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| **DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO LIBYA** | | |
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**Number of pages: - 2 -**

**To: *Fernando GENTILINI, Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa***

**Subject: Libya – Weekly of 13/06/2022 – Key issues**

**SUMMARY**

* ***With the expiry date of the international road map for political transition fast approaching, this week’s UN-sponsored talks in Cairo between representatives of Libya’s two parliamentary chambers on a framework for elections are widely perceived to be a last ditch effort for compromise on Libya’s political future based on the existing institutional structures.***
* ***Parallel to this track, negotiations between General Haftar’s LNA, its political allies, and commanders of armed groups and military actors from Libya’s West continued in Morocco to explore avenues for compromise on the constitutional track as well as on the executive crisis with its protracted parallel government situation that threatens to deepen Libya’s political divisions and result in cementing a state of de-facto partition.***
* ***Political tensions are exacerbated by ubiquitous sabre rattling along with substantial military and militia build-up in strategically important locations. It appears that the current security developments predominantly serve political purposes or mid-term objectives in ongoing turf wars between local actors. Most observers remain convinced that the majority of Libya’s armed groups still wants to avoid open military confrontation. But as the context is highly volatile, clashes seem inevitable and prone to escalation.***

1. **ASSESSMENT**

Libyan stakeholders continue to position themselves for the period after 22/6/2022, when the existing international road map will expire. The current massive sabre rattling on both sides of the conflict is part and parcel of the game. While LNA-allied forces highlight the consolidation of their control over the East and South of the country, including most of Libya’s oil resources, the GNU is adamant to suggest that it enjoys sufficient military options to counter the LNA/HoR/GNS demands for political submission. Alleged attempts by the GNU to increase its military clout through the unification of command structures involving well-equipped Turkish-backed forces under its ChoD, will be hampered by the fact that substantial swaths of GNU territory remain under control of pro-GNS militia. As a result, the danger of violent clashes on all contact lines between military and militia actors remains high.

Closed-door negotiations successfully reduced the fallout from the ongoing oil blockade. It is symptomatic for Libya’s crisis, however, that solutions to the question of oil revenues and distribution thereof, which eventually benefit all stakeholders, are not being propagated in public. On the contrary, Libya’s political foes are adamant to keep the threat of cutting oil production or access to budget allocations as potent as possible. Maximum pressure and minimum compromise approaches remain the smallest common denominator among political actors in their quest for unlimited access to government funds.

While willingness to compromise would be crucial to break the political deadlock, actors appear poised to use the current negotiations to cement the status quo. For how long this approach can succeed in sustaining the delicate balance in Libya’s highly fragmented security architecture is impossible to predict.

The current last round of UN-led constitutional talks Cairo will be a litmus test whether Libya’s parliamentary institutions HoR and HCS can be part of a solution, or theycontinue to stand for the unsustainable and deeply unpopular status quo.

**III. DETAIL**

* + - 1. In the run-up to the next and last round of UN-led negotiations between the Libyan Parliament (HoR) and the High Council of State (HCS) in Cairo starting from 12/6/22 on a framework for elections, international efforts have picked up to capitalize on this opportunity before the expiration date of the existing international road map on 22/6/22. UN SASG Williams’ closing remarks during the last session of the Security Working Group (SWG) under the Berlin process in Tunis on 7/6/22 and her opening address yesterday in Cairo, urged Libya’s last remaining elected national institutions not to let the Cairo sessions go to waste, and finally heed the call of the Libyan people, who unequivocally demand national elections. Related P3+2+2 talks in Tunis reportedly reached agreement on working towards avoiding any power vacuum in Libya as a result of the expected heightened legitimacy crisis after the above expiration date. Also in Tunis, the Foreign Ministers of Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia, conducted joint consultations emphasizing the necessity to address the crisis by creating renewed institutional legitimacy through general elections. Over the weekend, Libya’s Presidential Council (PC) reportedly convened MPs in Tripoli urging them along the same lines of UN SAGS’s above messaging.
      2. There were various media reports on the resumption of meetings in Morocco between HoR Speaker Saleh and important Tripolitanian militia and military leaders. The talks that allegedly included LNA and regional actors, reportedly focussed on possible ways forward in the protracted constitutional and executive crisis against the backdrop of the ongoing parallel government situation.
      3. Libyan social media was awash with rumours and heated debates over alleged preparations by GNU forces for major military operations to seize oil installations in Libya’s East and South, and to rid Libya once and for all of Russian military and Wagner mercenary forces. The discussions were fuelled by frequent news on increased military cargo flights to Western Libya from Turkey, USA, UK and IT.
      4. The security situation remained tense with skirmishes between militia, troop re-deployments in the greater Tripoli area, and in Libya’s South. Although there were no clashes that resulted in large numbers of casualties, Libya’s capital suffered from disruptive violent confrontations with indiscriminate shooting that broke out over the weekend between armed groups (GNU affiliated forces vs. GNS allies) along their respective contact lines close to the city centre. The clashes caused substantial public outrage, given the panic among countless picnicking families in public parks that were trapped by the fighting. After the Turkish backed 444th Brigade intervened and facilitated the evacuation of terrified civilians from the area, representatives of the international community, as well as GNU and GNS actors condemned the irresponsible militia behaviour. GNS PM Bashaga called on the UN to make arrangements for the withdrawal of all heavy weaponry from the capital, while GNU PM Dbeiba tried to publicly associate himself with the 444th security measures that managed to stop the confrontation.
      5. On the occasion of multinational military exercises in Turkey that included, albeit limited, Libyan participation, GNU PM Dbeiba and ChoD Al-Haddad held talks with the Turkish Minister of Defence.
      6. The HoR Presidency summoned MPs for an official Libyan Parliament session in Sirte on 14/6/22 to debate the GNS budget. The invitation followed preparatory budget consultations between representatives of HoR and GNS that took place in Sirte during the last 2 weeks. It remains unclear whether HoR will reach the necessary quorum for a vote to pass the budget.
      7. Consultations on a mechanism to shield the Libyan economy including its vital oil sector and pertinent budgetary issues from the political crises continued among members of Economic Working Group under the Berlin Process (EU Co-Chair), as well as among Libyan institutions in the framework of a national committee tasked with solving the budgetary problems of Libya’s national oil company (NOC). International efforts to convene a timely EWG session in Cairo to achieve progress towards establishing the above mechanism have so far not been successful.
      8. Libya’s losses in oil revenues are currently estimated at approx 2.5 billion USD since the start of the recent oil blockade on 17/4/22, which was imposed by local actors, who are commonly presumed to act on orders issued by the LNA and its political allies. During last week, the blockade continued to keep approx. 25% of Libya’s production capacity off world energy markets, after having peaked at over 50% at the beginning of the month. However, towards the end of the week, local actors in Libya’s East announced additional blockades of oil export facilities, the impact of which remains to be determined.
      9. UNHCR received new instructions from Libya’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to suspend key operations in Libya. The instructions resembled those submitted to UNHCR by MoFA in November 2021, demanding this time to halt the registration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya. UNHCR has temporarily suspended such registrations, while seeking more clarity on the instructions and underlining the need to register migrants in order to process migrant evacuation flights from Libya.

*Signed-off: José Antonio SABADELL, HoD*