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*Near verbatim*

## **Statement to the United Nations Security Council on the FOS *Safer* operation**

**Sana'a, 10 July 2023** – *The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, delivered the following statement today to the United Nations Security Council by video conference from Sana'a, Yemen.*

Madam President,

Distinguished Council Members,

Good morning.

Usually briefs on the *Safer* focus on what needs to be done. Today I would like to focus on what has been done.

I would like to start today with a progress report on the UN operation to prevent a catastrophic oil spill from the decaying FSO *Safer*.

Since the salvage ship *Ndeavor* arrived at the *Safer* site on 30 May, SMIT Salvage, the Boskalis subsidiary contracted by the United Nations Development Programme, has done everything possible to stabilize the decaying *Safer* and prepare it for the removal of a million barrels of oil.

Just some of the work that I have witnessed over the past five weeks includes:

- Inspection of every part of the vessel;
- Thorough structural assessments of the hull, confirming that despite decay the hull thickness levels are more than sufficient to withstand forces generated during the oil transfer. This means that the vessel can be moored alongside the *Nautica* for a cleaner, faster transfer of the oil;
- Pumping of inert gas into the oil cargo tanks to significantly reduce the risks of fire or explosion and continual testing to ensure the atmosphere remains at a safe level;
- Preparation of portable transfer pumps and rigging of hoses and valves and repairs of the *Safer*'s manifold through which the oil will flow during the operation.
- Prepositioned equipment required for the transfer of the oil and oil spill response equipment.

SMIT has certified to UNDP that the oil transfer can proceed, with the level of risk within an acceptable range. The *Safer* is fully stabilized for the ship-to-ship transfer of the oil.

The upcoming oil transfer still presents a residual risk. The United Nations and its partners have put in place a robust crisis management team based in Hodeidah and assembled the expertise and equipment required to respond if there is an incident.

**For further information, contact:**

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Madam President,

Shortly after *Ndeavor*'s arrival, the Sana'a authorities wrote to me to affirm their full support to the operation, including a waiver of all fees associated with it.

The Safer Exploration and Production Operations Company's skeleton crew currently aboard the *Safer* is working closely with the salvage team.

In line with the 5 March 2022 memorandum of understanding (MoU), the Safer Technical Committee based in Hodeidah continues to effectively facilitate the operation.

The Committee provides access, security and technical support and has maintained a high level of coordination and cooperation with the UN team in Hodeidah and the salvage team.

Even when there were miscommunications or misunderstanding which are inevitable in a sensitive security environment such as this, the Committee acted quickly to deescalate and resolve them.

Madam President

I am pleased to report to the Council that the authorities in Sana'a provided authorization today for the oil transfer from the FSO *Safer* to the replacement vessel.

I want to acknowledge the overall cooperation received so far from the Committee and authorities in Sana'a in the implementation of the project.

The replacement vessel *Nautica* is preparing to sail from Djibouti. It will moor alongside the *Safer* and should begin taking on the oil by early next week. Once the transfer starts, it will take about two weeks.

The completion of the ship-to-ship transfer of the oil will be a moment when the whole world can heave a sigh of relief.

The worst-case humanitarian, environmental and economic catastrophe from a massive oil spill will have been prevented.

But it will not be the end of the operation. The next critical step after the oil transfer will include the delivery and installment of a catenary anchor leg mooring (CALM) buoy to which the replacement vessel will safely be installed. The CALM buoy needs to be in place by September at the latest as currents and winds become more dangerous in October.

I want to recognize and thank the Government of Yemen for its full support to this operation.

In February 2022, the internationally recognized Government confirmed to me in Aden its support for the plan. It pledged \$5 million towards the operation, making it the sixth largest donor.

This political and financial support has been critical to the success of the project.

I have been assured that the cooperation will continue.

**For further information, contact:**

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Madame President,

The Security Council has remained seized of the situation of the *Safer* tanker over several years. The attention and unity of the Council on this issue has helped propel us to where we are today.

The current estimated budget is \$143 million, of which the UN has raised \$118 million from generous Member States, including eight around this table, the private sector and the general public, which has contributed \$300,000 through a crowdfunding campaign.

The broad coalition working to prevent the catastrophe also includes environmental groups like Greenpeace and, in Yemen, Holm Akhdar. Once again showing the breadth of the operation.

The Secretary-General has placed great importance on resolving the issue of the *Safer* tanker. And he has directed the United Nations system to support the project.

UNDP has worked tirelessly to secure and manage the wide range of maritime expertise needed to conduct the complex and high-risk operation – not to mention the 320-meter replacement vessel.

The International Maritime Organization, the UN Environment Programme, UNESCO and the World Food Programme have provided invaluable expertise.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has provided \$20 million in bridging finance from the Central Emergency Response Fund, which gave UNDP sufficient liquidity to start the operation that is now underway.

On the ground in Yemen, the project also has operational support from the UN Mission for the Hudaydah Agreement, UN Department of Safety and Security and the other members of the UN Country Team, including UNFPA.

Madam President,

I wish to recognize the top five donors for their role in advocating for the FSO *Safer* operation and also assisting us in mobilizing resources from both member states and the private sector – the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom.

We are thankful to all 23 Member States and the European Union for generous funding.

However, an additional \$25 million is still needed, including to repay the \$20 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

With your continued support, I am confident of the project's success to put an end to this environmental, humanitarian and economic threat.

Thank you, Madame President.

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