United Nations completes removal of oil from decaying tanker in Red Sea
More than 1.1 million barrels of oil transferred to the replacement tanker over 18 days

Hodeidah, Yemen, 11 August – At 1800 local time, the United Nations successfully completed the transfer of oil from the FSO Safer supertanker off Yemen’s Red Sea coast, preventing the immediate threat of a massive spill.

The Safer has been at risk of breaking up or exploding for years. A major spill from the vessel would have resulted in an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe.

The cargo of oil aboard the FSO Safer has been pumped onto the replacement vessel MOST Yemen (formerly Nautica) in a ship-to-ship transfer that began on 25 July, following preparations on site for the operation that began in May by leading marine salvage company SMIT, a subsidiary of Boskalis. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), which contracted SMIT, is implementing the operation.

As much of the 1.14 million barrels has been extracted as possible. However, less than 2 percent of the original oil cargo remains mixed in with sediment that will be removed during the final cleaning of the Safer.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: “I welcome the news that the transfer of oil from the FSO Safer has been safely concluded today. The United Nations-led operation has prevented what could have been an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe on a colossal scale.”

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner said: “Today is a proud moment for the many people across the UN System as well as our donors and partners who have worked tirelessly over the past months and years to avert a disaster in a country already vulnerable following protracted conflict. There is still work to be done, but today we can say with confidence that the immediate threat of a spill has been averted.”

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, who has led UN system-wide efforts on the Safer since September 2021, said: “Today is a great milestone. A remarkable global coalition came together under the UN umbrella to prevent the worst-case scenario of a catastrophic oil spill in the Red Sea. We need to finish the work the UN started. The installation of a CALM buoy to which the replacement vessel will be safely tethered is the next crucial step.”

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The United Nations thanks donors for their generous support

We also thank the HSA Group, the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, the Trafigura and Leo Balmer Foundations, Octavia Energy/Calvalley Petroleum, and generous individuals that have contributed to the UN crowdfunding campaign.

UN Secretary-General’s statement: https://www.un.org/en/latest/sg/statement
Broadcast footage: https://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/

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