

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

H.E. Marc PECSTEEN, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the
United Nations

Open VTC on Yemen at the Security Council

New York, 16/4/2020

Dear Mr. President, dear colleagues,

We welcome the announcement of a **ceasefire** by the Coalition as well as the positive reaction by the Yemeni Government. We call on the Houthis to make similar commitments without delay. All parties must immediately cease hostilities and engage in good faith in talks under the auspices of the UN. We are especially worried about the situation in Marib.

The efforts of the **Special Envoy** first to reach a nationwide ceasefire enjoy our full support. The de-escalation talks also provide an opportunity and should lead to political talks to identify a way out of the conflict. We encourage the parties to fully engage and refrain from any actions that may undermine these efforts. We emphasize the importance of an inclusive political process with the full and meaningful participation of women and youth.

Yemen is exceptionally vulnerable to **COVID-19** and recent reports of cases are a cause of grave concern. This could overwhelm the country's already fragile health care system. Humanitarian aid and medical supplies must continue to reach those in need. Authorities should facilitate the movement of essential humanitarian personnel and goods; and ensure cargo flights and humanitarian and commercial supplies coming through the seaports continue to be granted entry and can be transported across the country. We are concerned about the obstruction of humanitarian assistance and remind all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. There must be accountability for violations.

Children are the most vulnerable group in Yemen and bear no responsibility for the crisis. We are pleased that the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopted Conclusions on Yemen by consensus – after more than seven months of negotiations. We call on all parties to implement the Council's recommendations and in particular to take measures to end and prevent all grave violations of children's rights – through the adoption and implementation of an Action Plan with the UN and in the case of the Coalition an MoU and programme of time-bound activities as well as to provide for accountability for violations.

Concluding, we urge the Houthis to allow access to the **SAFER tanker** in order to evaluate the situation and avoid an ecological catastrophe.

Thank you Mr. President.