

Transcript of the Opening Remarks of the Special Envoy for Libya, Jan Kubis in the virtual meeting of LPDF - Verbatim

26 March 2021

Esteemed Members of the LPDF,

Many thanks that you are making time for us today, I understand it is not the best day to have meetings but I didn't want to postpone this gathering, I wanted to address you as soon as possible after my briefing to the Security Council, and as soon as possible after my briefing to the Secretary-General and the leadership of the United Nations.

The meeting of the Security Council took place two days ago, and yesterday I briefed the Secretary-General. Today, I am briefing you. So with apologies for doing so on Friday, but I didn't want to postpone this any longer because otherwise, it would have been possible to have this meeting only approximately a week from now, and I considered that it would be too much.

I would like to thank you also for sending to myself and my colleagues your questions in advance. I would like to react to some of them now and then no doubt during the discussion. Many thanks for that as well.

Let me start by highly acknowledging the work of all of you, of LPDF of all the members of the LPDF. You have achieved something that no one expected, not only some months but maybe even weeks ago. You achieved a way towards the unification of the country, towards the sovereignty of the country you managed to get one government for the whole country. You managed to get a session of the parliament that was split, into a unified session. You managed to get the confirmation of the new government in a unity session of the Parliament. You managed to get the interim executive authority, including the Presidency Council, that is now recognized by the whole international community. You managed to get the Parliament to start working on their duties, for example, the budget for the country. You are keeping them under very tight control, you are keeping them accountable to you. This is a very big achievement that has historic nature and character.

I can also confirm that even after the February meeting of the LPDF, after you nominated the new interim executive authority not that many believed in such a breakthrough, in such a progress, inside of the country, including those that were nominated to lead the country in this interim period, towards the elections on the 24th of December. But also outside of the country. I was receiving dozens, hundreds of questions: is it possible to move this exercise forward? Or would it end up in a similar situation to what happened after 2015- 2016 that eventually resulted in two governments. This time there were concerns that there might be a third government added to the two that claimed power. This is a small miracle, and the Prime Minister shared with me this view several times.

Many of the processes moved under the constitutional umbrella because indeed there are some institutions and authorities of the country that have the sole prerogative and authority, for example, to confirm the vote of confidence and eventually take the oath of the Government or of the Presidency Council. They have the sole authority to legislate and that's why, we and I believe it was good that you gave space to these authorities to act, and they acted, they delivered the

government and they delivered the new Presidency Council; but your work remains relevant. This body, the LPDF, is relevant and remains a key platform as the custodian of the achievements to ensure the follow-up on the implementation of the Roadmap, of its objectives. Because this is what it comes to, objectives.

This is one of the questions that I have received, and I would like to return it back to you. Yes, you are relevant, and you will be relevant also in the future.

As I said it was beneficial and it delivered the results the fact that you gave space to the authorities and institutions of the country to act. But now it's the time to get together and to discuss to take stock and maybe to listen to each other that would then help us take the next steps. I had this intention and I know that you also came with the initiative to convene a meeting of the LPDF with some points that you shared among yourselves, and with us as well, and at the same time you continued working in the framework of the Legal Committee, and I would like to highly acknowledge that work as well.

We were also using the time of the past weeks since I arrived, and let's just confirm it, I'm relatively new, I started only some five to six weeks ago, so we were using the time to mobilize the support of the international community, and to align the whole international community behind the objectives that you set forth in the Roadmap. I am very happy to report to you that the international community is aligned behind the objectives, behind the aspirations of the Roadmap and is committed to them.

The Working Groups of the Berlin Process have continued to meet and they again were a very useful source of encouragement to the authorities here in the country to move forward and implement the objectives of the Roadmap. The Political Working Group was briefed by Prime Minister Dbeiba, and Presidency Council President Mr Mnefi, and more recently by HNEC Chairman Dr. Emad Sayyeh.

The 5+5 Joint Military Commission also continued its important work. I would like to acknowledge their patriotic approach to the issues related to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and notably also in facilitating the holding of the HOR session in Sirte. And we tried to contribute to this as well through our outreach to some international partners that then help creating a conducive environment including the possibility to use the Ghardabyia airport for moving members of the HOR to Sirte.

I visited numerous international capitals and had numerous telephone conversations with ministers of foreign affairs of a large number of countries, including neighboring countries of Libya, countries of the region, countries in Europe and as far as - if you wish- Japan and the United States, and all of them are - as I said- aligned at this point in time in support of and requesting the implementation of the LPDF Roadmap. I also briefed the Security Council, and you also registered that even in the previous Presidential Statement, the Security Council expressed its support for these processes and underlined the importance of the unification of the national institutions as set-up again in your Roadmap. This is again a confirmation of your successes and your achievements.

In my discussions with members of the Security Council and also, on Wednesday when I briefed the Security Council, I requested them to express themselves in a Security Council resolution in

favor and in support of these positive developments. But again stressing what are the critical objectives of this support and referring to the objectives, as set out by yourselves, and among these critical objectives that we follow as a priority, is facilitation for the holding of the elections on 24 December of this year.

All the members of the Security Council were united in requesting the elections on the 24th of December of this year. All the countries of the region that I talked to, of your neighboring countries that I talked to, are united in requesting elections on the 24th of December. Yesterday, you had an opportunity to witness a very important visit of three Ministers of three leading European Union countries, France, Italy, and Germany. Germany is the Godfather of the Berlin process. They came here and said very clearly, among their priorities is holding of elections and supporting the holding of the elections on 24th December of this year. Therefore, this is for us and I hope that for the institutions and authorities of this country, not only a clear message but an imperative that I hope they will translate into concrete actions of a constitutional and legislative nature.

In my discussions, and meetings and conversations with the Speaker of the Parliament, I stressed the necessity of holding the elections and the obligation of the Parliament to take action to legislate and in our previous discussion with the Speaker, he reassured me that the Parliament is ready to ensure the necessary legal framework for the holding of the elections on 24 December. I plan to raise this issue in the coming days during my visit to him [HOR Speaker].

The head of the HoR Legislative Committee has been invited to brief the next meeting of the Political Working Group of the Berlin process. This is another format and, in another form, how to impress on the Parliament to live up to its responsibilities and duties.

But the time is of the essence, still, we do not see sufficient movement forward. There are questions and legitimate questions about whether indeed the Parliament will move and from our perspective, we cannot let it go by just hoping that they will move.

We need to think about some other alternative ways how to encourage them to take action. Because we know and we know it from the Chairman of the HNEC that he needs - and the country needs- to have a clear constitutional basis and legal framework for elections by the 1st of July to be able to ensure orderly preparations and conduct of the elections.

Therefore, the work of the Legal Committee, the continuation of its work with a clear focus on sound proposals for the constitutional basis for elections is, might and most probably will prove critical in finding a way for this issue.

And I hope that the Legal Committee will expedite its work with this very clear focus and will be able to complete this work relatively soon to contribute to creating the right atmosphere and send a strong signal to those who not only hesitate with elections but create problems and impediments to stall the process, that they will not be allowed to move with this kind of attitude.

In the meantime, we – UNSMIL - other parts of the UN but also other partners but also the international community is working with the HNEC on a number of files of a technical nature that should allow the holding of quality elections on the 24 of December. I am very grateful to a number of UN Member States for providing additional financing these days to the work of HNEC, through the UNDP Election Support program.

I plan to meet Dr Sayyeh soon in the coming days to continue our discussions on which areas he needs more support, more technical assistance and for that I already supported the request from the previous government addressed to the UN to send a needs assessment mission, experts from the UN HQ to agree with Chairman Sayyeh on additional areas of support.

This morning I met virtually with women's group and with civil society activists organized in the "24 December Movement" to start our discussions, how to engage these very critical stakeholders, women, youth, civil society, both for the elections but also in favor of holding of the elections through their political and other campaigns, and through working in many areas, and I was encouraged to see their clear demand and clear focus. I look forward to working with them, in the future, very closely.

I raised this topic with Prime Minister Dbeiba the other day and he pledged to give the necessary support including the necessary budgetary means to the HNEC to be able to deliver the elections. I was very happy to note that one or two days after our meeting he came and visited HNEC and agreed again to providing support and this is, at least from my perspective, a welcome move.

There are many other areas in the Roadmap as objectives for the country. I am aware of a very slow process as regards to sovereign positions and it is on my and our agenda. I am aware of the disappointment when Prime Minister Dbeiba failed to nominate more women to ministerial positions. Yes, important portfolios, ministry of foreign affairs, ministry of justice are now in the hands of women, but this is not enough, and this is not the pledge that he gave when he was elected by you. His pledge was very clear: 30% of women in the senior positions and we will continue working on this with him.

Of course, there is the big task of national reconciliation and I again remember from the meeting in February, President of the Presidency Council, Mr Mnefi, saying very clearly that this is one of his top priorities. I heard from Prime Minister Dbeiba several days ago only that this is one of his topical priorities. So we would urge them not only to declare it but to take expeditiously steps and measures to establish a National Reconciliation Commission and to prepare a plan and to start to implementing it. I hope, and I will strongly recommend it to the executive authority to appoint a woman as the head of the National Reconciliation Commission.

The last point that I would like to mention is that we continue working on the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libyan soil. It is a difficult process. It is a process but we don't only speak about it. I can tell you that in my meetings with a number of foreign countries the need to be addressed on this is. I am raising it because I know one thing that Libyans, the Libyan authority, institutions, including the 5+5 Joint Military Committee request the withdrawal of foreign forces and fighters from the country and indeed it is for all friends and partners of Libya to honor this request.

The country must finally be fully sovereign without any foreign presence that is not desired and at this point in time we need to work for the full implementation of the ceasefire and the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from the Libyan soil.

I apologize for taking too long, but in the past weeks many things happened and I wanted to brief you about some of our activities but also about the vision, about the way forward, and to raise to

some of your questions and also concerns, legitimate questions and legitimate concerns so that is why I took the floor for quite a while but now I will stop and I would like to invite you to make your points and comments that will inform our next steps.

Thank you very much for your patience and attention.