

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Ms. Najiba Al Naggar to the UN Security Council  
15 June 2021**

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on Yemen. I do so today on behalf of the SOS Center for Youth Capabilities Development, an NGO that works on governance, peacebuilding, development and human rights.

I am one of the millions of Yemeni women who have suffered the scourge of war. In late March 2015, as mortars and missiles began to fall around us in Aden, my family and I fled to Taiz in search of shelter. But Taiz was no different. With every sunset, we could hear the rumble of tanks as they passed through our neighborhood in order to fire on the city below. We fled again, this time to Sana'a, but here too the sound of bombs falling followed us. I cannot fully describe to you the terror that haunts me, and so many other Yemenis like me, who have endured untold suffering from almost seven years of war.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Yemen today faces multiple crises. With the recent escalation on the frontlines and the challenges in fully implementing de-escalation agreements, the country is far from achieving political, economic or social stability.

### **The economic crisis**

Even prior to the outbreak of war, Yemen was the poorest country in the region and by now the country has lost 90 billion USD in economic output. The alarming decline of the economy and currency since the outbreak of the war, combined with the devastating impact of COVID-19, has made the lives of millions of ordinary Yemenis – who face a severe shortage of fuel, exorbitant food prices and no access to the most basic services, such as electricity, water or healthcare – unbearable, especially for women, who have been disproportionately affected. To survive, many women reduce how much they eat to give more food to their children, cut down the number of meals, or have to borrow food from friends or relatives. Families going into debt to meet most basic needs is becoming the norm, and women are under ever more pressure as the number of women-headed households increase.

### **Yemeni women's leadership in humanitarian relief and peacebuilding**

Our resilience is close to breaking point. The conflict has put immense strain on the social fabric of our society. Tensions are high, localized violent conflict likely, and gender-based violence (GBV) rife and often unreported due to survivors' fear of being killed, detained or exposed to further violence, as well as stigma and weak rule of law.

Despite this hugely challenging context, the overwhelming majority – 80% of first responders – are women. Yemeni women have been providing life-saving humanitarian assistance, even when the international community has been unable to reach communities desperately in need. When cities are under siege or roads become unsafe for the delivery of humanitarian aid, Yemeni women have stepped in to negotiate local ceasefires and successfully call on warring parties to open humanitarian corridors.

In my work, I support the inspiring efforts of young women and men to mediate and resolve conflict and build peace. Whilst the conflict rages on at the national level – with young people and women largely marginalized by conflict-parties and the UN – we are driving the peace agenda in our communities. Women have played an important role in addressing tribal tensions and community strife because they know their own communities – they understand best their needs as well as the factors that trigger tension and conflict.

Women are doing all this against the odds, challenging gender norms, and with far too little backing and resources from national and international actors. Increasingly in the last year, women in the North have faced an additional

hurdle in their efforts – as authorities impose Mahram, whereby women must be accompanied by a male relative when they travel.

Despite the critical role that Yemeni women have played in humanitarian action as well as peacebuilding, women have been excluded from formal and meaningful roles in the UN-led peace process, and completely excluded from the new government – the first time in two decades. The UN and Yemeni authorities must do more to ensure women’s formal and direct participation, the standard enshrined in Resolution 1325 (2000). In addition, as this Council itself has recognized, politically active women and women human rights defenders face threats, intimidation and attacks for speaking out about violations in their communities. To ensure that Yemeni women can continue to play active roles in public life, it is critical that they can do so without fear of retaliation.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The Yemeni people feel abandoned by the international community and are losing hope. We need your help, and we need it now.

We therefore urge you, the UN Security Council, to:

- Redouble efforts to engage conflict parties and their backers to secure a sustainable, inclusive and nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution 2532 (2020), that would support viable conditions for protecting civilians, including women, and lead to a resumption of peace negotiations. This goes hand in hand with fully enforcing the Riyadh Agreement as a steppingstone for stability and safety for the communities living in the southern governorates.
- Mobilize and coordinate resources with Member States, especially those with influence on the conflict parties, to expedite an inclusive, transparent and accountable peace process, and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, youth and civil society of all political backgrounds from all regions of Yemen, including the South, in all diplomatic tracks and stages of the peace process, ensuring a minimum 30% quota of women as a matter of urgency.
- Call on the leadership of UNMHA and the international community to significantly increase support for local and national Yemeni women-led and women's rights organizations, especially core, flexible and long-term funding, and publicly underscore the crucial and legitimate efforts of women peacebuilders and humanitarians.
- Initiate and coordinate with Member States the provision of an effective and sustainable economic rescue package for Yemen. The package should include effective and sustainable measures to help stabilize the economy and strengthening the financial system to prevent further food price rises and enhance living conditions

Thank you.