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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Council Conclusions on Yemen
- Council Conclusions (25 June 2018)

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on Yemen, adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 25 June 2018.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON YEMEN

1. The EU reaffirms its extreme concern about the continuing deterioration of the situation in Yemen and that the parties to the conflict have pursued a military confrontation, most recently in and around Hodeidah. This has led to an escalation of hostilities and a further worsening of an already catastrophic humanitarian situation. The EU reiterates that there cannot be any military solution to the conflict and strongly supports the UN Secretary-General Special Envoy (UNSE) for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and his efforts to bring about an inclusive political solution to this conflict. In this framework, the EU will maintain its engagement with all parties to the conflict and stands ready to increase its action in Yemen, including in delivering humanitarian aid across the country and in mobilising development assistance to fund projects in crucial sectors. The EU expresses its serious concern about the fragmentation of the internal political structure in Yemen. The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen and calls on all actors in the country and in the region to fully respect them.

2. The EU recalls its previous Council Conclusions on Yemen, and notably those of 3 April 2017 and of 16 November 2015. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through negotiations involving meaningful participation of all parties concerned including civil society, women and youth. Therefore the EU supports the UNSE's efforts to restart the political process, in particular his intention to renew inclusive political negotiations as soon as possible, to discuss his political framework on sequenced transitional security and political arrangements. The EU expresses its concern that the latest developments risk undermining the UN-led efforts to resume negotiations towards a political solution of the conflict and welcomes the UN determination, as expressed by UNSE Martin Griffiths, to move ahead with the political process. The EU calls on all parties to cease the present escalation, exercise restraint, work urgently towards a nationwide ceasefire and engage constructively with the UN. The EU calls for the UN Special Envoy to be given full and unhindered access to all relevant stakeholders in Yemen.

3. The EU is seriously concerned about the recent intensification of the military operations in and around the city and port of Hodeidah, including the impact of the military operations by the Coalition on the civilian population. The EU urges all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and fully respect international humanitarian law, including unimpeded humanitarian access and safe passage for those who want to escape the fighting. In this context, the EU recalls that there is currently no viable alternative to the port of Hodeidah as a distribution hub for the commercial and humanitarian items needed and calls on all the parties to ensure the full and effective functioning of the Hodeidah port as the lifeline for humanitarian support and commercial access point for essential supplies.
4. The EU condemns the launch of ballistic missiles by the Houthis against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including at civilian targets, and against vessels transiting through the Bab Al Mandab Strait. The EU expresses grave concerns regarding the proliferation of ballistic missiles and technology. These actions feed regional tensions and threaten the safety and stability of Yemen's neighbours, including in the Horn of Africa, freedom of navigation, particularly in the Red Sea region, and global sea trade. The EU notes with concern the conclusions of the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen report which found non-compliance with the arms embargo established by paragraph 14 of UNSC Resolution 2216.
5. Stability in the region is of critical importance for the EU. The EU will strengthen its efforts on Yemen and is committed to a comprehensive and strategic approach encompassing all relevant regional actors. The EU and its Member States are actively engaged in reaching out to regional actors, including through enhanced political consultations, in support to the efforts of the UN Secretary General Special Envoy for Yemen to promote a comprehensive agreement to end the conflict. The EU renews its call on all international and regional actors to engage constructively with Yemeni parties to enable a de-escalation of the conflict and a negotiated settlement.

6. The EU reiterates its strong condemnation of attacks against civilians and renews its urgent call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including to respect the principle of distinction between the civilian population and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military objectives, the principle of proportionality, and to take precaution in the conduct of hostilities. The EU is deeply concerned with the impact of on-going hostilities, including bombardments in densely populated areas, the besieging of cities, the use of antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions, as well as attacks causing the destruction of civilian infrastructure including schools, medical facilities, residential areas, markets, water systems, ports and airports. Ensuring accountability for violations is an important part of the process to achieve a lasting settlement in the current conflict. The EU calls on all parties to the conflict to end the recruitment or use of children as soldiers and other grave violations committed against them in violation of applicable international law and standards. The EU also calls upon all parties to release children who have been already recruited and to cooperate with the UN for their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities. The EU further calls on all parties to the conflict to take all the necessary steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict.

7. The EU reiterates its urgent call on all parties to the conflict to take the necessary measures to ensure effective, impartial and independent investigations into all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and alleged violations of international humanitarian law, in accordance with international standards and with a view to ending impunity. In this context, the EU supports the full implementation of the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/36/31 establishing the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts. We call on all parties to extend full and transparent access and cooperation to the Group to carry out its mandate. We likewise encourage the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to provide technical assistance to the National Commission.

8. The EU is also concerned about the increased presence in Yemen of criminal and terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Da'esh, and condemns all terror attacks in the strongest terms. The EU urges the Government of Yemen to assume its responsibilities in the fight against terrorist groups which are taking advantage of the current instability. It is particularly important that all parties to the conflict take resolute action against such groups.

9. The on-going conflict in Yemen has entered its fourth year and has produced the worst humanitarian crisis in the world: more than 22 million people – 80% of the population – now need humanitarian or protection support. More than 10 million are in acute need of assistance. Over 2 million people have been internally displaced. Persons in vulnerable situations, women and children are particularly affected by the on-going hostilities. Despite the efforts of the humanitarian community, in Yemen over 17 million people are food insecure, among whom more than eight million people are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation. The disruption of the provision of essential public services, particularly in health, sanitation and education, has further compounded the on-going humanitarian crisis. In view of this situation, the EU welcomes the United Nations' 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan and expresses its appreciation for the results of the 2018 Yemen High-Level pledging Event convened in Geneva by the United Nations and the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland in which international donors pledged more than 2 billion USD. The EU encourages all donors to swiftly disburse their pledges and to channel them through the UN 2018 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan as part of a coordinated international response to the crisis.

10. The EU remains committed to continue to deliver life-saving aid to all people in need in Yemen. At the same time, the EU shares the concerns of the UN and other donors about the continuing shrinking of humanitarian space, as attested by the difficulties in securing visas and permits, the harassment, intimidation and targeting of humanitarian staff, the proliferation of check-points and arbitrary detentions, the confiscation and undue taxation of aid by customs officials or cancellation of programs, including vaccination campaigns. The EU calls upon all parties to engage with the humanitarian community in good faith to ensure the people in Yemen can access the assistance they urgently require. The EU calls on all the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to allow and facilitate the safe, rapid and unhindered access for humanitarian supplies and personnel to all people in need in all affected governorates. The EU underlines that humanitarian assistance is to be delivered in full respect of the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence on the basis of needs, and rejects all attempts to interfere with its delivery. The EU underlines the need for efficient and effective coordination amongst donors.

11. The EU is also extremely concerned with the impact that access restrictions on commercial and humanitarian imports have on the humanitarian situation and calls on all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate the safe, rapid and unhindered access for commercial and humanitarian supplies, including imported food, fuel and medical goods. It is essential to guarantee the full and sustained opening of all Yemen's ports and airports, including Hodeidah and Saleef ports and Sana'a airport, to all commercial and humanitarian imports as well as medical evacuations and commercial flights. The EU stresses the importance of ensuring the effective and timely processing for commercial shipping, including fuel, and fully supports the continuation of UNVIM (United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism) and the full and unhindered implementation of its mandate and will consider reinforcing it. For UNVIM to be able to operate effectively and to deliver on its mandate the full cooperation of the Coalition and of the Government of Yemen is essential. The EU calls in particular on the Coalition to ensure that vessels already cleared by UNVIM are swiftly allowed to reach their port of destination in Yemen. The EU renews its call for the full implementation of the targeted arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council. In this regard, the EU also reiterates the strict application of the rules set in the Common Position 2008/944 on arms exports.

12. The EU expresses its concern at reports of the denial of freedom of religion or belief which included discrimination, unlawful detention and the use of violence. The targeting of religious minorities is particularly concerning. Freedom of expression is also under threat with reports of the arrests of journalists. The EU also expresses concern at credible reports of the use of secret prisons in areas under the control of the Government of Yemen.

13. The EU is deeply concerned about the near collapse of Yemen's economy. The country's GDP has more than halved since the start of the conflict in 2015 and around 40% of households have reported the loss of the primary income source. The economic crisis, the collapse of public services, rampant inflation, in particular of the prices of basic commodities (food prices have increased by 30%), and the devaluation of the Yemeni riyal which has halved in value, have become drivers of the humanitarian crisis. Regular payment of salaries for up to 1.4 million non-military Yemeni public workers effectively ceased at the end of 2016, preventing them and their 5.6 million dependents from being able to regularly afford food or medicines. As public servants have been unpaid, only half of Yemen's health facilities are functioning and water and sanitation systems have not been maintained. The EU therefore calls upon the Government of Yemen to pay as a matter of urgency public servants' salaries, including arrears, across the whole country, in particular for those working in the critical sectors of education, health and sanitation, and to manage its revenues and accounts responsibly and transparently, including by ensuring a better and neutral functioning of the Central Bank of Yemen in the interest of all Yemenis.
14. The EU will continue to provide development assistance to Yemen prioritising interventions directed at stabilising the country through the provision of technical expertise, training, mentoring, and in-kind assistance to stakeholders across the country. The EU will work in stable areas with local authorities to promote resilience, help to maintain the provision of basic services and foster sustainable livelihoods for communities, especially those suffering the impact of prolonged displacement. Actions will be focused in particular in areas such as health, nutrition and rural resilience. The EU will ensure full complementarity and synergy between humanitarian and development assistance along a continuum of crisis response, early recovery, resilience, and stabilisation actions.
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