

## **Remarks by DSRSG Stephanie Koury to the Security Council**

Monday, 16 December 2024

*Thank you Madam President, members of the Council,*

At the outset, let me first congratulate the Libyan people on the successful holding of local elections held on 16 November in a first group of 58 municipalities across the country. This was a technically sound process organized by the High National Electoral Commission, with the support of the police and security forces which helped ensure a peaceful voting day.

The holding of these elections is a reminder that the Libyan people yearn to exercise their right to select those who govern them. Municipal elections for the second group of 60 municipalities is set to start next month. And I urge all authorities to support this.

*Madam President,*

In a little over a week, Libya will mark three years since the indefinite postponement of national elections in 2021. As unresolved issues continue to stall political progress, Libya's national unity and territorial integrity are under threat.

Over the past 8 months, I have met Libyans from all walks of life, and they have repeatedly conveyed to me a sense of urgency and to hold national elections.

Libyans are anxious about their country's future.

The status quo is unsustainable and has persisted for too long. Unilateral actions pursued by political elites have deeply eroded Libya's institutions into parallel and competing structures.

The recent crisis over the leadership of the Central Bank of Libya exposed the fragility of the veneer of stability of Libya's prolonged political stalemate. It also served as a stark reminder that it is high time for Libya to build strong institutions to address issues of uncontrolled spending and a fiscal deficit, establish a stable economy, against the backdrop of the possible decrease of global oil prices.

Further, the continuing divisions over the leadership of the High Council of State, compromise its ability to exercise its functions. This is another sign that Libya's

transitional architecture is crumbling under the weight of political polarization and the lack of a clear project for a permanent system of governance.

National reconciliation efforts are also increasingly hindered by the political divisions and the vicious cycle of institutional competition.

Competition between various armed factors for territorial control and access to resources continue to threaten Libya's stability. Two days ago, fighting erupted in Zawiyah between two armed groups. Minor clashes flared up again in the oil-rich desert of Hamada on 24 October, 6 and 9 November. Although the situation has deescalated for now, these incidents underscore the risks associated with uncoordinated unilateral troop movements and divided security institutions.

*Madam President,*

Last night, I have presented to the Libyan people UNSMIL's plan for an inclusive, intra-Libyan political initiative to overcome the current political deadlock and move beyond the status quo, towards national elections and the renewal of the legitimacy of Libya's expired institutions.

I intend to facilitate this process on the basis of the following objectives and principles: (1) first and foremost, preserving stability on the ground; (2) secondly, pursuing Libyan ownership by building on existing Libyan frameworks; (3) thirdly to help unify and strengthen institutions and their legitimacy; and (4) fourthly, inclusivity of Libyan political forces and cultural components. I also intend to facilitate this process through an incremental, flexible approach to enable progressive building of consensus. This incremental approach is also designed in such a way as to not predetermine any decisions made by the next Special Representative, and can be adjusted as appropriate.

In line with paragraph 2 and 5 of resolution 2755 (2024), UNSMIL intends to establish an advisory committee to develop options for resolving outstanding issues in the electoral framework and pave the way for the holding of general elections and one government for all Libyans.

It is my priority, based on my consultations with Libyans across the country, to address contentious issues in the legal framework for the elections. While the existing framework is the positive outcome of Libyan-Libyan efforts, and a good basis, it remains highly contentious among Libyans, and it is unlikely to produce a viable and peaceful electoral event without some tweaks.

We must be mindful of past experiences, in particular of the failed 2021 election.

This is why I intend to establish a time-bound advisory committee tasked to review outstanding issues in the electoral framework and make viable proposals and options for an overall roadmap for the holding of elections. The committee will be composed of experts and respected personalities, who are reflective of the spectrum of Libya's political forces, social, cultural and geographical components.

*Madam President,*

As the controversy over the executive authority ensues, we must be mindful of the successive transitional governments and Libya's decade long and open-ended interim arrangements. This is why I believe that any unified government that might emerge from Libyan-Libyan negotiations, should be strictly bound by principles, safeguards, milestones and timelines to take the country to elections, as a condition for its international recognition and legitimacy.

*Madam President,*

Building on ongoing efforts by Libyans, UNSMIL also intends to convene with Libyan partners a structured dialogue to consolidate consensus around a unified national vision for the future of the country. Long-term conflict drivers have remained unaddressed and have prevented Libya to move to a permanent system of governance which is centred on a shared collective vision on fundamental issues and relationships between the individuals and the state. Ensuring full, equal and

meaningful participation of all segments of society – particularly youth and women – remain UNSMIL’s priority to fostering inclusivity, building national unity and enhancing the legitimacy of the political process. It is my hope that this process can build an important legacy and support the conclusion of the constitution-making process down the road.

UNSMIL is continuing to support Libyan efforts to move forward economic reforms for the benefit of the Libyan people. UNSMIL will also continue to work to help advance unification of military and security institutions and, with the African Union and Libyan partners, advancing national reconciliation.

Over the past weeks, I have shared the broad parameters of our initiative with Libyan actors, as well as with regional and international partners. I am grateful for the constructive engagement and feedback. That feedback compels me to clarify what this first phase of the initiatives is not: the Advisory committee is not a dialogue group to take decisions but rather it is to generate options for use in a follow-on phase by Libyan decision -makers.

*Madam President,*

I am mindful of mounting challenges that must be overcome.

Two and a half months after the resolution of the leadership crisis at the Central Bank of Libya, I am encouraged by steps taken to improve governance.

The reinstatement of the Central Bank’s Board of Directors on 21 October is an important milestone, following its suspension for over a decade.

To effectively implement monetary policy and contribute to economic stabilization, the Central Bank leadership and Board must be free to act independently, transparently and with integrity, without conflicts of interests, in concert with oversight institutions.

As an immediate priority to support the Central Bank’s stabilization efforts, I urge Libyan decision makers to urgently agree on a framework for spending in 2025 with agreed limits and oversight.

I would also like to reinforce the critical importance of safeguarding the independence of Libya’s oversight institutions, and for authorities to adhere to

governance principles of transparency and anti-corruption as outlined in the Libyan Political Agreement and successive resolutions by this Council.

*Madam President,*

Arbitrary arrests and detention persist across the country. Despite progress in the areas of capacity building and partial access to detention facilities, I call on Libyan authorities to grant UNSMIL unimpeded access to all detention centers. I am very concerned about deaths in custody. Since I last briefed the Council, four Libyans, including two women, have died in custody. Transparent investigations into these deaths are needed and those responsible must be held accountable.

Regional instability also has a grave impact on Libya. Since the start of the Sudanese conflict in 2023, an exponentially growing number of Sudanese refugees have crossed into Libya, with 500 on average arriving daily.

The human rights and protection conditions faced by migrants and refugees remains a UN top priority. I urge all stakeholders to ensure that migration management accords with international human rights law. The UN remains committed to assisting.

*Madam President*

In closing, Libya's guns largely remain silent, but it is neither stable nor at peace.

Against the backdrop of persistent foreign involvement, regional changes and growing economic headwinds, we must collectively seize the opportunity to achieve a lasting political settlement.

Members of this Council, as well as regional and international actors have a concrete opportunity and obligations to help Libyans resolve their differences, reunify institutions, and move towards a democratic, rule-based system of governance. Libya has the potential to become a beacon of stability and prosperity for the Mediterranean region and beyond and one that serves its people.

The success of the UN-facilitated political process first and foremost requires political will and the commitment of Libyan actors to refrain from unilateral actions that continue to entrench institutional divisions and polarization.

Unity of purpose and coordinated support from Libya's regional and international partners is equally critical.

The Libyan people have shown that not only do they desire change, but they have the capacity to reach agreements through compromise and make lasting progress and hold elections. And they need your unified support.

Thank you, Madame President and members of the Council.