

**Statement of Martin Kobler,
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in
Libya (UNSMIL)**

International Women Day – 8th March 2016

Dear Ambassadors,

Distinguished guests,

While I cannot physically be here today to celebrate the courage, dedication and activism of Libyan women, please be certain that my thoughts, my heart and, most importantly, my acts are with you.

All over the world, women play a pivotal role in peace building, conflict resolution, and other social, economic, cultural and political life. **So too, do Libyan women.**

Today we celebrate the ordinary women of Libya who, silently and patiently, are shaping the future of Libya. I say ordinary women, but this is maybe not correct. I have not met a Libyan women who could be described as ordinary. You are all exceptional. I admire you from the bottom of my heart.

You have lived through dangerous times, and many of you have suffered tragedy. You have lost close relatives, you have been exposed to violence, some have seen your children been abducted or enrolling in militia, and others have been arbitrarily detained and deprived from your most basic rights.

Nevertheless, you keep hope. You build a better future for Libya. Your revenge, it's fraternity.

Women in Libya deserve to be recognized and to live with dignity. The right to life and security are fundamental human rights that must be granted.

Today, I would like to thank the human rights defenders, the women's rights activists and all the other brave women who demanded justice, and a society free from all forms of violence.

These acts have not been without tragic cost. Lives have been taken because you dared to stand up for what you believe in. Many

more of you have been subject to threats and assaults; as your public freedom has shrunk.

Libyan women were the first to demonstrate against injustice in 2011, and stepped in to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need and the ones who continue to reconcile community problems and conflicts.

From all parts of Libya, women made their voice heard demanding peace. A peace that would bring security so that they might send their children to schools, go to work and have income, move freely without fear, and have access to health and public services.

One message is clear to all: "enough is enough". Libyans must reconcile their differences and come back to the right track, the track of lasting peace and sustainable prosperity.

Libyan women are leaders. We see this over and over again. We watched their strong, inspired and clear demands clearly during the constitution drafting and the political dialogues processes. They know what they are demanding today will shape the future of the young girls and generations to come in Libya. And they are willing to fight for it.

Women's demands are not only legitimate demands, but inalienable. There can be no claim of democracy and equal citizenship without the direct participation of half of the population.

Today everyone - men and women in Libya - can take action to help achieve equal partnership more quickly - whether by supporting women and girls achieve their ambitions, say no to violence, call for women leadership, and create inclusive cultures of peace, equality and zero tolerance to violence.

Each of us can be a leader within our own domain of influence and commit ourselves to take proactive steps to accelerate women's empowerment in all spheres.

Since the revolution, UNSMIL has promoted the participation of women as equal partners to men in the journey towards peace, security, and full respect for human rights. It is a journey we will continue onwards with you. Today, women hold only 32 out of the 200 seats of the Libyan House of Representatives. In the proposed Government of National Accord, only 1 out of the 13 ministers is a woman, 2 out of the 5 state-ministers are women. This is not enough. I have always advocated for a 30 percent quota of women

in the parliament as well as in the government. I will continue to do so.

The empowerment of women continues to be a central feature of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and UN agencies efforts to address political, economic and social challenges faced by Libyan women.

Continue what you are doing, and know I will always be on your side to defend your legitimate rights.

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