



30 May 2022

The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan
Minister of International Development

Dear Minister Sajjan,

I am writing with a concern regarding the need for funds for international action to prevent an environmental disaster. I am speaking about the FSO Safer.

As you are likely aware, the FSO Safer is a ship anchored off the coast of Yemen, largely unattended since 2015 due to conflict in Yemen. There are very serious concerns about its structural integrity as well as fears of an explosion from trapped gases. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) states that there is an estimated 150,000 MT (nearly 1.1 million barrels) of crude oil onboard that, should a spill occur, “corresponds to four times the amount spilled during the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989.”¹

The IMO maintains that an oil spill from the FSO Safer would be a major humanitarian and environmental disaster that would heavily impact the northwest coastline of Yemen, as well as, potentially, neighbouring countries, including Djibouti, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia. They note that the area likely to be affected encompasses vulnerable ecosystems, including mangroves, coral reefs and bird habitats, as well as key infrastructures such as desalination plants and fishing ports. All these would be at significant risk should there be a leak.

Since the 1970s The Presbyterian Church in Canada has advocated for clean water and combatting pollution—even if the expense in the short run is high.² The church considers creation beloved of God and therefore worthy of protection. We have become aware of an international push to fund a response to this preventable disaster that would see the oil taken off the tanker and placed onto a structurally sound ship. We are aware that \$40 million has been pledged, but \$80 million is needed for the first and most urgent part of the planned removal of the oil. A drive for pledges was held in mid-May but Canada was not among the countries that pledged.³

There are many forms international development and aid can take, but surely helping to prevent what would become a humanitarian crisis is among them. Given Canada’s membership on the IMO and our stated commitments to protecting the Earth’s environment, we encourage the Government of Canada to join those countries who have already pledged funds to avert this potential significant environmental disaster.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and please remain assured of our prayers for the work you do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Allyson Carr
Associate Secretary, Justice Ministries
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

¹ <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/FSO-SAFER-oil-spill-risk.aspx>

² The Acts and Proceedings of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1973, p. 282.

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/pledging-event-raises-33-million-address-threat-massive-oil-spill-red-sea-enar>