

Averting further crisis in Yemen

Thank you, Mr President, and I join others in sending good wishes for the holy month of Ramadan.

As Yemen and the Muslim world celebrates the holy month of Ramadan, Yemen, as we've heard, is sadly experiencing the darkness. The darkness of a second COVID wave – with official case numbers doubling since the beginning of the year. Lack of testing means this is but the tip of the iceberg. The darkness, too, of imminent famine; its people can ill afford a renewed COVID crisis. And we note, too, the testimony of the Special Envoy of the particular experience of Yemeni women at this time and throughout the war. So we very much support the UN agencies' efforts to redouble their efforts to respond to COVID, and we encourage the Yemeni authorities to disclose data, implement suppression measures, and allow access for international staff and supplies.

The UK fully supports the work of Special Envoy Griffiths to secure a national ceasefire and a resumption of the political process for which he set out a very clear vision. The increased engagement from the US and from Oman in support of the UN process is important and welcomed. But despite increased dialogue, the Houthis have continued their offensive on Marib, displacing thousands and endangering civilians. Indeed, in the same week that Saudi Arabia publically reiterated its commitment to a peace deal, the Houthis launched a massive drone and missile attack on civilian targets in Saudi Arabia.

With the notable exception of Iran, the international community has welcomed the Saudi announcement and condemned the Houthi military escalations. We must be clear about who is frustrating UN efforts, and I encourage all parties to engage constructively, and without preconditions, with the UN proposals.

The UK welcomes the recent release of further fuel ships into Hodeidah. However, as we've heard, this equates to only around 30% of the fuel that the port would have expected to receive since the beginning of the year. We strongly urge the Government of Yemen to immediately release all remaining fuel ships and for all parties to work constructively with the Special Envoy towards a sustainable solution. Severe fuel shortages continue to threaten food distribution to millions of Yemenis over the coming months at a time when 16 million risk starvation. And so the UK calls on the Houthis to ensure that any fuel that arrives is distributed transparently and not used to fund their escalation of the conflict.

Finally, the SAFER oil tanker continues to pose a grave risk to Yemen and to the Red Sea. The Suez Canal incident only highlights how fragile maritime routes are, and we welcome Undersecretary-General Lowcock's recent update. While there were constructive UN-Houthi discussions last week, the Houthis have not yet agreed to facilitate the UN assessment mission. The vessel is under Houthi control and the responsibility for this matter rests on Houthi shoulders. If the Houthis fail to act on their stated desire to avert this crisis, then we will look to the Security Council to discuss further what

steps we can take.