

## **DSRSG Koury's Remarks to the UN Security Council – 20 August 2024**

Mr. President, (Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu, Sierra Leone),

Over the past two months, the situation in Libya has deteriorated quite rapidly in terms of political, economic and security stability. Unilateral acts by Libyan political military and security actors have increased tension, further entrenched institutional and political divisions and complicated efforts for a negotiated solution. Let me share some of the recent incidents.

On 9 August, the Libyan National Army moved unilaterally toward southwestern parts of Libya sparking Western forces and groups to mobilize and assert their readiness to respond to any attack. While the LNA later clarified its purpose in moving these forces was to secure the southwestern border, this move generated tensions in the West and raised concerns with Libya's neighbour Algeria. These types of unilateral security moves are not confined only to movements of East-West forces but also occur among Western forces and armed groups.

On 23 July, forces affiliated to the GNU moved westward, sparking mobilization by the LNA and among armed groups in that area.

On 9 August, heavy armed clashes broke out in Tajoura, east of Tripoli, between two armed groups resulting in fatalities, injuries to civilians and destruction of property. Local mediation efforts defused the situation.

Mister President,

Unilateral actions by political and security figures are also undermining stability in other ways.

Unilateral attempts to unseat the Central Bank Governor are met with countervailing attempts to maintain him. Attempts to unseat Prime Minister Dbeibah and his Government are met with attempts to maintain them.

On 14 August, tensions escalated and armed groups mobilized in Souk Al Jumma, Tripoli, over reports of some armed movements seeking to take control over the Central Bank. The situation was diffused in the early morning of 15 August.

On 7 August, in a highly close contest - a potentially one vote difference - the results of the vote of President of the High Council of State remain contested and voting for the seats of Vice Presidents and Rapporteur are suspended. The political contest over whether to oppose or maintain Prime Minister and the Government of National Unity have also

contributed significantly to the stalemate in the High Council of State. I urge the High Council of State to quickly resolve this issue as it risks further undermining its unity and legitimacy.

On 13 August, some members of the House of Representatives met in Benghazi and voted to end the mandate of the Government of National Unity and the Presidency Council and to transfer the role of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. These members also endorsed the HoR-designated government in the East as the only legitimate executive. Western leaders rejected these actions.

In response to these and other unilateral actions, UNSMIL reaffirmed to all political leaders and institutions their commitments and obligations under the Libyan Political Agreement and its amendments, in line with all relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2702 (2023).

Mr. President, esteemed members of the Security Council,

Unilateral actions in relation to the economic sphere are also causing the problem of instability. Following months of efforts to develop a unified budget with the participation of east, western and southern representatives, on 10 July the House of Representatives adopted a supplementary budget allocation submitted unilaterally by the HoR-designated government. This was denounced by leaders in the West. Moreover, efforts to change the Central Bank Governor continue. The Presidential Council issued a decision to have a new governor and form a Board of Directors over the last couple of days. And this has been rejected by the House of Representatives. These efforts are fueled by perceptions that the CBL Governor is not acting in a manner that is transparent and with fair governance to east and west. Unrelated, but nonetheless important, is a unilateral decision to close the Sharara oil field, under the control of the LNA forces, causing the National Oil Corporation to declare force majeure on 7 August.

Mr. President,

In the midst of this, UNSMIL, along with member states have been actively working to de-escalate the situation. In my interactions with key leaders and public statements I have urged Libyan leaders to refrain from unilateral actions, which will only further exacerbate the situation, and have urged dialogue and a commitment to a political process to move ahead in the interests of the Libyan people. I have conveyed the same messages in my bilateral meetings with Libyan stakeholders. As a first step, UNSMIL is working to help facilitate an overall de-escalation and is proposing talks to develop a set of confidence building measures between all parties to bring an end to unilateral actions and create a more conducive environment for resuming the political process. Among other things,

these types of measures would be aimed at ending unilateral actions, commitment to that, and restoring confidence in the Central Bank, ensuring that moves by military and security actors are coordinated so as to prevent mobilization and remove fears by others.

Going further, as a follow on, the success of the political process will require good faith efforts by political and security leaders and actors, an engaged broader public, and a coordinated approach in support of Libyan talks by the international community. The international community's support for Libyan led efforts is indispensable. I will continue to work towards this through engaging the diplomatic community in Libya and coordinating messaging and in capitals abroad in preparation for convening phase two of the political talks.

Last month I launched visits to some regional capitals, to discuss a coordinated approach in support of Libyan and UN facilitated efforts. My interlocutors expressed their commitment to support UNSMIL as it prepares the groundwork for launching these larger political talks. Alongside the holding of political talks in relation to a unified government and the holding of elections in line with current Libyan laws, UNSMIL will continue reinvigorating the economic, security and international humanitarian law and human rights working groups. These are critical issues which need to be progressed alongside the political track and elections. UNSMIL is also working with the Presidency Council and our partners of the African Union, to reactivate the national reconciliation process and the holding of the conference under the auspices of the Presidency Council and this year.

Mr. President,

Against this difficult context, ordinary Libyans are trying to move ahead including with democratic inclusive processes. We are seeing a revived engagement of political parties, trade unions, civil society and independent figures and others to coordinate and pro-actively advance constructive ideas for shaping the political process. The Mission is continuing extensive engagement with Libyans including political parties, women, youth, cultural and linguistic components, academics and others to ensure that they have a say on the future of their country.

Local elections are in fact moving forward on a very positive note. The High National Election Commission, with the Support of UNSMIL, is undertaking the necessary steps. Voter registration was completed for the 60 councils whose mandates expired or due to expire by the end of 2024. Around 210,000 Libyans registered to vote. On 18 August distribution of voter cards and registration of candidates started. The elections are expected to take place in mid-October 2024. Unfortunately, female turnout remains

relatively low, constituting only 30 per cent of the registered voters. I am also concerned there will be low participation of women as candidates

The increased number of reserved seats for women for the municipal council elections is a significant step to increase the representation of women in the local government; however more proactive measures are needed as women face many hurdles, including intimidation, online violence, verbal attacks and other obstacles to discourage them from registering as candidates. HNEC, with support from the UN family, is helping to promote the participation of women candidates through a variety of means. Libyan women are also advocating for the establishment of a national committee, representing women throughout Libya, to develop a strategy supporting women's empowerment across all sectors and I urge relevant authorities to facilitate this.

Mr. President,

Moving further south, extremist organizations maintain access and presence in Libya by leveraging their connections with local and transnational organized crime. The growing transnational organized crime and extremist organizations interconnections in Libya are particularly concerning. Weapons have reportedly been coming into Libya, in violation of the arms embargo.

Regarding human rights and respect for rule of law, UNSMIL is working with all stakeholders across Libya, governmental and civil society, to provide technical assistance to strengthen national capacities to advance human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, we have recently enhanced cooperation with the Libyan National Army and reactivated capacity building plans.

I welcome the recent release of some individuals who were arbitrarily detained in the West and the East, including some children. UNSMIL is also engaging with the LNA and authorities to review cases of individuals who remain arbitrarily detained.

However, the challenges are immense, ongoing restrictions on civic space, continued arbitrary detentions, including of women and children, abductions, enforced disappearances, torture, deaths in custody and coerced "confessions", continue to be reported across Libya. UNSMIL will continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained, and for transparent and independent investigations into such cases.

On humanitarian developments, on 16 August, flooding occurred in southwestern Libya, primarily in Ghat, displacing an estimated 5,800 individuals. In coordination with the government, the UN Country Team has dispatched humanitarian supplies and continues to do so.

Since the outbreak of fighting in Sudan in 2023, the number of Sudanese refugees in Libya has risen to 97,000 as of 11 August. With most arriving in Kufrah where they face challenging conditions. Full access to refugees is essential to provide effective and increased humanitarian assistance in coordination with local authorities. The UN Response Plan for Sudanese Refugees in Libya is only 21 per cent funded.

Mr. President, Members of the Council

In closing, the status quo is not sustainable. In the absence of renewed political talks leading to a unified government and elections – you see where this is heading - greater political financial and security instability, entrenched political and territorial divisions, and greater domestic and regional instability.

Libyans are frustrated with the status quo and the toll it is taking on their daily lives. People struggle to withdraw money from the banks and to meet their daily needs. Many express fear now about war once again erupting or about clashes between heavily armed groups. They also express fear to share their views freely without threats. Youth do not see a future, except to try to leave. This is not acceptable.

UNSMIL is now focusing its good offices on 1. helping de-escalate tensions, 2. preserving stability and fostering confidence building measures among key stakeholders, and 3. in preparation for convening Libyan led political talks. Advancing the political process, while maintaining stability, is the key priority for UNSMIL. I count on your support to take this forward

Thank you