

*Near verbatim.*

**United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly,  
Remarks at the conclusion of the oil transfer from the FSO *Safer*  
at the United Nations noon briefing – 11 August 2023**

*The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, made the following remarks today by video conference from Aden, Yemen.*

Thank you very much, Farhan. And thank you very, very much, Achim, for those excellent remarks and reflections.

I just arrived in Aden a few hours ago, about three hours ago in fact, on a flight from the city of Mukalla with the four Yemeni staff members who had been held hostage for the last 18 month. Of course, we are very delighted with this news. It is great news for our team here in Aden and more broadly in the southern part of the country.

As you recall, we had a World Food Programme member assassinated here about three weeks ago. So, it is good to have a good news day as we have today. So, it's a welcome day for the families. It's a welcome day for the UN personnel throughout Yemen.

I am pleased to report, as was mentioned in the opening, that they are unharmed, in good health and in good spirits. I had a chance to speak with them, obviously, on the way back. I am very much impressed not only by their good spirits but the strength they have exhibited under extraordinary circumstance. In addition, of course, we have our Bangladeshi colleague, Mr. Akim, who also has been released. And we celebrate for all of the families their release and reunion with their families.

As everyone has said, it has been a good day in Yemen. They don't come every day. So, we are very pleased that we can share this news today.

And today we can say that the United Nations and a remarkably broad group of partners have succeeded in preventing the worst-case scenario of a catastrophic oil spill in the Red Sea.

Over the past 18 days, SMIT Salvage has pumped as much oil as possible from the FSO *Safer* to the MOST *Yemen*, formerly known as the *Nautica*.

More than 98 per cent of the estimated 1.14 million barrels are now safely stored on the *Yemen*. The residual oil on the *Safer* is mixed with sediment and cannot be pumped out at this point. It will be removed during the final cleaning of the *Safer*.

An enormous amount of political groundwork, fundraising and project planning over the past two years has brought us to this point.

I want to congratulate the United Nations Development Programme, under Achim's leadership, for its outstanding work in implementing the project – which included considerable financial risk.

It's been mentioned earlier that only the UN was in a position to do this. I have to say that the UN Development Programme was the agency that stepped forward to do this and I want to congratulate them for that work.

We should recognize the cooperation the United Nations received from the authorities in Sana'a –

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particularly through the Safer Technical Committee, currently based in Hodeidah, which ensured access, security and technical support required to carry this out.

The crew of the Safer played a critical role in carrying out the operation, and they continue to work very closely with the SMIT team.

I'd like to highlight that two former captains that are working on the *Safer* actually came from Aden. They were invited up from Aden to work on the project here – an indication of the importance of going beyond the day-to-day concerns that exist on the civil war that continues here.

The United Nations also received important political and technical support from the Government of Yemen. That can not be underestimated. It also made a \$5 million contribution through the Global Environmental Facility, making it one of the top 10 donors to the project.

The United Nations has raised more than \$121 million from 23 Member States and the European Union, as well as the private sector and the global public. We still need about \$20 million to finish the work we have started.

Bridging funding from OCHA provided the necessary liquidity UNDP needed to get us to this point. We continue to seek support from donors to reimburse OCHA, which I should add has also been a leading advocate for the *Safer* problem over many, many years.

The broad coalition working to prevent the catastrophe also includes countless individuals and organisations that provided invaluable expertise and in-kind support. It includes private companies, like the Fahem Group that proposed the initiative that was the basis for the UN plan.

Member states contributed in many different ways. Djibouti has been an incredible host as a key hub for the operation. Both the *Nautica* (now the *MOST Yemen*) and the *Ndeavor* anchored in Djibouti before sailing to Yemen. Egypt's Suez Canal Authority waived fees for the passage of the *Ndeavor* on its way to the operation.

These are just some of the many examples that show the breadth of support –which reflect the well-placed concern the world has had for the threat posed by the *Safer*.

Of course, the entire UN system has been engaged and I thank, in particular, the Secretary-General for his support.

So, a remarkable global coalition has come together under the UN umbrella to prevent an environmental, humanitarian and economic catastrophe that would have happened if the world had not acted.

But we still need to finish the work the UN started.

As outlined by Achim earlier, the installation of a CALM buoy is the next critical step. [The replacement vessel] will need to be tethered to it.

Then, of course, the final removal of the *Safer* and final cleaning of the *Safer* will be required to permanently eliminate the threat.

Thank you, very much.

**For further information, contact:**

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