

Press conference following the 2nd meeting of the Libya Quartet

Brussels, 23 May 2017

Check against delivery!

First of all, it was an honour and a pleasure for me to be able to host the second Quartet meeting. We had a very fruitful first meeting in Cairo few months ago, on the 18th of March, and we used this opportunity today to assess developments in Libya since our last meeting and coordinate our work to advance the political process and assist Libya in its democratic transition.

I will present to you the main results of our Joint Communiqué being sure that you will have the full text immediately after our press conference and then I will leave to my friends and colleagues to reply to most of your questions. Since we have exchanged for several hours today on common positions, each of us can easily speak on the name of the others.

Today we committed again to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya and its institutions under the Libyan Political Agreement. We underscored the urgent need for a Libyan-led peaceful resolution of the political crisis and reiterated our rejection of the threat or use of armed forces by any Libyan party.

We strongly condemned the unprovoked attack on Brak al-Shati last week and all acts of violence. We called on all parties to refrain from further violence and any act that may undermine ongoing work to find a negotiated solution to the conflict.

We reiterated the importance we attach on consolidating stability and security along Libya's borders. We commended the efforts by the Constitutional Drafting Assembly to finalise a draft constitution to be concluded as soon as possible and pave the way to general and presidential elections.

We encouraged all Libyan parties to engage in constructive and inclusive talks – and I will stress the word “inclusive”. We underlined during our talks today the importance of having inclusiveness at the core of this political process.

We welcomed all efforts and encouraging progress resulting from recent meetings between Libyan stakeholders and in particular between Prime Minister [of the Government of National Accord and Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya, Fayez] al-Sarraj and Field Marshal [Khalifa] Haftar in Abu Dhabi in May and between the President of the House of Representatives, Agila Saleh and the President of the High State Council, [Abdulrahman] Sewehli in Rome in April this year.

We welcomed the appointment of dialogue committees by both the House of

Representatives and the High State Council and urged them to seek consensus on outstanding issues to ensure the full implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement.

We expressed our appreciation for ongoing regional efforts to support the Libyan political process, in particular the meeting of Libya's Neighbours held in Algiers this May.

We expressed our concern about the economic situation in Libya, underlined the need for the Libyan authorities to tackle the serious and urgent fiscal and monetary challenges facing the country and we reiterated our support to the coordination role of the United Nations and encouraged the United Nations to take the lead in any effort to facilitate a limited amendment of the Libyan Political Agreement.

We exchanged in-depth about the future steps to be taken, in particular we decided that our teams will continue to work closely together on a daily basis as they have done so far. But as I told you we exchanged information, analysis, decisions on the next steps to accompany a Libyan process that will see our four organisations committed to do it in the most coordinated, united and effective manner.

We also discussed that the venue of our next meeting will be Addis Abeba, hosted by the African Union. But obviously we will take every opportunity to meet if there will be the need to do so at any earliest convenience. Our contacts and our coordination will continue to be essential for the coordination of the efforts and the work of all our Member States. Together, we can really send to all the Libyans a message of unity that can hopefully – Inch'Allah – encourage their own unity.

Thank you.

Q&A:

Q. A question to you four mainly. Mme Mogherini, the European Union is supporting Mr [Fayez al-] Sarraj government as many, as the international community, but Mr [Fayez al-] Sarraj government, or part of it, or his allies in Misrata are responsible for the military attack in the South of Libya. If there is no external military intervention in this country, is it possible to imagine that you, as international community representatives, can take action against those militia who are responsible of putting in danger the whole political process? And I have another question, if the Arab League, the African Union, the European Union, can do something for those who are suffering in the migration camps inside Libya? And there are enough sad reports about that.

I will maybe take the last part of your question and leave the first part to my colleagues and friends.

We discussed about this at length and we agreed on the fact that it is useful for us to clarify completely that the support we give to the legitimate institutions in Tripoli and to [Fayez al-] Sarraj is not something that comes from the UN or from the EU, but from all the four of us together. It is the

entire community that works with the legitimate Libyan institutions in the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement with a view of ensuring the inclusiveness of the process and the need for different parties of the country and different stakeholders to come together. And as I said, we welcomed very much the recent meetings that took place in this direction and we will encourage further steps in this direction. But maybe on this Martin Kobler can elaborate more.

On the presence of the migrants inside Libya and in particular in the detention centres, I can tell you about the work that the European Union is doing with the International Organisation for Migrations [IOM] and the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees]. I met the IOM Director [General, William Lacy] Swing just the day before yesterday in Jordan. We are supporting the presence and the work of the IOM inside Libya with a very substantial financial package so that the IOM can operate inside the detention centres – guaranteeing living conditions, human rights standards at international level inside the camps in Libya. We often talk with the Libyan authorities at different levels to encourage their cooperation with the IOM and the work that the IOM is doing, is trying to do and is trying to increase inside Libya, is for us another way of saving lives. This has to be done at sea, as we are doing with our Operation Sophia. This has to be done in the desert, in particular in Niger where people and lives have to be saved before they enter Libya. But this has to be done also inside Libya and we see the IOM and the UNHCR as the key actors to guarantee the rights of the migrants, protect their lives, and also – as it is happening already – assist them if they wish to return in their countries of origin. Since the beginning of the year, the IOM, with our assistance, has already organised more returns from Libya to the countries of origin than in the entire last year. It is still not enough but the European Union and the IOM are working to try to solve this – especially for humanitarian reasons.

Q. I wanted to go back to the relationship between Prime Minister [Fayez al-] Sarraj and General [Khalifa] Haftar. Before, especially from the EU, the message was about supporting the UN recognised government. Today, Mme Mogherini, you are talking more and more about inclusiveness. Do you think we are coming to a point where politically the moment to miss building up to give General [Khalifa] Haftar a bigger role or maybe a role at part where [Fayez al-] Sarraj or any new unity – the unity government that could emerge in Libya? Before we were more expecting him to become the Defence Minister under [Fayez al-] Sarraj. He clearly thinks he can do better or have a more prominent role. So, do you think we are in a place of political messaging changing from the outside?

On our side we have always talked about inclusiveness; we have always recognized that the Libyan Political Agreement is the framework and the legitimacy of the Libyan authorities derives from that agreement including the legitimacy of the House of Representatives – that does not recognise necessarily the legitimacy of other institutions deriving from that same agreement.

This to say that it is not for us as European Union – or I believe any of us – to determine who does what in Libya, but we are united in saying that Libya

has to find an institutional setting with a legitimate basis that can allow also the international organisations and institutions to relate with the country's authorities and support the Libyan people in difficult circumstances. First of all, the fight against terrorism – let's not forget it. As Martin was saying, Libya is a rich country, Libya is a country that can easily find its own way by itself but is also facing some challenges.

Our only purpose is to accompany the Libyans along this road and to make sure that no one lives with the illusion that one side can win against the other. We have always united our voices in saying that Libya needs all Libyans and that the unity of Libya – East, South, West, different parts of the country – can together overcome the current challenges the country is facing and offer to the Libyan population a peace perspective better than the past years they have experienced.

It is not up to us to determine who does what, it is up to the Libyans to agree in which way they will share responsibilities in the framework of the legitimate internationally recognised Libyan Political Agreement with – as Martin [Kobler] said – eventual amendments to be decided among the Libyan parties.

This is the only thing we care about and you will find unity among us and unity as far as I see also among the neighbouring countries on the need for the different Libyan stakeholders to come together within the international framework that is recognised.

And this is why our joint messaging in this respect is so important because, really, the fact of us being together in passing this message of unity, our encouragement – encouragement, I would like to underline this – towards an inclusive dialogue, a constructive dialogue, we hope can really strengthen the actors that are in this moment signalling readiness to engage.

Q. I have something else for Mme Mogherini, it has nothing to do with Libya but with what happened last night in Manchester United. Are you going to take some strong actions to save your citizens since it looks like this type of attack is increasing more and more in a lot of European countries?

I will say a few words on the attack in Manchester if you allow me. This is a very sad day for Europe and for all of us. I would like to take the opportunity also to thank our friends from the African Union, from the Arab League, from the UN for the solidarity and the condolences expressed today.

For all of us, rightly so, because we are together in this, in the suffering and in the reaction. In Europe, in the Arab world, in Africa, elsewhere in the world, terrorists attack a way of living, a way of seeing life. In this particular case, it was particularly dramatic, the fact that it was hitting a concert where teenagers or pre-teenagers were celebrating joy and their love for life. And this should stay as the main guiding value of our youth, both in the European continent but also in the Arab world, in Africa, elsewhere where the love for life should stay the core of our way of seeing and living.

On the concrete response we have put in place. I was in contact this morning with Boris Johnson [Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

of the United-Kingdom] not only expressing solidarity but also offering all the European Union support on whatever will be considered useful and needed from the UK authorities. We have put at their disposal all our counterterrorism knowledge and competences and networks, including the external one.

I know that Commissioner King who is responsible for security in the European Commission is obviously looking at the best possible ways to coordinate our support. These are the first hours and the focus is mainly on the suffering and the thoughts to all the families and all the loved ones of those who lost their lives but also all the ones who were injured. But, the work has started immediately to offer to the UK authorities that are responsible for the investigations obviously and for the security of their citizens on their ground, to offer them all possible support and cooperation. We are united in this and all the EU instruments are at the disposal of the UK, in all ways that can be useful, and we will continue this work in the next hours.

Link to the video:

<https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I138934>