

Speech: Humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen

Thank you very much Mr President and thank you very much to our four briefers.

I don't think I've ever heard a more powerful set of briefings and please in the Security Council than those that we've heard from the four of you today. And I think your words and requests will reverberate round the Council. So far the Council has very much been united in its support of the UN's work in Yemen and we look to that to continue.

I think as well there's obviously a very clear joined-up partnership between the three UN Heads and I think that also is very important. And if there is any light to be found in this awful crisis, I think it lies in your willingness to speak out, your willingness to work really closely with each other, the dedication of you and your teams and that of civil society to helping the people of Yemen and obviously that must be one of the things that the Council has at the forefront of its mind.

As you have described, it's a truly appalling situation on the ground and the severity of the humanitarian catastrophe can't be overstated. Regardless of the hard work that's needed to redouble efforts in response to the humanitarian need – and we take everything that was said about the commercial needs in order to keep Yemen functioning – it's also clear that we are not going to succeed, you are not going to succeed, without an equal effort and commitment on the political track. And once again it bears repeating that only a political solution will actually bring this dreadful conflict to an end.

We heard some small positive steps from Martin today, particularly around the Central Bank, exchange of prisoners. We heard some good news on the UN's conference next year. I think that's very important. But we have to bear in mind the very sobering descriptions that David Beasley gave us of what life is like for ordinary people, including children. I think I just want to take the opportunity now to say that we very much agree with what the Special Envoy said about getting the parties together without preconditions.

We do need the words that we've heard to be put into concrete action. We do need the parties to engage with the Special Envoy to take part in the consultations that Martin is setting up and to engage constructively so that ultimately we can pave the way, Martin can pave the way, for a resumption of formal negotiations. And I think Martin what you said about bringing your framework back to the Council is very welcome and also very important, and I'm sure that all members of the Council will want to express their support for all three of your strands of work for the UN today, but particularly for the political track. I think it's obviously vital that talks are inclusive, that women are properly included. I think the women's technical advisory service is a very good step in that direction; it's good that you're looking

for modern ways to put that into practice. And I think the messages from Rashad Charkhan have been incredibly important today. So thank you very much to Rashan and for taking the time to come and explain to the Council how it looks from the citizens of Yemen.

My Foreign Secretary was in the region earlier this week because, like Martin and I think the rest of the you, we do believe there is a window of opportunity to tackle this manmade crisis in Yemen. I just want to emphasise the manmade bit. What men have created men can resolve. So I think that's another reason for all possible effort to be put behind the political track. David Beasley exhorted us to act now. I don't think there's anyone who can have failed to have been moved by what you, David, and what you Rashad told us. Jeremy Hunt, my Foreign Secretary, has announced that we will work with Security Council partners. Mark gave us a very important state of play on his five asks. Speaking for the United Kingdom, we support all of those five asks. Jeremy Hunt has therefore asked us to say that as penholder we will bring a draft text resolution to partners on the Security Council on Monday with the intention of putting Mark's five asks, which you all endorse, which I think is really important point, putting all of Mark's five asks into practice.

Thank you very much Mr President.