

Preventing looming famine and alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people

Thank you very much, Mr President. It seems an opportune time to thank you both, Martin and Mark, for your indefatigable efforts over the last few years to alleviate the Yemeni people's suffering and to end this horrific conflict. You have our full support but, just as importantly, so do the teams working so hard with you.

Since Saudi Arabia's statement of support for a nationwide ceasefire, peace talks, and for the lifting of restrictions on Yemen's ports and Sana'a airport, the Houthis' stated commitment to peace has been put to the test. As things stand, they are clearly failing this test.

By refusing to meet the SRSB in Muscat or allowing him to travel to Sana'a, the Houthis have passed up a vital opportunity to show they are ready to work towards peace. They say they are putting the humanitarian situation first, but their actions show they are playing for time to try to take more ground.

If the Houthis were serious about alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people, they would cease their offensive on Marib, which threatens to displace up to one million vulnerable displaced people, and they would remove their restrictions on humanitarian access, which are strangling the humanitarian response. If they were serious about protecting the future generation, they would stop recruiting children to fight and die on their front lines.

If the Houthis were serious about saving the lives of the most vulnerable, they would acknowledge the second wave of COVID sweeping across Yemen and accept COVAX vaccines. If they were serious about the long-term prosperity of the Yemeni people, they would give the UN mission the formal written assurances and permissions to assess and repair the FSO SAFER, to prevent an oil leak that would devastate Yemen's fishing and farming.

Regrettably, the Houthis have shown they are not serious about peace, or about ending the suffering of the Yemeni people. If this doesn't change, and change soon, this Council will need to consider stronger actions if we are to achieve peace in Yemen.

Mr President, all of our interests lie in a strong, prosperous Yemen, free from external interference and with an inclusive government. A nationwide ceasefire and Yemeni to Yemeni talks are the only way to achieve this. Until this is possible, we will continue doing all we can to prevent looming famine. We must continue to pressure the Yemeni parties to ensure the free flow of goods and commodities into and through Yemen, and ensure a well-funded UN humanitarian response. But we know that only a serious commitment to peace can banish the spectre of famine for good.

I wish all Yemenis a blessed Eid and I hope the next year brings them the security, stability and peace they deserve.

Thank you, Mr President.