



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

RIYADH • SAUDI ARABIA



Statement by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feltman at the Friends of Yemen Conference

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, May 23, 2012

For Immediate Release

Today, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman led the U.S. delegation and delivered a statement at the Friends of Yemen conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Please see selected comments and the full statement below.



Selected comments:

“Allow me first to echo the words of our colleagues in extending our deepest condolences to the victims and their families of the May 21 terrorist atrocity at Maidan Sabaeen in Sana’a.”

“We are firmly of the belief that Yemen’s and our success in stabilizing the Yemeni economic situation and overcoming the humanitarian crisis will be the single most important factor in determining ultimately whether the GCC Initiative and its vision for political transition succeeds or fails. Bilaterally or through multi-donor efforts, the international community must partner with the Government of Yemen and the Yemeni private sector to promote basic development programs, economic reform, and the strengthening of both domestic and foreign direct investment opportunities in Yemen.”

“The United States has stepped forward with a commitment of nearly \$80 million in humanitarian relief in 2012.”

Full statement:

Your Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal, Honorable Prime Minister of Yemen Mohammed Salim Ba Sindwah, Honorable Minister Burt, friends and colleagues:

Allow me first to echo the words of our colleagues in extending our deepest condolences to the victims and their families of the May 21 terrorist atrocity at Maidan Sabaeen in Sana’a. As well, the United States offers its condolences for the brave soldiers and members of the Popular Committees who have sacrificed their lives or suffered grievous injuries in the fighting against

violent extremist groups in southern Yemen and, especially, in Abyan Governorate, in recent days. There should be no question in anyone's mind that the United States is committed to standing side-by-side with the Yemeni people in confronting this scourge that has darkened so many lives in Yemen over the years. We honor the courage and determination in defeating al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its extremist allies, as expressed by President Abdul Rabo Mansour Hadi as recently as in his speech to the Yemeni people on May 22. We recognize that al-Qaeda represents a threat to the entire civilized world and that, to defeat it, the entire civilized world must join hands in support of the Government and people of Yemen.

Your Royal Highness, we appreciate your calling us here today for the Friends of Yemen meeting and we note that this is an especially auspicious occasion to be coming together for this purpose. Six months ago, many of us gathered in Riyadh to witness the last signature on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative to end the political crisis in Yemen and to begin the peaceful transition to a new, more democratic, more prosperous, and more hopeful Yemeni future. It's therefore fitting that we are gathered again today both to assess the progress that we have achieved over the past six months and to lay a clear course that will allow all of us to leave here with a new commitment and a new determination to fulfill the promises of the GCC Initiative.

Today, we are facing a new and more complex set of challenges. In the coming months Yemenis will be called on to undertake the steps that will advance through dialogue and negotiation the resolution of some of the most difficult problems that have confronted the country for decades and that have repeatedly provoked violence and warfare. Through the process of the National Dialogue, Yemenis will seek to address core issues of national unity and the fundamental structures of the state and government. Constitutional reform will build a framework to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. Military and security reorganization will seek to build

the structures that will provide for Yemen's security and stability into the future as well as to cement its place more firmly in the coalition of friendly nations. We commend President Hadi for launching the National Dialogue process through the appointment of an outreach committee composed of some of Yemen's most distinguished citizens. The U.S., along with our partners in the international community, look forward to working with the Outreach Committee to encourage broad-based participation in the process and ensure that the National Dialogue is the kind of inclusive process that will guarantee a successful outcome.

But we recognize that neither the Yemenis nor any other state could take on such challenges on its own. Thus, we in the international community must be prepared to shoulder our own responsibilities in aiding, advising, and assisting the Yemenis as they proceed. For its part, the United States is prepared to provide technical expertise in addressing some of the core issues that will be included in the National Dialogue as well as to provide necessary funding to help cover the expenses that will be incurred during the Dialogue. Similarly, the United States is prepared to join international efforts, coordinated by the World Bank and the United Nations, in assisting Yemen to develop the institutional capacity that will be needed over the coming months in order to take on the heavy burden of managing the transition process and ensuring its successful outcome.

The United States has enjoyed a long and fruitful history of cooperation with Yemen's security and military institutions. Thus, we recognize that we have a special role to play in helping Yemen address immediate security challenges as well as build the strong institutions that will be needed in the future. Through U.S. programs of training and assistance to the Yemeni forces, the U.S. seeks to enhance their capacity to deter, defeat, and destroy al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its violent extremist allies throughout Yemen. While Yemenis have suffered the

greatest harm at the hands of AQAP, there can be no question that the organization poses a threat to global security and stability, and therefore we all have a shared responsibility to support Yemen's courageous fight against it. But we must also look to the future and the creation of a unified, integrated military and security capability that can address all of Yemen's national security requirements. As such, the U.S. is engaged actively in supporting the efforts of the Yemeni Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior in planning for their reorganizations. Our objective is to complete the planning for reorganization no later than the end of 2012 so that the Yemeni forces may begin implementation by early 2013.

Finally, I would like to speak to the requirements of economic development and efforts to address the dire humanitarian crisis that Yemen confronts today. We welcome the presentation today of our Yemeni colleagues on their two-year economic transition plan and will study it carefully in preparation for the Consultative Group meeting that we hope to see a little later in the year. But, to be clear, we are firmly of the belief that Yemen's and our success in stabilizing the Yemeni economic situation and overcoming the humanitarian crisis will be the single most important factor in determining ultimately whether the GCC Initiative and its vision for political transition succeeds or fails. Bilaterally or through multi-donor efforts, the international community must partner with the Government of Yemen and the Yemeni private sector to promote basic development programs, economic reform, and the strengthening of both domestic and foreign direct investment opportunities in Yemen. The U.S. wholeheartedly endorses the need for more active programs to strengthen Yemeni job skills and to ensure that Yemen's workforce is prepared to compete and succeed in today's global economy.

We are all familiar with the shocking statistics of humanitarian need in the country – the endemic unemployment that destroys hope and cripples families, the food insecurity and malnutrition that

stunts lives and could, if unaddressed, mean a lost generation of young Yemenis who will suffer permanent mental and physical handicaps. The United States has stepped forward with a commitment of nearly \$80 million in humanitarian relief in 2012. The USAID humanitarian assistance coordinator will visit Sana'a shortly to discuss with her Yemeni counterparts the needs and the ways that the United States can respond more aggressively to this crisis situation. But the U.S. also recognizes the importance of economic assistance in stabilizing the country's security situation. Therefore, the U.S. is making a new commitment now to help Yemen address the needs for reconstruction, rehabilitation, and repair of infrastructure in the country's conflict-affected areas of the south. Through U.S. engagement, we will support the Government of Yemen's efforts to enable the return to their homes and businesses of the tens of thousands of Yemenis forced over the past year to flee their homes because of al-Qaeda's occupation.

Your Royal Highness, thank you again for this opportunity to gather together today to review the strong cooperation that exists between Yemen and its international friends and partners, to assess the needs, and to map our course for a future in which Yemen can achieve the strong, stable, prosperous, and democratic state that Yemen's citizens so richly deserve.

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