

Speech: “Libya needs urgent progress towards full political reconciliation now more than ever.”

Thank you Madam President, thank you Martin, thank you Olof for your briefings.

And at the outset, let me express to you Martin the UK’s complete support for your work and reiterate our commitment to the Libyan Political Agreement. It’s the sole framework for a political solution to the situation in Libya, but sadly, as you have made clear, its implementation remains mixed at best. I very much agree with all seven points of your seven point agenda.

As the penholder for Libya, we see three interlinked areas of concern; security, the economy, and the political process.

On the first, 2017 has seen a significant deterioration, including in particular, right now in the South, where there is renewed, escalating clashes which are edging the country towards civil war. The United Kingdom condemns all such violence as well as threats of military action and reports of gross human rights abuses by armed groups. Such acts have no place in the Libya of today. And we are clear that the military and other security structures need to be under civilian and political oversight.

As the Ambassadors to Libya from China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States said last week, there is a difference between acts against the terrorist threat and acts that can lead to further deterioration in Libya. On tackling terrorism, it’s important to recognise the defeat of Daesh in Sirte and I pay tribute to all involved and acknowledge the many lives lost in that effort.

But in spite of that success, we are now faced with a threat that has dispersed across Libya. Those who continue to undermine effective government in Libya are feeding the terrorist threat by creating ungoverned spaces. It’s a threat that extends not only across Libya but to the region as a whole.

Such ungoverned spaces create conditions for human trafficking and criminal networks to profit from the political and security vacuum in parts of Libya. Irregular migration can only be tackled properly by a strong and stable government.

Turning to my second point, the economy also remains vulnerable to the volatile political and security situation. So we need to see real improvements: the Presidency Council and the Central Bank must work co-operatively to address the liquidity crisis, and ensure that public services like water and electricity are sustained throughout Ramadan. And we need to see an end to parallel institutions undermining the Presidency Council.

There has been some progress; including the dispersal of the budget in the early months of 2017, and the economic dialogue on the detail of fiscal and monetary policy now taking place in Tripoli.

But it's clear that more steps are needed. Throughout, it is crucial that Libya's oil resources remain neutral and are used to benefit the whole country. The continued unity of the National Oil Corporation is essential to ensuring that revenues are used for the national good, and we call for much-needed investment in maintenance of oil infrastructure to help increase national exports and reduce the drain on the economy.

Turning to my final point, Madam President, the common thread in both the security and the economic situations is of course the political process. I'm pleased to reiterate here in this Chamber the UK's continued support for the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord, headed by Prime Minister Al Sarraj, as the legitimate executive authorities under the Libyan Political Agreement, in line with our Resolution 2259.

But as the security and economic instability illustrate, Libya needs urgent progress towards full political reconciliation now more than ever. We support early signs of progress to bridge political differences, including regional efforts within the framework of the UN-led political process and re-engagement by Libya's legitimate institutions – the House of Representatives, the Higher State Council – with preparations for dialogue.

We have a difficult and long road ahead. So we urge all parties to commit to progress, we underline our firm opposition to any attempt to disrupt the political process. All those who have a role to play, including those still outside the Libyan Political Agreement, must engage constructively and in a spirit of compromise. The international community, as Martin reminded us, must continue to support them to do so.

So we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to Libya as one of his personal priorities and we reiterate our full support for UNMSIL's central role in advancing the political process in Libya.

As the penholder on this issue in the Council, we will carry on playing our part. We will continue to monitor the situation in Libya closely, we will support all efforts to reach a more inclusive political settlement within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement, and we will work with the Presidency Council and the Government of National Accord in their efforts to deliver for the people of Libya. Because continued support from this Council and the wider international community will remain vital if we are to secure a better future for all Libyans.

Thank you.