

National conversation reveals Libyans' desire for 'united and sovereign nation': UN representative

Conversations taking place across Libya indicate that citizens are “yearning for a united and sovereign nation,” the top United Nations official in the country told the Security Council in New York on Monday.

UN Special Representative Ghassan Salamé updated ambassadors on the National Conference which was launched in April, as a way of giving all Libyans a say in responding to the country's on-going crisis. So far it has been convened in 27 different locations.

It is part of [a UN Action Plan](#) that provides for amending the [Libyan Political Agreement](#); the stalled 2015 deal aimed at establishing a single national unity government, among other points.

Mr. Salamé reported that the process has drawn thousands of participants.

“Libyans from all political stripes and segments of society gathered to enter the political conversation, many for the first time with an enthusiasm that could not have been predicted,” he said, speaking via teleconference.

“They have made it their own.”

While elections must be held as soon as possible, the proper conditions must be in place – *Ghassan Salamé (UNSMIL)*

The National Conference will run through June and is expected to take place in more than 40 locations overall, including Libyan communities based overseas.

Special events focusing on the concerns of women, youth and internally displaced persons will also be held.

Mr. Salamé said some points of consensus have emerged which show why advancement of the political process is “so vital.”

They include “a yearning for a united and sovereign nation and a common belief that, to achieve that, the state must be more decentralized.”

The UN Action Plan also calls for the preparation of elections and the National Conference has revealed that Libyans want a vote which can unite the country, as well as the means to emerge successfully from transition.

“While elections must be held as soon as possible, the proper conditions

must be in place," Mr. Salamé said, underscoring the need for a new round of voter registration; prior commitment to accepting the results; as well as sufficient funding and security arrangements.

Regarding the amending of the Libyan Political Agreement, the UN envoy said despite attempts to "reconcile various opinions," parties are unwilling to make concessions.

"By focusing on elections this year, amending the LPA rapidly shrinks in importance," he stated. "However, we must demand far more from the current Presidential Council in their final remaining months, both in terms of concretely preparing for the elections, and providing services to the people."

Mr. Salamé also briefed Council members on a new UN strategy to help Libya deal with armed groups who continue to have what he has described as a "perilous" influence on politics and the economy.

It involves direct engagement with these groups, in close consultation with the government.

While the strategy "will not unravel armed groups tomorrow", he said it "will help the long process begin in earnest."