

Statement by the President of the European Council Charles Michel at the Berlin Conference

I would like to thank Chancellor Merkel, and the organisers of today's conference, for your tireless work at this critical moment in the Libyan crisis.

It is encouraging to see the most influential regional and international partners come together in support of the UN-led efforts to find a political solution to the Libyan crisis.

As the EU has consistently stated, the only sustainable solution is through UN mediation efforts that put the needs of all Libyan people to the forefront.

I wish to reaffirm today the commitment of the European Union to the immediate cessation of hostilities in Libya in the interest of stability in its immediate neighborhood. We support the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Libya, and this in the interest of regional stability and prosperity – this is vital for Europe.

We have supported German-led mediation efforts launched last year in support of the UN peace process. I would like to pay special tribute to UN Special Representative Salame, who, under the authority of Secretary General Guterres, has made every effort to bring the parties to the negotiations table in order to find a political solution to the conflict.

We would like to encourage cooperation with the African Union and the League of Arab States.

In recent weeks, High Representative Borrell and I have worked to support the conclusion of a ceasefire and for the relaunch of the peace process.

We are committed to play an important role in the follow-up to the Berlin Conference. We represent Libya's main economic partner and primary investor. Libyan youths look to Europe when they study abroad. Libya's long term prosperity depends on these economic and cultural ties.

That is why the EU is gearing up to implement the outcome of the Berlin Conference. We are ready to mobilise our means where they are most needed.

In the short term, our contribution to the follow-up to this Conference, we are reflecting on how best to contribute to the monitoring of the ceasefire and the respect of the arms embargo. On the arms embargo, the EU was the only regional organisation to enforce it after 2016. We intend to continue that effort, working with our partners around this table, to cover all the corridors where the embargo is being violated.

In the longer term, as conditions allow, we hope to make progress in other areas of the proposed Conclusions:

1. political – to support a future national conference, the organisation of elections, and possible work on the constitution;
2. economic – actions focused on capacity building in national institutions, such as the National Oil Company, Central Bank and Libyan Investment Authority;
3. security sector reform (through our Common Security and Defence Policy instruments, including the existing civilian mission EUBAM);
4. and human rights – the EU wishes to bring its expertise.

The EU is ready to host a Senior Officials Meeting of the International Follow-up Committee tasked with implementing the Conference Conclusions. And we are ready to play an active role in the technical working groups created by this process.

Now it is time for all members of the international community to work together to consolidate the ceasefire and respect the UN arms embargo and also preserve the unity of Libya's financial institutions on which the unity of the country itself depends.

In the past, we have shown unity on a number of these objectives. For example, thwarting illegal attempts to purchase oil outside the official circuit. In other areas, we should have done better, in particular, on the arms embargo, as highlighted by the UN in its reports.

Moving forward, we should also avoid unilateral actions, such as the signing of agreements, which exacerbate the conflict. I am aiming at the actions that are incompatible with international law and which create a pretext for external interference in the Libyan conflict. The European Union has taken an unambiguous position on this, with the conclusions of the European Council on 12 December 2019.

Today we are committed to the Berlin process and the UN mediation efforts that put the needs of the Libyan people first. Today is an important step, but much work remains to be done. We are ready to contribute.