President, Excellencies, and delegates

Thank you to the Irish delegation and presidency for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on Libya. I am a Libyan woman, an Amazigh and a human rights activist and researcher.

I am speaking to you today whilst millions of Libyans struggle with the necessities of life, not only is there not enough proper testing and monitoring of Covid-19 but power cuts go up to eighteen hours a day if not more, with temperatures in the vicinity of 40 celsius. The armed conflicts over the past decade have ravaged what little infrastructure existed. People are looking towards the elections in December, projected to take place in three months, for solutions. However, as of today there is no agreement about the legal and constitutional basis for it. There is uncertainty about the preparations and too many conflicting processes involving competing entities. So, people are uncertain if the election will even take place. There is an urgency for it to happen because Libyans are yearning for stability, however directing that yearning towards eminent ill prepared elections without a firm democratic foundation and due process is dangerous.

If the elections do not happen, or if the results are disputed in a similar scenario to what we saw in 2014, it would mean a more fractured society and a violent armed conflict that could destroy whatever is left of the country. A prerequisite to avoid this, is a solid, and currently missing, legal, and constitutional foundation for the election. This legal foundation must be rooted in a real constitutional process that is truly inclusive of all the peoples of Libya, including full recognition and protection of the rights of Libya’s indigenous peoples. Without this we are set up for failure as an election would hinge on the protection of the future elected body from disputes and division that inevitably will lead to further violence.

The planned presidential election is at best a flawed attempt at instating democracy, at worst it leaves Libya open to another despotic dictatorship. Without the foundation of strong, and separate institutions, dividing powers and ensuring checks and balances between legislative, judicial and executive branches of government. Libya is left open to corruption and abuses of power that will be detrimental to human rights, peace, and true democracy. The current constitutional basis, namely the temporary constitutional declaration and what has been agreed upon by the process facilitated by UNSMIL is not conflict sensitive and is already proving very divisive.

The current legal documents are based on the systematic exclusion and division of Indigenous people in the electoral system based on the division of Libya into three regions that do not reflect the demographic realities of the country. This leads me to highlight another process that needs to happen in parallel with the constitutional process, **Reconciliation.**

A truth and reconciliation process is much needed, and it has to be depoliticized, to allow for greater ownership and acceptance by the people of Libya. Any support of efforts has to be given to Libyan led initiatives, guided by conflict sensitivity and consideration of inclusion of Libya’s diverse ethnic groups. Accountability and justice is of the utmost importance for peace and for the future of reconciliation in Libya, the truth seeking mission mandate should be extended and supported to function properly and have access to all parts of the country. This mission must consider both recent and historic grievances.

The United Nations Special Mission in Libya’s mandate must be more clearly defined, and its role properly communicated. The role must be centered on **mediating** to broker military unification, constitutional basis with a broad range of respondents, and a truth and reconciliation process based on international best practice. There is a current perception amongst Libyans that the mission is being complicit in allowing corrupt political elites and spoilers to set the agenda for peace in Libya. This has to be checked to stop further disruptions of the process and to repair the damage that has been done to the trust in the mission. The best way to do this is by being more inclusive in processes, to ensure space is also given to the diverse groups representing civil and civilian society striving for a peaceful future for Libya.

Excellencies, delegates, and members of the security council,

Women in Libya have been failed repeatedly by all actors over the past decade. They are punished through exclusion for being non-violent actors in this conflict. There is a lack of political will to implement agreements and policies to integrate women meaningfully and properly across the various processes. Women are tokenized, their work and visions for peace in Libya often not taken seriously. They have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, they make up half of the displaced population, and lead more households due to loss of their livelihoods and male family members. To add to that, women in Libya face systematic violence of governmental bodies, which keeps them as second-class citizens.

The space for civil society has been shrinking over the past years, so much that any work in relation to the conflict and politics is life threatening. Women human rights defenders and activists work every day in Libya at great risk not only for themselves but their families and loved ones. The current roadmap put forward by UNSMIL has the question of human rights defenders and civil society activists as a pillar, but nothing was done about it.

In five days, it will be the United Nations International Day of Democracy, I urge you to consider supporting Libya’s democratic journey through:

* Support in bringing in local and international legal experts to define the electoral process and the constitutional basis linked to the current process.
* Establishing an independent body to monitor, evaluate and ensure transparency, and to hold the government accountable to due democratic processes in order to minimize corruption and abuses of power.
* The withdrawal of foreign fighters, international militias and mercenaries is another key priority for efforts to build stability in Libya.
* The ceasefire monitoring mission under UNSMIL should be made independent of UNSMIL, and its mandate should be made relevant to today’s problems, rather than the problems that existed prior to its inception. This also has to take into account not only power vacuums but also the indirect consequences and conflict induced vulnerabilities.
* Supporting accountability and justice for historic and current grievances through a truth and reconciliation process.
* Prioritizing the protection of civil society activists and human rights defenders, while ensuring broad representation, in all future programs.

Libya’s future might seem complicated to some, uncertain to others but there are some common sense and simple pillars that the solution should be built on; a legitimate government connected to the people’s desires, a real security sector free from foreign backed militias, and a truth and reconciliation process that centres victims.

Thank you for your attention, and for your support as we strive towards a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future for my homeland.