

Speech: “All Libyans, regardless of their age, gender, or where they are from, must feel represented and understood by their political leaders.”

Thank you Mr President.

And may I thank both Ghassan and Rina for your briefings here today. And a very warm welcome and thank you also to our briefer from civil society, Ms. Sharief, who set out some very powerful messages and set out very eloquently the importance of an inclusive peace process, including particularly women and youth, and actually it would be very helpful, perhaps as follow up to this conversation to hear anymore from UNSMIL on how they are integrating the gender perspective in their work.

Let me begin, Mr President, by welcoming the Special Representative Salamé's update on the political process and reiterating the United Kingdom's full support for his work. In our statement of the 14 December, we in this Council urged all parties to support the political process in a spirit of compromise for the sake of the Libyan people.

This must include support for Special Representative Salamé's efforts to secure consent to amend the Libyan Political Agreement and commitment to the sequencing of the UN Action Plan.

As Ms. Sharief highlighted, civil society has an essential role to play in ensuring the voices of the people are also heard during discussions on the future of their country.

All Libyans, regardless of their age, gender, or where they are from, must feel represented and understood by their political leaders. This will encourage Libyans to give their political leadership their support and build trust in the political process.

The greatest immediate need is the establishment of a more inclusive political platform. That is essential to create an executive better able to improve the security, human rights and economic conditions in Libya.

A more inclusive political settlement will also help build a context more conducive to preparation for elections. We welcome the Special Representative's emphasis on ensuring the right conditions are in place ahead of elections, including the necessary political, legislative and security preparations to ensure their success.

Mr President,

The security situation in Libya remains of deep concern, as we saw from clashes at Mitiga airport on Monday. As we've said before, there can be no military solution in Libya. All parties must exercise restraint and express their support for national reconciliation. This must include reconciliation of the security forces.

Unified security forces under the command of the civilian government, which are representative of and work for all Libyans, will also enable the threat posed by extremist groups to be tackled in a sustainable way. It will help bring an end to the impunity of armed groups which are inextricably linked to the gravely concerning human rights situation.

Ungoverned spaces in Libya are creating the conditions for abuses and violations of international humanitarian law which take place against civilians, internally-displaced persons and migrants.

We fully support the work of the AU-EU- UN Taskforce in tackling slavery in Libya. We call on all parties that are suspected of committing, ordering, or failing to prevent such human rights abuses and violations to be fully investigated, and if found guilty, to be held to account for their actions. We also stand ready to consider the sanctioning of individuals involved in people trafficking in modern slavery.

We are also concerned by reported restrictions to civil and political freedoms and intimidation of civil society organisations, public servants, religious groups and national minorities, including recent attacks of Sufi Shrines and Amazigh representatives. These groups must be allowed to participate in Libyan society and the political process.

And finally Mr President, on the economic situation. This Council needs to continue to protect the Libyan people from economic hardship, including by supporting the restoration of the economy and the delivery of services across the country. We must act robustly against attempts to illicitly sell oil and establish parallel institutions.

We need to continue to ensure that sanctions measures keep up with the situation on the ground. This includes the work we have done to address fuel oil smuggling. But we should also be ready to rectify inadvertent consequences, such as addressing the depreciation of frozen Libyan Investment Authority funds – which remain frozen at the Libyan government's request until their eventual return for the benefit of the Libyan people.

Mr President,

A stable, unified, inclusive government is the best way to improve the security conditions, the economic fortunes and human rights situation for millions of Libyans. It will also improve global peace and security and our ability to address the challenges of migration. We must continue to stand together in support of Special Representative Salamé's efforts to achieve this. And we, like him, urge Libya's political leaders to put their country first.

Thank you.