



## Briefing to the Security Council

Mr. Martin Griffiths

United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen

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**Thank you very much Mr. President,**

And thank you for giving me this opportunity to brief the Council. It is almost exactly a year since I first had such a chance. And I said then, back in April of last year, that a political solution was available to resolve the conflict in Yemen. But I added that at any time war can take the chance of peace off the table. And I must say both these propositions hold as true today as they did a year ago.

In addition, as I am sure Mark Lowcock will describe, the plight of the people of Yemen has if anything worsened during this period. And the pursuit of peace which is the task to which I contribute is measured as much against the lives and livelihoods daily lost across the various governorates of Yemen, and this I hope explains my persistence in planning, hoping, pushing for a start of consultations leading to that political solution.

But first, Mr. President, to the situation in Hodeida.

General Michael Lollesgaard has been working without stop to secure agreements between the parties on the operational plans for redeployments in Hodeida in line with what was agreed in December in Sweden. And I hope we will hear more of that in a while.

It has been, as we all know, a long and difficult process. I am happy to announce to you Mr. President that both parties have now accepted the detailed redeployment plan, prepared by General Michael for phase one of the redeployments in Hodeida. I am grateful, as I'm sure we all are, to both parties, and to Michael, for the constructive engagement which has allowed us finally to reach this point. And we will now move with all speed towards resolving the final outstanding issues related to the operational plans for phase two, redeployments and also the issue of the status of local security forces we're introducing in the coming days.

President Hadi has consistently approached this, as I have said to this council recently, with the practicality of a former military man. As he has also told me on more than one occasion, he wants to see those redeployments happen and the city and the ports of Hodeida, Ras Issa, Salif return to some kind of peace for its inhabitants. I am grateful to President Hadi for his patience and his commitment.

I was in Sana'a a week ago exactly where General Michael Lollesgaard and I met Abdul Malik al Houthi, the leader of Ansar Allah, and we were able to hear again his reconfirmation, in clear

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terms, in detail, as well as in general terms of his support for the implementation of the Hodeida agreement. And of course, this was important in the leadup to the announcement that we have just heard today. I was glad to hear it so directly confirmed and I am grateful to him for the position he takes on this and other issues.

**Mr. President,**

Let us be clear that when, and I hope it is when not if these redeployments happen, they will be the first voluntary withdrawals of forces in this long conflict. Making this happen is not an easy decision for the parties to take. And of course, it has taken longer than we had hoped but that it should happen at all is extremely welcome.

Hodeida is a test of many things Mr. President, the principal of which is of leadership. And I like to hope that we shall see, in the coming days, the people's trust in those leaderships vindicated in this test.

We should also not forget, and I'm sure Michael will remind us, that since the ceasefire came into force in the very early hours of December the 18th, 2018, levels of violence in Hodeidah governorate, while not adequately and sufficiently reduced, nonetheless, have significantly reduced. Civilian casualties are down and there are reports of people, as Lise Grande often reminds us, our distinguished colleague in Sana'a, that people have begun to return to their homes, those displaced by the war. Much needs to be done to tighten and sustain the ceasefire. But the positive developments that I hope we have and will see in Hodeidah have already shown what can be achieved through dialogue and compromise. And I hope the parties recognise this with your support and build on it.

Meanwhile, as I am sure again Mark will describe the economic situation in Yemen remains extremely fragile. Commercial ships face difficulties accessing Hodeidah, fuel prices are on the rise. There have been some positive developments, such as the Government of Yemen's welcome decision to start paying public sector salaries in Hodeidah and pensions throughout the country. I don't want to trespass much upon Mark's territory, but I mentioned this because these are measures which cross the line between the parties. Further action of course must be taken to reduce prices and ensure availability of basic commodities, including fuel. And I'm grateful to be within and under the leadership of Mark and Lise Grande in these matters.

**Mr. President,**

I accept and I need to say this very clearly, I accept that we all need to see tangible progress in Hodeida before moving to focus on the political solution. I have actually said it to this Council before. And more importantly perhaps than me saying this, the leadership of the parties have said as much to me including within the last ten days. So yes we must see progress in Hodeida. And perhaps today is the first day in that direction. We must see progress in Hodeida. Full stop.



But I would be derelict in my duty if we were not also preparing the ground for political consultations, not least because the war in Yemen again as Mark will tell us, shows no signs of abating. The tragedies of war particularly pain us all when children are the victims, as they have been dramatically of late. And it should be so that this is a pain that we all feel, but it is also true that the larger battlefields should not be forgotten. In Hajjour there have been some devastating battles with all the human misery and civilian displacement naturally attendant upon events of that kind.

This means that we must keep our focus as this council has urged me before, on reaching a political solution to this conflict. And reach it as fast as we may.

We all know the rough outlines of an agreement to end the war, precisely in line with the three references and the resolutions of this Council. none of us are freelancing.

We need to work with the parties on the outlines of an eventual settlement in a way that fleshes out the 'Framework' that I have discussed with members of this Council before and that was on the table in those days in Sweden in December of last year. We need, in a purposeful way, to seek their views on both the concepts and the details. We need to do that now in advance of any formal return to a process of political consultations. This is to prepare the ground for a serious eventual consultation between the parties.

**Mr. President,**

In preparing for the political road to peace I make it my job to meet as wide a section of society as possible. I was particularly lucky in this regard to be invited to attend a recent meeting here in Amman in Jordan, with more than a hundred Yemeni women organised by UN Women. Many having travelled with great difficulty to get there courageously, to urge their contributions to resolving this conflict. My pledge to them in that meeting was that we will make sure in the months to come that we do consult them and their networks on all the different issues that will be debated between the parties. And as I was saying before finishing these remarks Mr. President, there is no doubt we can all do a lot better when it comes to the inclusion of women and other sectors of civil society indeed in the political process.

I will continue also to meet as many representatives of the varied Yemeni political parties as possible, all of them that can contribute their thinking. Doing this ensures obviously that we benefit from their experience. But it's more than that. These are the people who eventually will return to their rightful positions in running the politics and government of Yemen once the parties have agreed to resolve this conflict. For this to happen, these politicians, this political class will need to work together instead of competing with each other.

The engagement process that I have just been describing builds on the rich past experience of negotiations, particularly and I'd off my hat to Ambassador Mansour, the one hundred days in Kuwait three years ago. It is a process perhaps led by the Office I am privileged to be a part of, but it is not only done by this Office. I have already mentioned the contribution of UN Women. I

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will have further discussions with our own Technical Advisory Group of Women in Edinburgh next week. Track II organisations, this is my own background indeed, including in Yemen's context, including particularly the Berghof Foundation, IDEA, CMI and others, building on extensive experience in Yemen over the years, are active and valued partners in this endeavour, and have been centrally involved in the thinking and planning that we go through in this office and we start to hope that we may be able to engage in the political process. I am also grateful for the support and advice we receive from the Peace Track Initiative and the Women Solidarity Network that represents a large number of Yemeni Women and women-led organizations, and of course this council will soon hear from Ms. Mona Luqman, one of Yemen's leading peace activists. But I should add, and I am sure she will be urging us to do better in our efforts to include women, both in the formal delegations that come to rounds of formal consultations, but also in those much more extensive consultations that will help refine the issues we put before the parties

**Mr. President,**

My primary responsibility in the next few months will be to winnow down the differences between the parties so that when they meet, they can be asked to answer precise questions about the nature of the arrangements to end according to the resolutions of your council this conflict.

I seek the support of this Council for this approach. Let us together require those who can help us towards peace be encouraged and the sceptics set aside while we work to make our case.

**Mr. President,**

I cannot finish without reminding us and I am sure Mark will do it in a much more sufficient way. Yemen bleeds. Its people go hungry. Its children many of them have not seen the inside of a classroom. In many ways it is one of the world's most tragic place. This is the spur that encourages us to imagine beyond Hodeidah that we could see progress towards that solution which alone can bring back the hopes of Yemeni families.

Thank you very much Mr. President.