



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

7 April 2022

Dear Madam President,

The Security Council has repeatedly discussed the situation of the *Safer* oil tanker, the aging floating oil storage and offloading vessel moored off the west coast of the Republic of Yemen since 2015.

It is assessed that an oil spill from the *Safer* oil tanker, which is in an advanced state of deterioration, would spark an ecological, environmental and humanitarian catastrophe in the Red Sea and beyond. It would devastate the coast of Yemen, destroy livelihoods, deplete fisheries and potentially force the temporary closure of the ports of Hudaydah and Salif, which are essential to enabling imports of commercial and humanitarian supplies that millions of people rely on to survive.

Depending on the season, the environmental impact would risk affecting the Republic of Djibouti, the State of Eritrea, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Federal Republic of Somalia, and could be expected to disrupt vital maritime traffic through Bab Al-Mandab and the Red Sea, endangering access to the Suez Canal.

The Security Council has repeatedly sought to facilitate efforts by the United Nations to assist in addressing this grave threat. I am taking this opportunity to update you on the steps taken by the United Nations in this respect.

Given the urgency of the matter, in September 2021, I requested the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in Yemen to reorient the approach and take the lead on the *Safer* oil tanker operation, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the entire United Nations system, as necessary.

Her Excellency
Dame Barbara Woodward, DCMG, OBE
President of the Security Council
New York

In line with this request, the Yemen RC/HC established a Coordination Committee to oversee the required operational assessment and planning, along with the development of an immediate commercial solution. The resulting plan was subsequently presented to United Nations principals and endorsed in December 2021, including the recommendation of SMIT Salvage as the implementing partner, after extensive due diligence that allowed the identification of this company as being uniquely qualified for this role and acceptable to the Yemeni parties.

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the de facto authorities in Sana'a on 5 March 2022, the plan envisages the provision of a replacement export capacity equivalent to the *Safer* oil tanker within 18 months after the necessary funds are mobilized and secured and the procurement contract is signed. However, as such capacity is not immediately available and the situation is urgent, it has been agreed that the cargo of crude oil will initially be transferred into a temporary vessel, which will remain near the *Safer* oil tanker. This transfer, and the accompanying cleaning of *Safer's* tanks, will take place over approximately 80 days after the required resources are mobilized and secured, and upon the completion of the procurement process.

While the final cost of the operation will be contingent on several factors, it is estimated that implementation could require a budget of at least US\$80 million. It is therefore essential that the necessary resources be rapidly mobilized to enable the immediate commencement of the operation, including the contracting of relevant partners.

Against this backdrop, the Yemen RC/HC, with the support of UNDP, has initiated discussions with Member States and potential donors with respect to the possibility of convening a dedicated donor conference to immediately mobilize sufficient resources for the full implementation of the *Safer* oil tanker operation. I would like to thank those Member States that have already expressed their interest in supporting such an initiative.

Complementary to these efforts, UNDP is also assisting in developing contingency plans to respond to any catastrophic leak from the *Safer* oil tanker prior to the planned operation being launched. The contingency plan is being undertaken together with additional expertise drawn from within the United Nations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as well as from the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA).

I wish to reiterate to the members of the Security Council the urgent need to address this potential regional disaster before it strikes, and my endorsement of the operation plan to address the *Safer* oil tanker in the manner envisaged.

The attention and unity of the Security Council, speaking with one voice on this issue, constitutes the best chance for success and I trust that I can count on your continued support as we undertake this critical operation. The Security Council will be kept abreast of ongoing developments regarding the implementation of the operational plan, as appropriate.

I would be grateful if this letter could be circulated to the members of the Security Council.

Please accept, Madam President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

with my warmest personal regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written in a cursive style.

António Guterres