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Secretary Blinken

We write with concern about political tensions in Libya and how one of the few stabilizing forces in the country faces continuing pressures.

It is no secret that the National Oil Corporation(NOC) and its Chairman, Farhat Bengdara, are very valuable resources, including in guaranteeing the top revenue source for the country. But they are also forces for reform across the energy sector and beyond.

And the Chairman is unique among key leaders in the country; he has respect and support from both the transitional government in Tripoli and the government in the East.

Yet, there have been a number of reports in recent weeks that suggest the independence of NOC and its leadership may be in jeopardy.

Part of this threat comes from the enhanced activity by the Russian state in Libyan affairs, including in the energy sector.

Just recently, there was news of plans to have the Russian government build a refinery in Taftnet in the eastern part of the country. *Such a move would clearly bring more political instability to the country and would also undermine the NOC's ability to steer clear of the politics of division between the transitional government in Tripoli and the government in the East..*

Libya, of course, even in its tense state with an eastern faction claiming power and authority in conflict with the government in Tripoli, has every right to manage its bilateral relationship with Moscow.

But there are regional and global implications to Russia's actions in the country, most notably in the constant threat that energy production will be interrupted. And perhaps even more disturbing, a project such as the proposed Russian refinery would have not just economic but military repercussions in terms of Russian influence.

We believe that the National Oil Corporation(NOC) and its leadership are a critical force for stability and ultimate prosperity in the country.

The NOC Chairman has pledged to increase oil and gas productions substantially by 2030.

At the same time, he is instituting reforms at the NOC aimed at greater transparency,

productivity and anti-corruption.

And he recently joined the CEOs of other national oil companies in pledging to substantially reduce carbon use across the NOC, most notably with more sustainable recovery practices as well as the promotion of renewable energy.

Thus far in his tenure, he has been able to blunt attempts to jeopardize his independence.

But the threats are always real and often imminent. And they come from not only external forces but internal actors.

We hope you and the administration will do everything in your power to protect the independence of the NOC and its Chairman.

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