

Statement of SRSG Martin Kobler to the Security Council

6 December 2016

“Moving Beyond Containment”

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Spain for presiding over the Security Council this month.

The members of the Council have before them the latest report of the Secretary General on the activities of the United Nation Support Mission to Libya.

I would now like to update you on the latest developments since my last briefing.

Mr. President.

The first anniversary of the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement on 17 December is fast approaching.

It is time to take stock.

I will concentrate my remarks on the following three points:

One. What has been achieved so far?

Two. What are the challenges?

Three. What is the outlook for Libya in 2017?

One: The Achievements

The Presidency Council has been operating now for almost nine months from Tripoli.

Following economic talks in London and Rome, the Presidency Council now meets regularly the financial institutions to address Libya's economic troubles.

Oil production has increased significantly, tripling from August, to almost 600,000 barrels per day.

The international community, and I am thankful for this, is clear and in consensus. It supports the Presidency Council and the Libyan Political Agreement. In this regard, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the UN have formed a troika, to work together and provide stronger support.

Ambassadors are submitting their credentials to the Presidency Council in Tripoli, member states are looking to return to Tripoli.

Advances against terrorism have been made in both East and West.

The Islamic State has shrunk from the entirety of Sirte to now just a few buildings.

Although they continue to be a threat, the days of the Islamic State controlling territory in Libya are over.

While in Benghazi, the Libyan National Army continues to make progress, taking area after area.

I would like to pay tribute today once again to all the sons of Libya who have sacrificed their lives for this common cause. And I would also like to commemorate the many civilians who died in the course of these clashes.

Two: The Challenges

Mr. President,

While these developments are encouraging, there is much to be concerned about and this is my second point.

Still the institutions of the Libyan Political Agreement work far below expectations.

Although the Presidency Council resides in Tripoli, the Government of National Accord has limited authority.

Twice, proposed Government of National Accord lists were rejected by the House of Representatives.

Cooperation within and between many of the institutions remains gridlocked.

Pretender governments compete for power.

The Interim Government in al-Baida exists in parallel to the Government of National Accord.

The Salvation Government has also tried make a comeback in the last weeks, creating a tense stand-off between rival armed groups in Tripoli.

The fragmented security situation allows criminal and terrorist networks to flourish.

Over the last days we have seen the most violent clashes in Tripoli since 2014, between armed groups competing for power and territory.

I am very concerned and use this opportunity to urge and to call on forces engaged in the violence there to immediately stop fighting, terrorising the population and I call for wisdom to prevail.

The deadly clashes were triggered by the murder of the religious Scholar Sheikh Nader Al Omrani whom I met a few months ago.

We recently also saw clashes in the south in Sabha, where 23 persons were killed.

These events, Members of the Council, are symptoms of the lack of security and underlying tensions between communities.

Weapon deliveries are still going on and they appear in violation of the weapons embargo of the Security Council and sometimes end-up in the hands of terrorist groups throughout the region.

Until Libya has a reliable and coherent security apparatus, the arms embargo must remain in force and enforced.

The fundamentals of the Libyan economy also need to be tackled as a matter of urgency.

Although the increase in oil production provides some relief, Libya runs a budget deficit of around 70% of the GDP, the largest budget deficit compared to other GDP in the world.

Still, the Presidency Council has challenges utilising funds.

The relations between the Central Bank and the Presidency Council are strained.

While some opponents of the Libyan Political Agreement in Tripoli seem to have unrestricted access to huge sums of money, the Presidency Council and the Central Bank of Libya are still struggling to find a way to disburse money.

I urge the Central Bank of Libya to save the Government of National Accord and other institutions by rapidly disbursing money in an orderly way but with a minimum of bureaucratic procedures. Access to funds is the lifeline for the Presidency Council.

Libya's financial reserves have shrunk from 109 billion dollars in 2013 to near 45 billion dollars. The country will face an economic meltdown unless something changes.

Three: Outlook 2017

Mr. President,

People in Libya are rightly frustrated at the slow pace of progress.

More containment is not a recipe for Libya in 2017. As many say: The mistake was to leave Libya alone after 2011.

6 years later and we must engage more with our Libyan partners.

Together, we must work so that root questions are firmly and decisively addressed.

Antibiotics, not aspirin.

Mr. President,

I am convinced that the Libyan Political Agreement remains the one and only viable framework. It is without alternatives.

Until today, even the most vociferous critics of the agreement acknowledge that it is the only workable framework.

That said, the Libyan Political Agreement did not fulfil the expectations. The implementation has stalled.

However its articles are not set in stone. The Libyan Political Agreement even foresees a mechanism for change, should the political circumstances demand.

Next Steps

Libya must move forward.

I would like to propose at the end six points:

First, the outstanding political questions must be tackled.

I convened the Libyan Political Dialogue multiple times. In November, the Libyan Political Dialogue called on the House of Representatives to amend the constitutional declaration to incorporate the Libyan Political Agreement within it.

I conveyed this message to the House of Representatives President Agila, urging him to convene a meeting of the House of Representatives and vote, there after endorse the Government of National Accord to be presented by the Presidency Council.

Should this be difficult, I asked President Agila to tell us why, so that we can be helpful and assist, and address the open questions within the House of Representatives.

This being done, the Libyan Political Agreement will be owned by the institutions that it creates – the House of Representative and the State Council.

All outstanding questions, including the supreme commandship of the army, the chain of command of the Libyan army, can be addressed by the process the Libyan Political Agreement provides for.

However, a path forward should consist of inclusive, peaceful dialogue, and never of military escalation.

Second, the issue of armed groups in Tripoli must be tackled urgently. In this regard, I give my full backing to the creation of the Presidential Guard, which will provide protection to state institutions and embassies. I agree with those who say the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord must not be protected by armed groups.

The vision of a Presidential Guard has been transformed into a realistic plan. This plan deserves our full support. It is not an alternative to the building up of the Libyan Army under a unified command.

Once established, the Presidential Guard will apply for exceptions to the weapons embargo to the Security Council Sanctions Committee.

UNSMIL will convene a High Level Meeting next week on 13 December to remove the obstacles to the formation of the Presidential Guard.

Third point, the fight against terrorism produced good results. I have spoken about Sirte, I have spoken about Benghazi, however, the gains are not irreversible. The economic recovery of Sirte and Benghazi in particular, has to be planned and implemented, and this is a matter of priority.

Fourth, the fundamentals of the Libyan economy must be addressed.

Deficit, inflation, the lack of liquidity, and more, must be tackled to avoid economic meltdown.

The Presidency Council must have access to funds and the capacity to disperse them.

In this regard, I will continue my support to the current multilateral meetings on Libyan financing, which have already led to valuable achievements like the appointment of the Minister of Finance.

And I intend to provide technical support to the Presidency Council to assist in building their administrative capacity.

Fifth, the issue of human rights and the rule of law, including the situation of migrants, must be more effectively and more comprehensively addressed.

Libya is a human marketplace and this is a shame for a country like Libya. This has to be addressed. This has to end.

The rule of law must also be respected. Summary justice dispensed by armed groups must make way for due process. Abductions, assassinations, threats against judicial officers and social activists must cease.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate my full support to the efforts of the International Criminal Court and I applaud the Prosecutor's announcement that new investigations will begin in Libya.

And Sixth and finally, I want to emphasize the importance of UNSMIL returning to Tripoli in a phased way once security questions are adequately addressed and mitigated.

We can be far more effective there than we can hope to be in Tunis.

UNSMIL must return to Libya, we should do it now to support all partners in these difficult moments.

Stability can be better achieved better if the international community is on the ground, and not in exile.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Council

I would like once again to thank the Security Council for its unwavering support to the Libyan Political Agreement.

The only alternative to the Libyan Political Agreement is chaos.

The Libyan Political Agreement must work, the Libyan Political Agreement can work and the Libyan Political Agreement will work.

Thank you very much Mr. President.