

Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

Yemen

New York, 17 June 2019

Mr President,

I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and the Executive Director of the World Food Program, David Beasley, for their briefing.

As mentioned in last week's Security Council press statement, we were pleased to note the **start of the redeployment** of Houthi troupes from the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras-Issa in May and we call on the Houthis to dismantle all military structures in the ports. Furthermore, we call on all the parties to fully implement the agreement on withdrawal, completely respect the ceasefire and resolve outstanding points of disagreement, including the question of local security forces.

We continue to call on all parties to implement the **Stockholm Agreement** in its entirety, including the Agreement on the exchange of prisoners and the Agreement on Taiz.

Although this is just the start of the implementation of the Agreement on Hodeidah, Belgium encourages the Special Envoy to continue to prepare the **next stages of the political process, and stresses the importance of an inclusive process, with the meaningful participation of women and young people, who reflect the ethnic, geographical and political diversity of the Yemeni population.** The Hodeidah Agreement is of particular importance to the humanitarian situation, but the resolution of the conflict requires a sustainable and inclusive political solution. We reiterate our **full support for the work of Special Envoy** Martin Griffiths.

Violence continues in the rest of the country, aggravating the lack of trust between the parties. This violence also has an impact on **access to humanitarian aid**. We call on all parties to exercise restraint.

We also condemn the ongoing targeting of civilians in this devastating war and in this regard we deplore **the attack on Abha International Airport** in Asir province in Saudi Arabia on 12 June, for which responsibility was claimed by the Houthis.

[Belgium is deeply concerned by **the growing tensions in the region** and we would like to stress that **dialogue** is the only path likely to result in lasting peace and security in the region. Belgium considers that the UN has a role to play in supporting this dialogue.]

Efforts are required to **improve the humanitarian situation** which, as we have heard, remains **catastrophic**. We commend the humanitarian agencies on their outstanding work despite the difficulties. It is essential that all parties facilitate the access of humanitarian aid and respect international humanitarian law. In particular, we strongly condemn any **diversion of this aid**. It must be provided to those who need it. What the Executive Director of the World Food Program, David Beasley, has just described is unacceptable.

We have also heard the appeal of Under Secretary General Marc Lowcock for the **funds announced during the Donor Conference** in Geneva last February to be paid as soon as possible. In the meantime, **Belgium's contribution** has been paid in full. We call on the other contributors to do the same.

Children are the principle victims of the conflict. As Chair of the Working Group on **Children and Armed Conflict**, we held a working group meeting last Friday in the presence of the Ambassador of Yemen. During this meeting, Special Representative Ms Gamba presented the **report of the Secretary General** on children and armed conflict in Yemen. We are now going to facilitate the negotiations on **conclusions** on the basis of this report. We reiterate our request for Special Envoy Griffiths to ensure that child protection measures are included in any peace process.

Similarly, we would like to urge all parties to the armed conflict to respect their obligations and commitments under **international human rights law** and to provide the **Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts** established by the Human Rights Council with full cooperation and all necessary access facilities to enable an effective and independent investigation.

Thank you.