem is the biggest block overall. So I do appeal to anyone with any humanitarian instinct on the ground to work with OCHA, to work with the World Food Program, to get this sorted out because as we've all heard Mr President, the people of Yemen can't take much more. Thank you.