# **Developments in Libya since the HRVP visit**

Important developments took place in the week after the HRVP visit to Tripoli:

**Are Elections getting closer?** The day after the visit, the President of eastern-based parliament Aguila Saleh, issued a law on presidential elections. The law was never voted in parliament. It proposes a 2 round elections and imposes conditions for the candidates that would exclude several potential high profile candidates (including Haftar, PM Dbeiba and Saif al Islam Gaddafi).The Election Commission declared it will implement it. UNSE Kubis, in his briefing before the Security Council of 10 September, endorsed the law. Reactions in Libya were mixed: some stakeholders, including from western Libya, publicly approved the law but others have criticised the unilateral move. Internationally the P3 (FR/UK/US) + 2 (DE/IT) issued a general statement. FR also issued a national statement more clearly welcoming the law.

This could be a genuine step forward, breaking the long impasse. But this could also end up being a confirmation that most Libyan politicians are in the reality manoeuvring against elections. Legal battles around the modalities of presentation of the law could block elections for many months. The step could actually be a calculation of both Aguila Saleh and Prime Minister Dbeiba (it is known that neither wants elections and the PM has not reacted at all to the bill): approve a law that cannot be implemented and remain in power while avoiding any blame from the international community. By the way, among the international partners only EGY and FR are genuinely insisting on elections in December. Others, TK in particular, have a clear preference for the current situation.

Parliament has now only a few working days to issue a law for parliamentary elections, if Libya wants to hold them on 24 December together with the presidential elections.

**Motion of non-confidence against the Prime Minister** On 13 September, 45 members of parliament (about 1/3 of those still active) submitted a motion of non-confidence against PM Dbeiba. This is a follow up of the “question session” held the day of the HRVP visit in which members of parliament severely criticised the government in particular for neglecting eastern Libya. The vote should take place next week but President Aguila might decide to postpone it to continue to keep uncertainty around the PM. UNSE Kubis has privately conveyed messages against this move: the procedure to replace Dbeiba is complicated and would leave Libya in a limbo in a critical moment. In the end, it is not clear if the motion would have enough votes to pass but many in eastern Libya (and in Cairo) want to weaken Dbeiba in order to give him a clear message that he cannot stay beyond 24 December.

**UNSMIL remains in a limbo** The mandate of the UN mission (UNSMIL) was supposed to be renewed on 15 September. A draft resolution calling for the appointment of a Special Representative based in Tripoli and practically starting the procedure to replace Kubis was blocked by Russia at the last minute. A 2 weeks technical rollover was approved instead to allow more negotiations. The US has made no mystery of its dissatisfaction with Kubis. But others (RU and FR in particular) still strongly support him. In any case it will take a long time before a possible Kubis’ replacement will be agreed.

**The challenges of the withdrawal of foreign forces** The Stabilisation Conference organized by the Libyan Foreign Minister has been rescheduled for 21 October. Egypt has made it clear it is not happy with the phased plan for the withdrawal of foreign forces which Libyan FM Mangoush has prepared because the withdrawal of Turkish forces is envisaged only at a later stage.

In addition, there is growing evidence that Russia, as stressed since some time, sees Libya as a bridgehead for its expansion into Africa and the Sahel in particular. On 14 September France publicly criticised the military government of Mali for striking an agreement with Russian company Wagner to operate in the country. Speaking before the French parliament, FM Le Drian said Wagner’s presence in Mali is “incompatible with our presence”.