

Libyan authorities must shoulder the burden to support country's 'vulnerable' south

Despite years of promises to address the “vulnerable heart” of Libya – the country's south – conditions around its water and oil resource wealth have continued to deteriorate at “an alarming rate”, the United Nations envoy for the country told the Security Council.

Ghassan Salamé, the Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)) spoke to Council members on Friday via video conference in Tripoli about his recent visit to the south – the first since 2012.

“I heard first-hand from citizens who spoke movingly about the terrible hardships they endure”, he said – from the brutality of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Da’esh terrorist fighters to what he described as lakes of sewage in the region “due to the lack of investment in basic public infrastructure” and foreign mercenaries who slip through porous borders to common criminals alike that prey upon citizens and migrants.

While UNSMIL has built a taskforce to tackle the situation, and agencies are helping, “it is the Libyan authorities who must shoulder the burden” he stated.

Inaction leads to attacks against water pipelines and oil facilities, “which hurt Libya's slowly recovering economy”, and leave citizens vulnerable to armed violence.

Only Libyans themselves can plot a path out of this malaise, towards stability and prosperity – *UNSMIL head Ghassan Salamé*

“Wherever there is fighting, parties must take all measures to protect civilians and civilian facilities and adhere to International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law” or face the consequences, underscored Mr. Salamé.

The Special Representative relayed positive steps made by the Council of the Government of National Accords, including the appointment of Health and Local Governance Ministers, which have “improved our scope to support service delivery and reform”. However, country-wide security remains precarious.

Steady the economy, unite the nation

At the same time, while things are looking up on some economic fronts, such as “long queues of people standing for days outside of ATMs to get a meager fraction of their assets is now behind us” and rising oil production has driven revenue, Mr. Salamé underscored that disturbances in the South over

the lack of services have recently slowed production.

“It is essential that such grievances be addressed without resorting to threatening the national economy” he stressed.

UNSMIL has been returned “in full force”, he said, pointing to the reopening of the Benghazi office this month and the opening of an office in the South later this year, stating: “It is vital that we are here, in Libya”.

Underscoring the importance of the National Conference in tackling the country’s underlying dysfunctionalities, he implored Libya to see it as “a patriotic concern that transcends partisan and personal interests” and asked for the Council’s support.

“The political deadlock in Libya has been underpinned by a complex web of narrow interests, a broken legal framework and the pillaging of Libya’s great wealth”, said the Special Representative. “Only Libyans themselves can plot a path out of this malaise, towards stability and prosperity”.

Sanctions in full swing

For his part, Jürgen Schulz, chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, recalled the Committee’s visit in November – the first since the inception of the sanctions regime in 2011 – where they visited Tripoli, but were unable to stop in Beida because the airport was closed.

He also highlighted the timebound measures in Security Council [resolution 2441](#) to prevent illicit exports of petroleum, and said that sanctions criteria would include planning, directing, or committing acts of sexual and gender-based violence.

Mr. Schulz called on Member States to report back to the Committee on the implementation of travel ban and asset freeze measures.