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Press release The Friends of Yemen Ministerial Meeting Co-Chairs' Statement

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World location:

Yemen

The fifth Friends of Yemen meeting was Co-chaired by the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen.



Following the Friends of Yemen Ministerial meeting held in New York on 27 September 2012, Ministers from the Friends held the fifth meeting in London on 7 March 2013. Co-chaired by the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen, the meeting was attended by 39 countries and international organisations.

The Friends met to demonstrate their continued support for

Yemen's political transition, led by President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, as set out in the Gulf Co-operation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism. The Friends reiterated the importance of supporting the Government of Yemen's development and reform plans in the political, economic, security and humanitarian sectors.

The Friends stressed their full support to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen as well as committing to continue to support Yemeni transition plans based on the principle of non-interference in Yemen's internal affairs.

The Friends reiterated the importance for the transitional period to be inclusive and a Yemeni-led process.

The Friends assessed progress of commitments made at the previous Ministerial meeting and focussed discussion on five key topics:

- The status of the National Dialogue Conference and Constitutional Reform
- Preparations for the February 2014 elections
- How the \$7.9 billion of aid committed to Yemen in 2012 was being implemented
- The grave humanitarian situation
- Security, including reform of the military, security and justice sector

Political

The National Dialogue Conference

- The Friends welcomed the announcement of the start of the National Dialogue Conference on 18 March 2013, which is based on the principle of inclusiveness. The Friends affirmed that the National Dialogue Conference constitutes the cornerstone of the transition process and it is the only way for the Yemeni people to address peacefully outstanding issues and shape the new Yemen.
- The Friends called on all parties to engage actively and constructively in the Dialogue and to ensure their

participants have the required numbers of women and youth representatives in place.

- The Friends commended the Technical Committee's work and welcomed the establishment of the Secretariat to organise, staff, and support the Dialogue, expressing their confidence in its leadership and the support of the international community for its efforts.
- The Friends welcomed the essential role that has been played by the GCC countries and the GCC Secretary General towards a successful transition in Yemen, including their efforts to support the National Dialogue Conference.
- The Friends welcomed the technical and organisational efforts of the UN team in assisting the National Dialogue Technical Committee and Secretariat. The Friends acknowledged the essential roles that the UN Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General and the international community have played in this vital step.
- The Friends highlighted the importance of resolving political issues, in particular those in the South and in Sa'ada, and welcomed the recent establishment of two committees to address land disputes and dismissed civil, security and military personnel in the southern provinces. The Friends urged the Government of Yemen and the members of these commissions to continue investigations of these issues.
- The Friends welcomed the Security Council's Presidential Statement of 15 February 2013 which expressed concern over reports of interference in the transition, and reiterated its readiness to consider further measures, including under Article 41 of the UN Charter, if actions aimed at undermining the political transition continues.

National Elections

The Friends welcomed the operational plan presented by the Government of Yemen on behalf of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda (SCER) setting out a timetable with key milestones in order to deliver full presidential and parliamentary elections in February 2014 in accordance with the transition timetable.

- The Friends expressed their support to the Commission's efforts to establish a comprehensive electronic voter register and welcomed the contributions by the international community to provide technical and financial assistance for the elections complementing the Government of Yemen's funding.
- The Friends welcomed the continuing technical and organisational efforts of the UN team and international community in assisting the Government of Yemen's planning and delivery of national elections and referenda.

Transitional justice and reconciliation and human rights

- The Friends welcomed the allocation of funds to compensate victims of violence in 2011, strongly encouraged the early ratification of a law on transitional justice and reconciliation, and recognised the importance of responding to calls for justice and accountability.
- Recalling the decree issued in September 2012 to establish a commission of inquiry into allegations of human rights violations and abuses, the Friends urged the Government of Yemen to begin these transparent and independent investigations immediately.
- The Friends acknowledged commitment of the Government of Yemen to human rights, but also encouraged greater urgency on implementing OHCHR recommendations accepted by the Government of Yemen.

Economic

- The Friends noted that US\$7.9 billion has been pledged by the international community in 2012 to support Yemen's transition, including US \$4.4 billion from the GCC, and of which US\$6 billion has been allocated, US\$2.7 billion approved, and US\$1.8 billion disbursed. Building on this progress, the Friends encouraged the Government of Yemen and donors to work together to ensure aid committed to projects is spent quickly and effectively. The Friends called on those who had not allocated their pledges to do so without delay and for the allocations to be aligned with the priorities and projects of the Transitional Programme for Stability and Development (2012-2014).
- Considering the critical situation in Yemen, the Friends reaffirmed that the pledges made in Riyadh and New York in 2012 represent new funds.
- The Friends welcomed the establishment of the Executive Bureau, which will accelerate absorption of donors' pledges financed by international aid, oversee implementation of projects and policy reforms confirmed in the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF). The Friends pressed for rapid progress to be made on project preparation, reconstruction, and capacity building projects that will have direct impact on the lives of people of Yemen.
- The Friends recognised the Government of Yemen's efforts to improve the investment climate and encourage investment in Yemen, including through establishment of a Public Private Forum, and urged implementation of other reforms in the MAF. The Friends encouraged timely completion of Yemen's World Trade Organisation accession.
- The Friends expressed concern over the Government of Yemen's 2013 budget, particularly the continued high

expenditure on salaries and fuel subsidies, high interest payments and low tax revenue. They commended the budgeted increase in capital expenditure and called for its efficient implementation as well as more effective social protection. The Friends encouraged the Government to implement tax laws and other economic reforms, and continue to work with the IMF to support macroeconomic stability and growth. In the short term, the Friends called on donors to cover the full cost of donor-funded projects as a support measure during the transition in order to maintain the macroeconomic stability achieved to date.

Humanitarian and reconstruction

- The Friends noted with concern the continuing severe humanitarian situation and reports that 13 million people are in need of some form of assistance, over half of Yemen's population. The Friends welcomed the UN and humanitarian partners appeal for US\$716 million to reach 7.7 million of the most affected people this year, 1.6 million more than last year.
- The Friends noted the importance of humanitarian assistance in responding to the most immediate needs of the population during the transition and agreed to coordinate their support to the UN appeal and to other humanitarian interventions to make best use of collective resources.
- The Friends noted the importance of the reconstruction for the affected areas during the transition and agreed to coordinate the support to reconstruct public and private buildings to make best use of collective resources.

Security

- The Friends welcomed the Presidential decrees that set out the new structures of both the Ministry of Interior and

Ministry of Defence. The Friends urged the Government of Yemen and those international partners supporting the restructuring plans to implement the new proposals in a timely fashion.

- The Friends welcomed the Government of Yemen's efforts to combat terrorism and committed to continue their support to Yemen in this regard. The Friends welcomed the Yemeni National Strategy to Combat Terrorism and agreed on the importance of tackling the threat from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The Friends stressed the importance of further efforts to secure safer environment for the Friends' assistance activities
- The Friends expressed serious concern over reports of weapons being brought into Yemen from outside for the purpose of undermining the transition and obstructing the National Dialogue Conference.
- The Friends urged the Government of Yemen to exercise restraint by their security forces, and avoid the use of excessive forces in response to peaceful protests.

The Friends concluded by noting the critical junction that the political transition in Yemen has reached. The Friends noted the importance and urgency of fulfilling the commitments made by all without delay.

The Friends decided to meet next in September 2013 in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York to assess progress.

Further Information

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