

**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Speech by H.E. Karen Van Vlierberge, Deputy Permanent Representative  
of the Kingdom of Belgium to the United Nations

at the United Nations Security Council

**Briefing on Yemen**

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Madam President, distinguished colleagues,

I wish to begin by thanking Special Envoy Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for their insightful briefings.

I will focus on three points today: the Joint Declaration and the need to make headway on the political front; the follow-up to the recent prisoner exchange; and the devastating impact of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen on children.

Madam President,

Nearly a month has passed since our last meeting on Yemen, and yet virtually no progress has been made. Unlike last month, there has been no fresh escalation of violence, but fighting has gone on unabated, in Marib, Hudaydah and other areas. The Yemeni people continue to suffer on a daily basis.

Last week, we commemorated the first anniversary of the signing of the Riyadh agreement. Its implementation remains far too limited.

During his briefing in October, Special Envoy Griffiths appeared to show a certain degree of optimism regarding a possible meeting of the parties to finally reach agreement on the Joint Declaration. However, for this to materialise, it is incumbent on all parties to demonstrate a genuine willingness to sit down at the negotiating table and discuss the issues at hand. Today, this appears not to be the case.

I cannot stress it enough, only dialogue can put an end to the war and resolve the major differences in Yemen. We implore all stakeholders to re-engage in UN-led peace talks. Evidently, Special Envoy Griffiths continues to enjoy our full support.

Madam President,

Belgium is pleased to note that the agreement on the exchange of a large number of prisoners has been fully implemented. Once again, we wish to commend the International Committee of the Red Cross for the crucial role it played in negotiating the agreement and implementing it.

This prisoner exchange is one of the tools enabling trust-building between the stakeholders. We clearly need more such tools at our disposal. Our hope is that similar agreements can be arrived at in the near future.

Madam President,

Turning to my third and last point, I wish to touch upon the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

As the conflict continues to rage, the humanitarian situation is worsening. Years of conflict, economic decline and COVID-19 have made Yemen one of the worst places to live on the planet. This is particularly true for children.

A recent joint analysis of the FAO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme revealed that in some parts of Yemen, more than one in five children suffer from acute malnutrition. It is no coincidence that the highest figures have been reported in the Hudaydah Lowlands: 27% of children there are in acute need of basic food.

Children suffer from acute malnutrition, as do their mothers - a quarter of a million pregnant or nursing women in Yemen need treatment for malnutrition. According to Lise Grande, OCHA coordinator for Yemen, we are nearing a point of no return, we risk losing an entire generation of young children.

Supplementary funding is necessary to tackle this humanitarian disaster. In this regard, the EU and its Member States have shouldered their responsibility: tomorrow ECHO will convene, alongside Sweden, a second meeting of humanitarian and development actors on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen (SOM). After an initial meeting in February, the parties will once again address the issue of financing and humanitarian access. I take great pride in informing the Council that Belgium has contributed more than \$30 million this year in core funding for the WFP, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

But the top priority is to urgently end hostilities and the war. The parties to the conflict and those who support them have a significant responsibility. We implore them to lay down their weapons and finally put the people of Yemen above their own parochial interests.

Thank you.