



**Office of the Special Envoy
of the Secretary-General for Yemen**

UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg's Briefing to the Security Council

Open session

12 February 2026

Thank you, **Mr. President**.

Mr. President, as we navigate an increasingly contested world, where established rules and norms are under strain and where conflicts are multiplying across regions, we must be reminded that these are familiar themes for Yemenis. For years, they have lived with the uncertainty brought by the erosion of institutions, the fragmentation of authority, and the gradual disappearance of predictable rules.

That is why the steps being taken now to improve living conditions and support stabilization in government areas carry such significance. These efforts can restore a measure of stability and predictability, so Yemenis' lives are shaped less by disruption and improvisation, and more by accountable institutions that apply rules fairly and serve citizens equitably. By reducing tensions and building consensus, these steps can also help create a conducive environment for a wider political settlement to the conflict. These are some of the issues I have been discussing in Riyadh, from where I brief you today. And here in Riyadh, I met with the newly appointed Prime Minister, Dr. Shaya al-Zindani, and members of the Presidential Leadership Council.

There are early positive signs in government areas, including improvements in the provision of electricity and payment of public sector salaries. However, continued tensions, recent security incidents and demonstrations, where in some cases violence and loss of life have been reported, underscore the fragility of the situation. Improvements in service delivery can be reversed if security deteriorates, if economic reforms stall, or if institutions are pulled in competing directions. I am particularly concerned about recent attacks targeting media institutions and journalists, including in Aden. A free press and freedom of expression are essential for good governance, public accountability, civic engagement, and channeling disputes through politics rather than force.

Mr. President, the new cabinet under Prime Minister al-Zindani's leadership can protect recent gains by anchoring them in strengthened institutions and economic reforms. That will require an enabling environment that shields the cabinet and the Central Bank from politicization and rebuilds confidence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the appointment of three women ministers, after several years of women being absent in the cabinet. This should be reinforced through the full, equal and meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making at all levels of government, and in peace negotiation teams and advisory structures. Inclusive peace processes are more legitimate, and experience shows that they deliver more sustainable outcomes.

In parallel, the Southern dialogue that is being planned offers an opportunity to begin addressing long-standing grievances and build consensus on issues important to southerners and all Yemenis. Advancing shared visions for the future will help pave the way to inclusive nationwide discussions and negotiations, through which these issues can be addressed comprehensively and sustainably.

Ultimately, **Mr. President**, stabilization in any part of the country will not be durable if the broader conflict in Yemen is not addressed comprehensively. It is high time to take decisive steps in this regard. Without a wider negotiated political settlement to the conflict, gains will continue to remain vulnerable to reversal.

In recent weeks, I have been engaging with the Yemeni parties, regional actors and members of the international community to explore pathways to restart an inclusive political process. My Office has also been consulting with diverse Yemenis on this question, including with governors to gain more nuanced insights into local concerns and how to address them at the national level. Across these discussions, three reflections on the way forward are clear:

First, we must be honest about what more than a decade of war has done to Yemen. The conflict has become more complex. Lines of contestation have multiplied and local dynamics have grown alongside national ones. While regional tensions have increasingly fueled the conflict and been fueled by it, our common objective has remained steady and firm: Yemen needs an inclusive political process under UN auspices to reach a negotiated political settlement that can sustainably end the conflict. But getting there requires that the parties adopt a forward-looking approach. We need to build on what still works, revise what are outdated assumptions, and be pragmatic in designing a political process for today's reality.

Second, Yemen's conflict is a set of interlocking files. Treating political, economic and security issues in isolation can only produce partial results that will not hold. Restarting a political process will therefore require that the parties engage across these tracks in tandem, without making engagement in one track contingent on progress in another.

And third, a credible process must deliver for Yemenis on two time horizons. It should enable near-term agreements that reduce suffering and demonstrate progress, including economic de-escalation measures. At the same time, it must create space for Yemenis to negotiate the longer-term issues essential to ending the conflict, including the future shape of the state, security arrangements and principles of governance.

The conflict-related detainee file is a clear example of what can be achieved when the parties choose to engage in dialogue. Right now, the parties are in Amman, negotiating face-to-face under

UN auspices, to work through the complex task of finalizing names of detainees so a release operation can materialize, building on the agreed outcome of their meeting in Muscat in December. I encourage the parties to sustain this engagement, finalize the remaining elements without delay, and move swiftly to implementation. With Ramadan approaching, the parties should work towards ensuring families can spend Eid with their loved ones. I also encourage the parties to continue beyond this phase, working toward their commitment to release all conflict-related detainees under the all-for-all principle. I thank the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting these negotiations, and the International Committee of the Red Cross for its indispensable role.

Mr. President, this week marks one year since our World Food Programme colleague died while held in arbitrary detention by Ansar Allah. There has been no investigation or answers on the circumstances of his death. Instead, today 73 United Nations colleagues are in addition to other former United Nations staff are detained, along with other from civil society and diplomatic missions. Many have been held incommunicado, with serious concerns about their conditions and wellbeing. Some have been referred to Ansar Allah's special criminal court, which is proceeding with trials that fall far short of basic due process. We have never given up on our detained staff, and we continue to pursue every avenue, at all levels, to resolve this issue. I call on Ansar Allah to unconditionally and immediately release detained staff and rescind all court referrals. I urge regional and international actors to use their influence to push for the same outcomes.

Mr. President, before closing I want to turn to the region, which is again witnessing rising tensions. We all hope for de-escalation. But whatever the regional trajectory, Yemen must not be pulled back into broader confrontation. The question of peace and war is, fundamentally, a national one. It cannot be outsourced nor can it be appropriated by a single actor. No single Yemeni actor has the right to unilaterally drag the country into a regional conflict. The responsibility borne by all Yemeni actors and decision makers is first and foremost to the Yemeni people – to their security, to their livelihoods and to their future. Upholding Yemen's national interest and the aspirations of all its people must remain the guiding principles at all times including in moments of heightened tension. Restraint, in this context, is an obligation.

Mr. President, lasting stability in Yemen depends on building institutions that serve Yemenis equitably wherever they live, so that divergence in views and contestation is channeled through dialogue and peaceful political engagement rather than violence. That requires an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices, and it requires unity behind that objective. I ask this Council to remain united in supporting a credible path back to a political process, and I urge regional actors to align around the same purpose and to use their influence in a coordinated way to steer Yemenis toward engagement. The United Nations remains ready to support Yemen in this endeavour.

Thank you very much **Mr. President**.