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Oceans and the law of the sea

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Further to the information contained in paragraph 75 of my most recent report on oceans and the law of the sea (A/76/311), I wish to draw attention to the ongoing threat of imminent catastrophic environmental damage posed by the floating storage and offloading oil vessel *Safer*.

The *Safer* has been moored in the territorial sea of Yemen for over 30 years and is reportedly holding over 1 million barrels of oil. Maintenance ceased in 2015 and the vessel went out of class in 2016. The *Safer* appears to be continuing to deteriorate and leak gas, giving rise to serious concerns of imminent oil spills, explosions or fires on board.¹ United Nations entities have underscored that any such incident would have catastrophic consequences for the marine environment in the Red Sea and beyond, as well as for fishing, international shipping and the humanitarian situation in Yemen.²

The United Nations has been engaging with all stakeholders, including the Houthi de facto authorities who control access to the site, to find a solution to the threat posed by the *Safer*. Plans for a United Nations assessment mission to the *Safer* have faced several rounds of delays since 2019. However, the United Nations continues to engage with all stakeholders and at all levels to promote a pragmatic, safe solution as quickly as possible.

¹ See, for example, United Nations Office for Project Services, *UNOPS Operations related to FSO Safer Assessment and Light Maintenance: Scope of Work* (November 2020), available at: https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/FSO_SAFER_Condition_Assessment_and_Light_Repairs_SOW_5.11.20_ENG-Public.pdf; and International Maritime Organization (IMO), “FSO *Safer* oil spill risk” (last updated 4 June 2021), available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/FSO-SAFER-oil-spill-risk.aspx>.

² See, for example, the briefing given to the Security Council on the situation in Yemen by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme on 3 June 2021, available at: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/statements/briefing-security-council-yemen>; and IMO, “FSO *Safer* oil spill risk” (footnote 1).



Urgent action is needed to avert further deterioration of the situation and a disaster of significant magnitude and devastating environmental and humanitarian impact. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea requires States to protect and preserve the marine environment and to cooperate to that end, including in eliminating the effects of pollution and in preventing or minimizing damage by pollution. I call upon the flag State, the Houthi de facto authorities and all States in a position to do so to promptly take the necessary steps to prevent an avoidable tragedy, before it is too late.
