

Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hanna S. Tetteh
In-person remarks to the Security Council on the situation in Libya
Tuesday, 17 April 2025

Mr. President (*of France*),

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Thank you for your support since my appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya. Your backing enables UNSMIL to effectively implement its mandate.

Since my arrival in February this year, I have engaged in extensive consultations with Libyans from all work of life, political, military, security, judicial actors, oversight institutions, political parties, civil society women's leaders and also the diplomatic community. Their insights and their perspectives into Libya's current state of affairs have been invaluable.

I have heard diverse opinions. Most Libyan leaders call for an inclusive political process and note the urgent need to end unilateral actions, to unify institutions, and restore stability. Some believe a new unified government is the only solution, while others argue that it will prolong the nearly fifteen-year transition period. This school of thought stresses the importance of strengthening existing institutions, noting that establishing a transitional government has not addressed Libya's fundamental challenges. All parties agree on holding elections, but there are differing views on whether a constitutional framework should precede general elections.

Political will for compromise is crucial to develop a consensual roadmap resolving Libya's political crisis and completing the transition. Elections must be integrated into a comprehensive political framework promoting state-building by unifying and strengthening institutions.

Mr. President,

UNSMIL is supporting the work of the Advisory Committee to develop options for addressing contentious electoral issues. The Committee held sessions in Benghazi and Tripoli, including with the 6+6 Committee and the High National Elections Commission, to discuss these challenges. The Committee is finalising its deliberations and is expected to submit its report proposing options on the way forward by the month-end, barring delays. I would like to express my thanks to the Committee for their commitment to this important endeavor. UNSMIL will assess the options and use them as a foundation for forging consensus on the next steps of the Libyan-led and owned political process.

In parallel, I have been engaged in consultations with leaders, political parties, and civil society actors on the subsequent phase of the process and I intend to maintain an inclusive stakeholder approach, ensuring that any outcome is not only Libyan-owned but also enjoys broader Libyan support. Given the increasingly frequent recurring crises, I intend to act with urgency while exercising caution to preserve stability.

Mr. President,

Libya's political crisis persists due to competition for economic resources. Fragmented institutions, unilateral actions which deepen divisions, and lack of a unified budget exacerbate the situation, causing macroeconomic instability characterized by foreign exchange deficits, inflation, and currency depreciation.

In parallel to the work of the Advisory Committee, UNSMIL has been engaging economic experts to identify reforms for financial management and sustainability. We will continue consultations to foster progress and are ready to support the key political stakeholders to agree on a unified budget to prevent a looming crisis.

Maintaining the independence of key oversight institutions is crucial and they must be safeguarded by political actors. This includes the National Audit Bureau. Mr. President, Appointments and removals of the leaders of these institutions must adhere to the provisions of the Libyan Political Agreement.

The discontinuation of the National Oil Corporation's crude oil-for-fuel transactions from the 1st of March is a positive development that promotes greater transparency in oil sales. We encourage the Government to ensure timely funding of fuel imports based on domestic demand. Given the mutual accusations following the devaluation of the Dinar last week by the Central Bank, several Libyan stakeholders have suggested conducting an audit of the key Libyan state institutions by one of the top five international audit company. They think this would provide clarity on the management of public finances and help address the lapses and shortcomings of these institutions.

Mr. President,

The 2020 ceasefire agreement is largely holding but the security situation remains volatile. Amid continued military build-up and hostile competition over territorial control, especially among Western armed groups, recent armed mobilizations in and around Tripoli have renewed concerns about a potential outbreak of violence in the capital. In the southern region, the ongoing restructuring and consolidation of control of the Libyan National Army forces continues to fuel tensions with local stakeholders and resulted in

heavy fighting and loss of lives in Qatroun. The situation will remain fragile until there is a political will to unify security and military forces under a shared vision.

To enhance communication and information sharing, with UNSMIL's facilitation, the security and military authorities from eastern and western Libya have established joint border security centres in Tripoli and soon will do so in Benghazi. These centres aim to enhance communication and information sharing across the country.

Mr. President,

The support of regional and international partners is crucial to the success of any political agreement. In March, I visited Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Türkiye to highlight UNSMIL's efforts to strengthen its political engagement and provide an update on UNSMIL's support to the Advisory Committee. I emphasised the risks of maintaining the status quo to Libya's unity and regional stability and welcomed the assessments and views on how to overcome the political impasse.

As I continue these engagements, I am exploring options to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of existing coordination mechanisms at the regional and international levels to build the necessary support to advance the political process.

Mr. President,

One of the tragic consequences of Libya's divided institutions is the vacuum in which armed actors perpetrate human rights violations with impunity. The recent surge in xenophobic and racist hate speech has been alarming, as it incites violence against migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and humanitarian organizations providing lifesaving support. Portraying migrants as security threats, and this has sparked demonstrations, mass arrests, and a fatal shooting.

Activities of some humanitarian organizations officially registered in Libya were suspended and their staff interrogated, obstructing the provision of life-saving support, and so far three people have died consequently.

The targeting of humanitarian organizations, migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees must stop. We acknowledge the recent discussions between the Government and the UN to address the situation and encourage all political actors to adopt a more comprehensive approach to address the trafficking of migrants, and secure the humanitarian space by ensuring safe and unhindered access by UN agencies and their partner organizations.

Mr. President,

Arbitrary detention continues to be prevalent in Libya, including targeting legal professionals and political opponents. While recent releases in eastern and western Libya are a positive development, hundreds of individuals still languish in illegal detention. I strongly urge the authorities to ensure that arrests are conducted in accordance with the law and those deprived of their liberty are afforded their due process rights and fair trial. Furthermore, I emphasise the urgent need to release all individuals arbitrarily detained without delay.

Women in Libya face significant challenges and violence without adequate social or legal protection. In response to this concern, Libyan experts conducted extensive consultations to develop a draft law on the Protection of Women Against Violence. This comprehensive law, which addresses protection gaps and aligns with international standards, was endorsed by members of the House of Representatives in November 2023 and cleared by the Legislative Committee in January 2024. I would urge the House of Representatives to expedite the adoption of this law without further delay.

As the national reconciliation process has become politicised, victims' long-standing calls for truth, justice, and reparation remain elusive. I reiterate UNSMIL's commitment to collaborating with all Libyan stakeholders and the African Union to support a rights-based, victim-centred, and inclusive reconciliation process.

Mr. President,

Regarding election. The second phase of local elections in 62 municipalities, including Tripoli, Benghazi, and Sabha, will be taking place and voter registration concluded on April 15th.

Preliminary figures indicate that over 570,000 voters registered, of which 31 per cent are women.

These elections are crucial for establishing democratic governance from the grassroots level. Overall, the first phase of municipal elections was successful; however due to competing spheres of influence in the absence of unified government, in a few municipalities voting results were not respected and winning candidates were replaced by de facto authorities, as occurred in Harawa. In other cases, municipal boundaries are being changed during the electoral process or announcement of results is pending due to allegations of interference. Disputes regarding election outcomes should be resolved through the existing legal frameworks, respecting the will of voters ahead of the next round of voting, and this process should be used to strengthen institutional readiness for national elections.

At the national level, the dispute over the elections of the High Council of State Presidency remains unresolved, weakening the institution. I urge the members to find a compromise solution.

Mr. President,

Every day, ordinary Libyans face recurring crises, whether economic, security, or political. The protracted institutional and political divisions, coupled with harmful unilateral actions and the struggle for control of resources by a privileged few, hold the aspirations and needs of the Libyan people captive. Overspending of Libya's vast resources in the absence of an agreed national budget could lead to an economic collapse if not urgently addressed. This is despite the fact that the country's resources could provide adequately for the safety, security and well-being of its citizens.

UNSMIL's objective is to support the Libyan people to end successive transitions and establish peace, stability, and good governance by, amongst other things, ensuring the unification of Libya's institutions and holding inclusive national elections.

While member states have diverse interests in Libya, the international community must come together to collaborate on a unified plan to support a democratic state that addresses the Libyan people's fundamental needs and aspirations, fosters economic growth and equitable development.

Inaction will be more detrimental than the cost of change.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.