**Speaking points – Briefing by Director Stefano TOMAT to the UNSC – Operation IRINI**

*Introduction and political context*

* Dear President, dear Ambassadors, I would like to thank you for inviting me to join this timely discussion on Operation IRINI.
* Since last year’s EU briefing, significant progress has been achieved in Libya thanks to a combination of strong UN mediation efforts, international support through the Berlin Process and indeed renewed Libyan determination.
* The interim Government of National Unity, under the positive leadership of PM Dbeiba, is making clear efforts to steer the country towards a smooth transition. More than ever, the unity of the international community is paramount to help the Libyan authorities consolidate progress to date and thereby continue creating the conditions for a viable return to stability.
* The immediate focus is the preparations for national elections on 24 December 2021 and the adoption, to this effect, of the required legal basis and constitutional framework. The approval of a unified budget and agreement on sovereign positions by the House of Representatives are also particularly crucial.
* A stable security situation is the key precondition for progress to hold. The withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries is, in this context, a priority. The EU remains committed to supporting the Libyan Peace Process and the road to stability. And we are ready to do more to help Libya and further support the UN-led and Libyan-owned peace process if so requested.

*Implementation of UNSC 2292 and reference to UN latest reports (UNSG and PoE)*

* Let me use this opportunity to thank the UN SG for his appreciation for IRINI’s work in his latest report on the implementation of the arms embargo, as well as the Special Envoy mentioning the important role played by Operation IRINI in his oral report to the UNSC on the 21st of May.
* We have appreciated that the UN SG reiterated his call upon all Member States to complement the efforts of Operation IRINI to stem the illicit flow of arms to and from Libya by air, land, or sea, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.
* At the same time we share the concerns highlighted in the last report of the UN Panel of Expert where it identifies “*extensive, blatant and repeated violations of the arms embargo during the reporting period*". Strict compliance with the arms embargo, and full implementation of the ceasefire agreement, can help create the conditions for further advancement of the political process in Libya.
* Unfortunately, the situation in Libya remains fragile. Therefore, we are firmly convinced that the renewal of UNSCR 2292 and its subsequent resolutions, which authorizes the inspection of suspect vessels remains key to stabilization efforts.
* The adoption of UNSCR 2292 in 2016 and its renewal over the past 5 years have sent a strong signal of our collective endeavour to improve stability in and around Libya.

*Why IRINI is so important*

* In this regard, we believe that Operation IRINI has made and continues to make a significant contribution to this objective, i.e. to improve stability in and around Libya, by having contributed to substantially reducing the flow of arms by sea.
* "*The European Union military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini) has been the only regional arrangement acting under the above-mentioned authorizations during the reporting period*", as reported in the UN SG report about the implementation of the resolution 2526(2020).
* Operation IRINI is sharing this crucial information with the United Nations, operating within the framework of existing UN Security Council resolutions, notably UN Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016). **Legitimacy**
* The Operation has scrupulously monitored and documented arms embargo violations regardless of the source of violations, and informed accordingly to the UN Panel of Experts on Libya, as per the relevant UNSC Resolution. **Impartiality**
* Operation IRINI is implementing the UN arms embargo in full **transparency** and the proof of it is the SHADE MED(Shared Awareness and Deconfliction in the Mediterranean) events recently organised by the Operation in which the Operation presents publicly its tasks and actions.
* Operation IRINI is an undeniable security provider in the Mediterranean. the renewal of UNSC 2292 will avoid a security vacuum at a moment when the stabilization in Libya is what is most needed.

*Legal framework/impartiality of action/ operational results*

* Let me now focus on Operation IRINI and its actions. Operation IRINI, established last year in support of the Berlin Process and in particular to contribute to the implementation of the UN arms embargo, operates in full compliance with UNSCR 2292 (2016) and subsequent Resolutions, notably 2526(2020). The extension of IRINI’s mandate at the end of March for a further two years (until 31 March 2023) is a clear sign of EU support to the Libyan peace process.
* I would like to reiterate that Operation IRINI acts within the framework and in strict accordance with all relevant UNSC Resolutions as well as with the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. IRINI conducts its operations in a neutral and impartial manner, to enhance Libyan sovereignty, to shine a light on those who are violating the UN arms embargo and to set the proper conditions for peace and prosperity***.***
* Let me underline this aspect. The Operation has clearly demonstrated its full impartiality. It has scrupulously monitored and documented arms embargo violations, regardless of the source of violations. All of IRINI’s actions are transparently documented in the reports to the UN Sanctions Committee in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions. We will continue to fulfil our reporting obligations to the Sanctions Committee in the case of inspections, and we will continue to contribute to the UNSG reports, as we have done for the last report submitted to members.
* Operation IRINI has undeniably achieved significant results. IRINI conducted more than 3200 hailing (as of 19/05: 2335 hailing related to the arms embargo task, 913 hailing related to oil smuggling), 122 friendly approaches, 13 inspections, 1 cargo seized and 1 case of oil smuggling deterred. Therefore, the situation in the Mediterranean has improved and the trafficking of by sea has reduced thanks to the monitoring of Operation IRINI which has produced a deterrent effect. In doing so, it has acted in line with the highest standards of conduct and adhered to the spirit and the letter of all international maritime standards and laws.
* Overall Operation IRINI has good relations with the vast majority of flag states and the spirit is professional and cooperative. Let me underline that today the International Maritime Community (IMC) perceives IRINI as an effective Maritime Security Provider in the central Mediterranean Sea, as highlighted in the recent SHADEMED preparation conferences held by IRINI.
* IRINI also contributes to the implementation of UN measures to prevent the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. Through the enhanced use of radars and satellite imagery, Operation IRINI monitors as widely as possible potential violations of the arms embargo by air and land in full compliance with UNSCR 1970(2011) and reports on them to the UN. If the international community wants IRINI to do more, a revised UNSC resolution would be needed and the agreement foremost of the Libyans themselves.
* The disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks is another of Operation IRINI’s tasks, always in the framework of the relevant UNSC Resolutions and in accordance with international law.

*What is IRINI going to do in the near future*

* IRINI's mandate renewal is a strong signal of the European Union’s commitment and active support to peace and stability in Libya.
* Being a multifaceted Operation, IRINI’s mandate also includes support to the capacity building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy as a further contribution to the return of peace and stability. In this regard, we have noted the reference in the report of the SG that inspections should be complemented by training and capacity building in law enforcement tasks for the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. Let me reiterate IRINI’s readiness to help the Libyan authorities in this endeavour. We are thus hopeful to soon resume IRINI’s training task continuing the successful work of Operation Sophia, IRINI’s predecessor, and we are in touch with the Libyan authorities on this.

Conclusions

* Let me conclude: to thank the UN SG and Special Envoy for the acknowledgement of the good work done by Operation IRINI as well as UN members who support us. Now that Libya has embarked on the road to peace, our continued presence in the Central Mediterranean is more necessary than ever. The EU stands ready to continue to assist the UN and the International Community in these endeavours and calls for the support and unanimous renewal of the authorisation under UNSCR 2526(2020) to ensure the sustainability of what has already been achieved. I stand of course ready for your additional points and questions.