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Letter dated 20 March 2019 from the Permanent Representatives of Germany, Peru and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Germany and Peru, as co-chairs of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, would like to share the summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on Yemen held on 4 March 2019 (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Christoph **Heusgen**
Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 20 March 2019 from the Permanent Representatives of Germany, Peru and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Security Council Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on Yemen held on 4 March 2019

On 4 March 2019, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Yemen. Members of the Security Council were briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, accompanied by experts from his team and the United Nations country team.

Council members asked several questions about how to increase the direct involvement of women in the talks, beyond an advisory role to the Special Envoy, and in the implementation of the Stockholm agreement, and whether there is already a road map or strategy to achieve this, noting that there had been no information in this regard in the reporting to the Council so far on resolution 2451 (2018). Other questions centred on the United Nations steps to provide women and girls with adequate access to humanitarian assistance and services, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including child marriage and conflict-related sexual violence, and support the women human rights defenders and journalists who are detained, attacked or disappeared.

Below are the main points that were raised in the meeting:

- The Special Envoy expressed his commitment to women and peace and security and lamented that, despite efforts, neither delegation to rounds of talks in Geneva or Stockholm had met the 30 per cent minimum of representation of women called for by the Security Council and achieved during the exemplary National Dialogue Conference in 2013. In Stockholm, only one woman joined the government delegation in the end.
- The Special Envoy's Technical Advisory Group of eight Yemeni women professionals had a more active role in the Stockholm round of talks than in Geneva, but the parties did not allow them in the room during the formal negotiations. Instead, they prepared thematic technical papers and tried to lobby and reach out to the parties in bilateral meetings. A majority of the members of the Technical Advisory Group also belong to the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security, and they are all leading grassroots and community-level peacebuilding initiatives in Yemen. The text of the Stockholm Agreement was gender-blind, and the Special Envoy agreed that the Technical Advisory Group should be screening, analysing and advising on any other agreements in future rounds of talks, and to support their work in other tracks in between rounds of talks.
- The Office of the Special Envoy is actively lobbying to have women represented in the Taiz Committee, which aims to explore options for de-escalation and facilitate humanitarian assistance, will continue to work on supporting women's involvement in peacebuilding, reconciliation and other track-three initiatives, including through Yemeni Voices, an inclusive peacemaking outreach project that provides Yemenis from all social groups and governorates with an independent mechanism to communicate and exchange views about the negotiations and the peace process in general, including through an online portal

and digital and SMS polling and social media analysis, coupled with in-person workshops.

- One of the main challenges is the exclusionary nature of the talks as required by the parties, which do not include women's groups and other political and social forces, and the fact that military actors, rather than political actors or civil society, have all the decision-making power, including now in the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement in Hodeidah, Yemen. Still, the Office committed to revisit the success and achievements of the National Dialogue Conference in 2013 and find modalities for women's meaningful involvement in any transition.

- The Women, Peace and Security unit in the Special Envoy's team had been funded by extrabudgetary resources from Japan until recently, and from the United Kingdom and Germany currently, but they have included these posts in their regular budget request for 2020. The Office of the Special Envoy collaborates with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), which has offered to second an adviser and continues to support the activities of the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security.

- One Council member observed that, during his one-month assignment to monitor the ceasefire in Hodeidah, Major General (retired) Patrick Cammaert had insisted on speaking with female doctors and nurses in medical facilities, after realizing that he had only been given the opportunity to speak with all-male representatives during his visits, and that speaking to the women had given him new information. The achievements of the Association of the Mothers of Abductee Sons, which had been able to secure the release of 336 detainees, was also mentioned as an example of the impact of women's voices and activism.

- In the United Nations country team in Yemen, four agencies lead the work on sexual and gender-based violence: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, and UN-Women. Human rights monitors face high risks and great difficulties in having access to basic information, especially in the north. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict noted that some of the patterns identified include sexual violence against refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers and in detention sites – both official and unofficial centres – and high numbers of cases involving minors, and that the gender-based violence subcluster remains severely underfunded.

UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, highlighted some of the recommendations shared in writing with the Informal Expert Group members. For example:

- UN-Women and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should support the Office of the Special Envoy with modalities and proposals for resource mobilization to put in place some of the ideas that have been called for by Yemeni civil society. These include insisting on the 30 per cent minimum as a precondition for any United Nations-led activity and as the basis of the composition of any bodies set up by the agreements, such as committees on de-escalation, reparation, reconstruction, redeployment coordination, or the committee to reach consensus on how to address the situation in Taiz; formally tasking the Technical Advisory Group to review any draft language or text coming out of any talks; establishing an independent all-women cross-party delegation; and supporting broader engagement of national stakeholders in a

political dialogue that builds on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, including if the negotiations among the warring parties stall.

- The United Nations should report to the Security Council on consultations with women leaders and women's organizations on the compliance of the parties with regard to implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, including redeployment of forces from the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ra's Issa, prisoner exchange and Taiz as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance in these areas.

- Peru, as the Chair of the sanctions committee, and the United Kingdom as the penholder on Yemen in the Security Council, should reach out to other Council members to revisit the possibility of including more robust language in future Council products on Yemen. This includes suggestions to add sexual and gender-based violence as stand-alone criteria for sanctions, as with other sanctions regimes, and to call for dedicated capacity on gender-based crimes in the Panel of Experts on Yemen; that all attacks on women's rights activists and women human rights defenders be condemned and that the United Nations report on its plans or interventions to protect them or enable them to safely report concerns about their security; to recall existing obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and call for the cessation of weapons transfer to parties; stronger language recalling the 30 per cent minimum agreed in the National Dialogue Conference and emphasizing the need for an inclusive political and peace process based on diverse representation by region, age, social group and gender, and that takes gender issues into consideration in its agreements; and inviting international partners to support women's peacebuilding and conflict resolution work at the local level.

- As a follow-up to the recently concluded High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen, held in Geneva, the Security Council and its members should remind the international community to prioritize funding for gender-based violence and the urgent reproductive health needs of Yemeni women and girls as life-saving interventions.

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict complemented these suggestions with further recommendations on their mandate. Apart from the above-mentioned consideration for changes in the sanctions regime, specific provisions on conflict-related sexual violence should be included in future agreements, including the inadmissibility of amnesties for such crimes, and as part of the prohibited acts in the definition of any ceasefire, and the teams working on monitoring the ceasefire should have the requisite capacity and expertise on this matter. There is a need for all United Nations entities with a protection mandate to call for additional resources to be able to monitor conflict-related sexual violence in Yemen effectively, including the nexus with trafficking and violent extremism as expressed in resolution 2331 (2016).

The co-Chairs closed the meeting and expressed their intention to follow up on the recommendations raised at the meeting, in particular the Special Envoy's request for joint advocacy on the direct involvement of women in the talks targeted at various actors and through different channels.