

Violence and suffering in Yemen must stop if peace is to thrive

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you once more to Martin and Mark and to Ambassador King for the briefings.

I want to state on record once again that we fully support the UN-led process and the UN's efforts to bring peace to Yemen. And we take this opportunity once more to urge all the parties to engage in good faith and work closely with the UN to bring the conflict to a close. In that regard, we welcome the 16 February announcement that an initial agreement was made for an exchange of prisoners and, as ever, it is implementation that's key.

We heard from Martin about the need for violence and suffering to stop if peace is to thrive. The decrease in violence that began in October was welcomed by the international community and by Yemenis. But as the emergency Council session on 28 January acknowledged, the recent violence in Al Jawf and Nehm is a very grave concern. Regardless of who started the violence, it is clear that the Houthis have sought to exploit the situation and this is unacceptable.

But to pick up on something Mark Lowcock said the violence does underscore the fact that the conflict will continue until we can find a political solution. So we encourage the parties to redouble their efforts towards beginning political discussions. And in order to ensure the effectiveness of the peace talks in Yemen, as well as the sustainability of the peace, we encourage the development of a context specific approach to women's participation in the process, as called for in Resolution 2493.

I want to turn now to humanitarian access. We share very much the concerns that Mark outlined; his briefing on the reversal of the trend towards decreasing civilian casualties was very sobering. We endorse his remarks on international humanitarian law, and I think his warning about donors was also very salutary. As the United Kingdom, we're increasingly concerned by access constraints and obstructions in Houthi-controlled areas in the north. Houthi restrictions have grown significantly over recent weeks with intimidation of UN and NGO humanitarian workers becoming more severe. In line with Resolution 2451, humanitarian workers need to be able to conduct their work safely and without harm.

Madam President, unless these obstructions are lifted and intimidation ceases, there is a real risk that UN agencies and NGOs will not be able to deliver life-saving aid over the coming months. Urgent action is needed and I support what Mark said also about the needs assessment.

The Secretary-General's statement on 12 February reiterates the importance of the humanitarian operation. And I want to place on record how grateful we are for the work the UN is doing to ensure vital humanitarian work can continue. In these increasingly difficult conditions, it's vital that we, as the

international community, continue to support these efforts in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Madam President, I'd like to put on record our concerns also about the Central Bank of Yemen and the fact that it will imminently run out of foreign currency reserves. And this will cause major economic, humanitarian and political consequences in Yemen. Significant financial assistance on the scale of \$1-2 billion is urgently needed to prevent this. And we look to the Government of Yemen to urgently come up with a credible plan that reassures potential donors of their investments to the Yemeni people.

Turning to the Panel of Experts, Madam President, I want to thank and pay tribute to the Panel of Experts for their tireless work over the last year and to say that the UK will work with others on the Council and the Sanctions Committee to take forward their recommendations. The United Kingdom notes with concern the report's finding of weapons of Iranian origin in Yemen. We recognise the panel's finding of the Abqaiq Aramco attack. The Houthis simply did not have the capability to conduct such an attack. It's also deeply troubling that the report's findings on instances of intimidation and sexual violence against women in Houthi-controlled areas. This is unacceptable and I hope today the Council can reiterate our condemnation for such actions.

And just also to place on record, Madam President, our concerns about the Safer Oil Tanker and the vital necessity of dealing with that. We urge the Houthis to allow either the removal of the oil or repair mission to proceed and not to hold the environment hostage. Continued Houthi inaction on this issue is nothing short of reckless.

Thank you.