

Moving toward a ceasefire in Yemen

Thank you, Mr President. And let me also thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for their briefings. And I think I'd also like to thank the Yemenis who today, through Mark Lowcock, have spoken to the Security Council. It's because the situation is so desperate for Yemenis, like those who have spoken, that this Council and the parties on the ground need to act.

We are extremely concerned that the humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to plunge to new depths as the country battles an economic crisis, an increasing risk of famine and a major outbreak of Covid-19. While we assess that Yemen is over the initial Covid-19 peak, we are concerned about the potential for new waves of infections and even more deaths. It is vital that public health mitigation efforts continue, and we call on all Yemeni parties to report cases transparently to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access and facilitate the UN's response.

Mr President, the indirect effects of Covid-19, including on Yemen's fragile economy, will have a far longer lasting impact. Yemen's currency has collapsed to record lows, leading food prices to rise by over 20 percent since January. Urgent external financial assistance to the Central Bank is now needed to stabilise prices and enable more people to afford food.

In light of this economic crisis, recent food insecurity and economic data suggest that conditions in Yemen already mirror or are even worse than those of late 2018, when pockets of famine were last identified across the country. And as we've heard, famine is now a realistic prospect in Yemen this year.

In addition to economic support, the key action that the international community can take to prevent famine is urgently to provide significant funding to the United Nations humanitarian appeal. With the new General Assembly High Level Week fast approaching, the United Nations has received just \$900 million this year, compared to around \$2.6 billion at this point last year. This funding gap is curtailing the humanitarian response and seven million people will stop receiving food if new funding is not in place by October.

In response to this funding crisis, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary announced an additional \$32 million funding uplift for Yemen earlier this month, in addition to what has already been pledged by the United Kingdom. We welcome other countries' announcements of extra funds, but call on all donors to play their part and urgently provide funding to the UN appeal. And we call on all of those who have given money in previous years to do so again to the same levels this year.

Mr President, a political solution is needed desperately to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and end the conflict for good. And as I've said repeatedly in this Council, the United Kingdom fully supports Martin Griffiths' painstaking and patient efforts. I want to urge today the Yemeni

parties – by which I mean the government of Yemen just as much as the Houthis – to cooperate with him and to agree to his proposals as soon as possible. The window of opportunity to end this conflict will close. It is in the hands of the parties to work with Martin Griffiths and reach an agreement. It is in their hands whether they are ready to act in the interests of their people or only in their own self-interest.

I want to welcome Security Council unity on this issue here and at ministerial level. Later this week we will be co-hosting an event on Yemen with the Secretary-General and others, which will demonstrate our close Council and international coordination. We must stay united, colleagues, in our messages to the parties and our support for Martin Griffiths so that he can reach an agreement.

The United Kingdom remains extremely concerned by the situation in Marib. The Houthi offensive is not only leading to a distressing loss of life, but it threatens to derail the political process at this crucial stage. We welcome and fully support the Special Envoy's strong statements on Marib. I urge this Council and the wider international community to send a strong, unified message to the Houthis that they must cease their offensive on Marib and negotiate peace.

Mr President, we should not forget the SAFER oil tanker, which this Council has been briefed upon many times and held an individual session on earlier in the summer. It poses a significant environmental and economic threat to the region. While I welcome progress made in negotiations between the Houthis and UNOPS on the scope of the assessment and repair mission, this mission needs to happen urgently. The Houthis must follow through on their promises by allowing the UN experts to board the tanker to carry out their work as soon as possible.

Mr President, time is running out. The parties need to move quickly to agree a ceasefire and engage in a comprehensive political process. If they do not, this Council should be ready to take action.

Thank you, Mr President.