

Statement by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

Yemen – Briefing + Consultations

New York, 16 January 2020

Mr President, I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and the Director of the Coordination Division Ramesh Rajasingham for their briefing.

We recommend that the **efforts to de-escalate the situation** continue until hostilities cease in the country.

The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project (CIMP) figures show a decrease in the **total number of civilian victims in 2019** compared to 2018, with a decline from 2,049 in 2018 to 1,104 in 2019. This is primarily due to a decrease in the number of air strikes, which are responsible for mass deaths, and to a decline in the number of deaths from artillery fire ('shelling') and landmines.

We hope that these **trends** will continue and that the **next steps in the political process** will begin very soon, under the auspices of the United Nations. **It must be inclusive**, with significant participation by women and young people reflecting the ethnic, geographical, social and political diversity of Yemen's population.

However, we can't forget the **agreements already reached whose implementation continues to be difficult, as is the case for the Riyadh Agreement.**

We again call on all parties to fully implement **the Stockholm Agreement**, including the Hodeidah Agreement, the Prisoner Exchange Agreement and the Taiz Agreement.

Humanitarian access continues to be difficult. The operational environment for humanitarian players in Yemen is one of the most restrictive in the world, resulting in interference in the humanitarian operations and restrictions on movement, in addition to the conflict and persistent insecurity. It is essential that all parties facilitate the access of humanitarian aid and respect international humanitarian law. Belgium is particularly concerned about reports that the Houthis are now demanding to be paid 2% of the budget of every humanitarian project as a condition for their approval.

The **economic and financial situation** is also of particular concern. The **Central Bank** requires an **injection** of foreign currency to stabilise the riyal. The **corruption** in Yemeni institutions doesn't help and, according to the panel of experts of the Yemen Sanctions Committee, it could be a threat to peace and security. The announcement on 19 December that the Houthi authorities in Sanaa banned the use and exchange of the **new banknotes** in the areas under their control is a new burden for civilians who are already overwhelmed, in particular in the north of Yemen, and worsens their economic situation.

We also encourage the Houthis to grant access to the **SAFER oil tanker** to facilitate a review of the situation and to avoid a potential ecological catastrophe.

Lastly, all parties must meet their obligations and commitments resulting from **international humanitarian law and, where applicable, international human rights law**. We are particularly concerned by the continuation **of serious violations of children's rights** and by reports according to which the Houthis use a policy of sexual violence against women who are politically active in the zones under their control. This is totally unacceptable and must cease.

Thank you.