

**Remarks of SRSG Ghassan Salamé to the United Nations  
Security Council  
28 August 2017**

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Egypt on presiding over the Security Council this month.

I am very pleased to be speaking to you from the UNSMIL compound in Tripoli. My presence here is intended to signify the mission's and my personal resolve to working as closely as possible with Libyans, in Libya.

A month ago I assumed my position as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the head of UNSMIL. I was fortunate enough to have already met Prime Minister Serraj and Marshal Haftar in Paris on 25 July and to have exchanged with them ahead of taking up my post.

I was also fortunate enough to receive upon my nomination hundreds of calls, letters and emails from all walks of Libyan society.

On 5 August, I made my first official visit to Tripoli and met with the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the High Council of State Al-Sweihli and the following day with Speaker of the House of Representatives Saleh and Libyan officials. This trip launched my consultations with Libyans across the political spectrum and across the country.

Since then, I have been present in Libya as often as possible and have been to towns across the regions: Tripoli, Al Qubba, Benghazi, Misrata, Zintan and Al Bayda. I am sorry to say that due to external restrictions I have yet to visit the South, in fact a trip last Thursday was cancelled a few hours before departure, but we are working hard to make sure that it happens as soon as possible.

In each place I have met with political figures, military and security officials and with women, intellectuals, activists and youth.

It is indeed my conviction that our attachment to the Libyan Political Agreement as a reference should not prevent us from reaching out to all Libyans, whatever their status, past positions or present stands. Rather, we must reach out so that there is reconciliation for all.

In my external consultations, I sought to prioritise Libya's neighbors. This included Tunisia, where I also thanked the authorities for their support and hospitality to UNSMIL during the past three years.

In Egypt, I met with the officials in charge of the Libyan file, representatives of the League of Arab States, and some of the leading members of the Libyan community established there.

When in Algeria, Prime Minister Ouyahya and Foreign Minister Messahel reiterated their support to our action.

I also visited Italy where Prime Minister Gentiloni and his ministers expressed their commitment to the success of our efforts.

All these countries will benefit from a stable, peaceful and reconciled Libya, as will many more.

I look forward to travelling next week to Congo Brazzaville where the African Union High Level Committee on Libya is convening key Libyan actors.

It is my intention to extend the scope of my visits in the coming weeks and months, to other neighbors, countries in the region, and beyond.

From my meetings with Libyans, a clear picture is emerging. People are frustrated with their deteriorating living conditions. I passed the same bank in Tripoli repeatedly from ten o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night and saw so many people I thought it was a demonstration. No! They were just waiting to access a fraction of their month's salary - the equivalent of what's now worth \$25.

It is unnatural that in this wealthy country, university departments are closing one after the other because the outrageous gap in the exchange rate has led foreign faculty to quit *en mass*.

People are tired of the endless cuts in electricity and water, which in turn take down the telephone system and the internet. Libyans cannot understand being poor in a country rich with natural resources. An oil producing country where they must queue for sometimes a day to get 20 litres of petrol.

The impression of a now well-rooted political economy of predation is palpable, as if the country is fuelling its own crisis with its own resources to the benefit of the few and the frustration of the many.

There is clearly here a serious problem of governance that can hardly wait to be addressed.

The people's welfare is, obviously, a fundamental element in Libya's future stability. I intend to work closely with our partners to ensure that we are fully coordinating in realising a macroeconomic vision for the country while helping the authorities provide basic services.

Unless the economic challenges are addressed, and soon, the humanitarian crisis in Libya will deepen.

For civilians in need, access to humanitarian assistance should go unimpeded, and relief personnel protected.

Of particular concern is the present situation in Derna where we have repeatedly called for civilians to have freedom of movement and actively worked for the entry of basic necessities to the city.

The other challenge, which Libyans are concerned about, is of course, their security. There is much fear of criminality, of kidnapping and the threats posed by the widespread proliferation of arms. My first night here in Tripoli, I fell asleep to the protracted staccato of gunfire.

Civilians are killed or injured across Libya as a result of sporadic armed clashes and explosive remnants of war. Thousands are also detained for prolonged periods of time, many with no prospects of a fair trial.

The terrible attack at the al-Fuqaha checkpoint on Thursday 24 August, which saw the brutal killing of nine soldiers and two civilians was attributed to ISIL.

The Libyans I have spoken to want an end to uncertainty and instability, and they respect those who are working to bring the situation under control. In Tripoli and in certain other parts of the country, the security situation has truly improved. Oil production has increased markedly, enabling the Presidency Council and Central Bank of Libya to work together to deliver on the budget.

These are positive steps. But the key to lasting stability requires addressing the over-arching political situation. In this regard, the main issues which dominate the political landscape are as follows:

Firstly, the upcoming two year anniversary of the Libyan Political Agreement on 17 December. There is uncertainty over what the end of the transitional period outlined in the LPA actually means. One of the most immediate tasks is to help build a consensus among Libyans on the legal and political significance of that date.

An institutional vacuum at this crucial time will not serve Libya's interests.

Most of my interlocutors have raised with me their thoughts on amending the LPA. A consensus is emerging on this issue, and I hope to be able to announce some movement on it in the coming days.

Secondly, the prospect of adopting a constitution. The vote by the Constitution Drafting Assembly on 29 July to finalise the draft text was an important milestone. However, at the moment, the legality of the vote is being considered by the courts.

Thirdly, there are growing and widespread calls for fresh elections. Before these take place, it would be wise to ensure political and technical preconditions for successful elections to be addressed, and in particular a commitment by all

parties to accept the election results. Elections are not about the accumulation, but about peaceful and organised rotation.

Finally, a political package is required to bring these three elements together coherently. Here, sequencing is the name of the game. Libyans can successfully go into these three processes only if they define in what order and with what urgency they should do so, and if we help them combine the three into one single package which most, if not all, players consider acceptable.

In any case, any efforts to forge a solution must be Libyan-led and Libyan-owned. The United Nations is here to support them in their endeavours, and certainly not to replace them.

We will in particular work with them to promote the rapid re-unification of their political and financial institutions. .

Mr. President,

Libya's problems are not just confined to the Libyan people. The presence of ISIL, of Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups, foreign fighters and mercenaries, the trafficking of arms and the cross-border black market economy are challenges which extend across Libya's borders and impact its neighbours and the wider international community. Three days ago, deadly clashes near the border with Chad reminded all of the regional sensitivity of Libya's present conditions.

Irregular migration, and the revenue it generates for smuggler networks, has also proven to be a direct threat to stability in parts of Libya. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees who are stuck in Libya often suffer abuses and detention in inhuman conditions.

We need to act, we need to act together and we need to act now.

We are not starting from zero. Thanks to my predecessors and the concerted efforts of member states, we have the political framework of the LPA. There is fairly widespread recognition in Libya that the current situation cannot drag on indefinitely. The commitments to a ceasefire and to a political rather than military solution to the crisis made in the Paris communique need to be supported by concrete actions, to avoid a renewed military escalation.

Mr. President,

To deliver on our mandate, we continue to prepare to ramp up the presence of the United Nations family in Tripoli and from Tripoli across the country – as security conditions allow.

A convoy of UNSMIL personnel was attacked with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades on 28 June. One staff member was injured and we are fortunate that there were no further casualties.

The UN presence in Libya is already significantly larger than any other diplomatic mission, and it will soon expand further. We must remain aware that there are real risks in operating in Libya, and it is incumbent on me to ensure that those risks are mitigated as effectively as possible.

Mr. President,

I would like to thank all of the Member States who have worked to support the LPA since its signature, who have contributed to fighting ISIL and other listed terrorist groups and who have contributed to stabilising the country.

I look forward to working with all those Libyan and international stakeholders to bring together our political, security and economic efforts in a coherent and coordinated manner.

I appreciate the efforts of all governments and organisations working to promote peace and reconciliation among Libyans. But a proliferation of initiatives to mediate somehow risks confusing the political landscape.

There is a window of opportunity, and it is in the hands of the Libyan people to seize it. I would not have assumed this role if I did not believe that a peaceful and positive end to the Libyan crisis was possible.

For this reason, during the upcoming meeting of the General Assembly, Secretary General António Guterres plans to convene a High Level Meeting where an action plan will be presented. I will not go into further details as it would be premature prior to the conclusion of my round of consultations with Libyans.

The UN stands willing and able to act in the best interests of all Libyans, at equal distance from all parties. I very much hope that with the trust of our Libyan partners and the confidence of the regional organisations and concerned member states, we are able to strengthen and unify our collective efforts, and together restore Libya to its rightful place in the family of nations – one united, stable and prosperous country.

Thank you.