

Speech: The uplifting and frightening developments in Yemen

Thank you very much, Mr President. And again our thanks to all the briefers, beginning with the Special Envoy. I mean what we've heard today is both uplifting and frightening. My Foreign Secretary, the British Foreign Secretary, has spoken about this this morning and he's asked me to pass on his thanks to the UN and related agencies for all the heroic efforts, for the patience and painstaking diplomacy that has got us to this point. And he was able to see for himself the work in hand when he visited Aden in March.

I'll come on later to what this means for the dire humanitarian situation that Mark and Henrietta have told us about. But for the moment I'd like to concentrate on what we heard from Martin. I think we all have to welcome these initial deployments by the Houthis from the three ports. They are significant steps. But they are part of the broader redeployments in Hodeidah. And it was very good that, Martin, you were able to pass on the Government of Yemen's commitment that it too will be discharging its commitments on redeployment. So that is a very important part of where we are. And I completely agree we owe General Lollesgard also our deep thanks for what he's been able to achieve. I think the next stage on that is obviously that the parties need to engage constructively with the General to finalise the outstanding negotiations to allow for implementation of both phases, of Phases One and Two of the Hodeidah Agreement. And it's very good news that there should be a meeting on the 14th of June among the parties in Amman in Jordan to discuss the economic aspects of the Hodeidah Agreement. And I think what we heard from Mark and Henrietta just underscores that this isn't just about humanitarian; it's also about the ability of the Yemeni economy as a whole to revive and work properly. And this Council's been concerned about that before.

On the political solution to the conflict, I mean, yes, we all want to see these recent developments unlock the root to that broader political solution that Martin and his team have been working so hard on. This is necessary in itself, but it's obviously even more urgent given what we heard from OCHA and UNICEF today.

I wanted to move on, if I may, to the drone strike against oil pumping stations in Riyadh province in Saudi Arabia. We condemn this drone strike by the Houthis. As my Foreign Secretary has also said, the risks remain real to the stability of the peace agreement and to its ability to prosper and bring the sort of security and safety to the people and the children of Yemen that we all want to see. The attack is not just wrong; it undermines the trust needed to get to a resolution of the conflict. It's not the time for provocation when we are so close to being able to make significant progress on the ground and unlock some of the economic and humanitarian and medical things that we all need to see. And I think we need to bear that very strongly in mind.

I think we all were horrified by the briefings that Mark and Henrietta were able to give us and the figures. I won't repeat those figures there. Some of the individual human stories are absolutely heart tugging. But I think for me, Mr President it was the scale of what we're facing, what the people of Yemen are facing, that remains so shocking. So I think we really do owe it to you to make sure that the UN presence on the ground can do its job effectively. Whether it's the monitors or the humanitarian agencies, all the parties need to help ensure the UN can really do its job. That includes letting the UN in in the numbers in which General Lollesgard has said. It includes getting rid of the access constraints. It includes approving travel permissions and operating agreements swiftly, including allowing access to the large number of Yemenis recently displaced in Hajjah and Ad Dhale. And it includes making sure the onward road access from Hodeidah and Salif Ports and the infrastructure remains protected.

I think the other shocking figure was that only 20% of the response plan is funded. So I think it's incumbent on all Members of the United Nations to help OCHA with this and to ensure new pledges, and where pledges have been made, that we get disbursement as fast as possible. And that must be a priority for all of us.

As Henrietta said, you know, we're very close to the point of no return here. So there's an urgency about action that we should all reflect on and report back to our capitals.

The last thing I wanted to say, Mr President, here, is about the stability of the Yemeni rial. I mentioned the economy earlier. We've got to have economic measures working properly so that that in turn facilitates the commercial imports of food and fuel on which Yemen depends so heavily.

Thank you to the Ambassador of Peru for his briefing on sanctions and where the Committee has got to. It was a very interesting visit, I think. A real pity about not being able to meet Ansarullah and I hope that can be corrected for next time.

But I'll close, Mr President, by saying I think the Council is united on Yemen. I hope we can find some way of really expressing the urgency behind the measures that are needed on the humanitarian and economic side while giving our full support to Martin and General Lollesgard to move ahead on Phases One and Two of the Agreement but also the longer term political solution which is now really pressing.

Thank you.