

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL
FOR SOMALIA
BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL
15 May 2018

Madam President,

At the outset, let me to express my best wishes to members of the Council and to Somalis around the world at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, a time of peace, forgiveness and compassion.

Events in the last 48 hours in Somalia highlight the complexity of the situation facing her people.

Today saw the conclusion in Mogadishu of the National Constitutional Convention, a milestone marked by strong commitment to an inclusive constitutional review process with clear and ambitious targets. This augurs well for strengthening the rule of law, stability and advancing reconciliation.

Today happens to be the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Somali Youth League. Celebratory events around the country are highlighting the needs and ambitions of today's young Somalis, many of whom lack education and job opportunities and, as a result, feel marginalized.

In Baidoa, federal member state presidents are meeting in the Council of Interstate Cooperation to prepare for engagement with the federal government on critical issues such as security, resource and revenue sharing and relations with Gulf partners.

The African Union and United Nations Joint Review team is meeting Somali and international actors here. The focus of discussions has been the implications for AMISOM of the national security transition plan.

In Beletwayne, humanitarian colleagues are working round the clock with local authorities and communities to address the catastrophic consequences of floods for over 200,000 people.

And in the Tukaraq region of Sool, forces from "Somaliland" and Puntland have been exchanging fire, with an as yet unknown number of casualties reported. There is a serious danger that this conflict could escalate with devastating implications for local people as well all Somalis.

Madam President,

There is a lot going on. To its great credit, unforeseen events are not deflecting the Federal Government from its determination to pursue an agenda embracing economic and financial reform and revenue generation, security sector reform, and inclusive politics, all with a view to an irreversible and positive transformation of the country's prospects.

This agenda deserves timely and coherent support from the Council and Somalia's international partners, while recognizing that the many risks facing the country need to be managed and mitigated.

The Government has vigorously pursued the objective of putting the country on a sounder economic and financial keel. In February the International Monetary Fund welcomed progress under the Staff-Monitored

Programme and reiterated its support to help Somalia reach a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) decision point as soon as feasible.

The High-Level Roundtable on Somalia on 19 April in Washington DC opened the path towards pre-arrears clearance grant. This was a vote of confidence in the government's achievements in engaging with the private sector, improving public financial management and increasing domestic revenues. A number of partners are already providing or now plan to increase budget support, including the EU, Norway, Sweden and Turkey.

More resources are needed to address the root causes of fragility, chronic poverty and low human development affecting the bulk of the population. Longer-term investment is needed to build resilience to climate shocks, and break the cycle of recurrent crises that cause so much suffering and undermine the state-building processes.

The humanitarian situation is not as bad as a year ago, but by any global measure it remains very serious.

The *Gu* rains and flooding have affected more than 718,000 people in the central and southern regions of Somalia. The consequences of the floods include large scale population displacement, economic damage and diseases including cholera. A Rapid Response allocation to address flood response of up to US\$5.1 million has been endorsed, and is pending final approval.

The 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan calls for US\$1.5 billion. As of today, the Plan is only 24 per cent funded, and therefore inadequate to support on-going flood relief operations. Allow me to use this occasion to appeal to international donors once again to provide generous and timely support, while thanking them for the prompt and unprecedented amount of funding that enabled the prevention of famine last year.

Madam President,

Success in raising revenues, attracting grants and budget support provides a firm basis not only for investment and creating jobs but tackling Somalia's security and state building challenges, and for strengthening relations with Federal Member States, not least through resource and revenue sharing agreements.

Insecurity remains a constant concern. Despite increasing pressure on the group, including an uptick in airstrikes, Al Shabaab has continued to demonstrate its ability to execute deadly terrorist attacks against civilian and military targets including AMISOM, notably through the use of IEDs.

The factors that breed terrorism, including youth unemployment, corruption, a sense of injustice and unresolved conflicts, cannot be left until later. The truly formidable challenge facing Somalia and its AU and other partners is simultaneously to fight the insurgency while reforming the security sector.

The President is leading defence reform. The government is taking bold steps including biometric registration, payroll reform and operational readiness assessments, while recognising that much more needs to be done.

The list includes, as the Prime Minister has put it, turning the National Security Architecture into construction, agreeing the basis upon which regional forces will be integrated into the army and police, passing essential legislation, asset inventories and weapons management, transparent procurement procedures and greater accountability.

A measure of progress is that the Security Transition Plan was approved by Somalia's Council of Ministers on 19 April. The Plan is designed to build Somali operational and institutional capacity not only for the armed forces but in areas of the most basic security concern to the population, including justice, accountable local governance, freedom of movement and service provision.

The Plan was endorsed by the AU Peace and Security Committee on April 30th, and welcomed by all partners at the High-Level Security Meeting in Brussels on May 2nd. The imperative is now to implement it. Critical will be ensuring national ownership and leadership of the Plan through the NSC structures, under Somali leadership.

AMISOM continues to play an indispensable role, at great human cost, in protecting population centres, main supply routes and Somalia's overall political progress. The SRCC will shortly address the many challenges that entails.

Suffice to say that successful security transition will require not just deep reform of the Somalia security forces but also, as the AU Commission Chairperson and UN Secretary-General's Envoys noted, transformation of AMISOM, whether relating to more flexible joint operations and combat mentoring, greater emphasis on policing, adequate enablers and force multipliers or stronger accountability systems, whether for assets or relating to human rights. More flexible operational support by UNSOS will also be needed, along with predictable financing.

The AU/UN joint review is likely to underscore that the foremost requirement for success is the need for unity of purpose among Somali actors, as well as between the Somalis, the AU, the TCCs, and principal security partners. The Comprehensive Approach to Security structures are designed to ensure coherent and coordinated approaches.

Madam President,

Somali politics remain as lively as ever, punctuated by crises relating to competition for power and resources, complicated by the weakness of Somali institutions; ambiguities in the Provisional Federal Constitution, particularly with regard to relations between the three branches of government; the growing pains associated with the emergence of federal arrangements; and the role of untraceable money in the political marketplace.

The most prominent fault lines have related to the impact of the Gulf dispute, the role of parliamentarians in politics, and in relations between the leaders of the Federal Member States and the Federal Government. These issues both overlap each other and have distinct contours.

The stand-off between the Federal Government and parliament was resolved in early April when the Speaker of the House of the People resigned; the new Speaker was elected peacefully and inaugurated last week. This creates an opportunity to fast forward the legislative agenda, taking advantage of a phenomenon rare in Somali politics – unity between the President, the Prime Minister, and the Speaker.

But as with tensions that continue between the Federal Government and Federal Member States, structural deficits may again contribute to future crises. These need to be addressed, including through the Electoral Law and Political Party Law, moving towards a constitutionally compliant forum that brings the Federal Government and Federal Member State leadership together and measures to regulate motions of no confidence, and impeachment procedures as well as nothing less than a campaign to fight corruption.

The role of the UN and international community continues to be to insist upon adherence to the rule of law, inclusive processes, and zero tolerance for the use of violence by any party in the resolution of political disputes. Sometimes this results in us being accused by one side or the other of being biased, but I believe the record will speak for itself in terms of consistent support for a gradual change in Somali political culture.

Relations among powerful Somali actors are being tested as a result of the Gulf dispute, with actors taking positions that accord with their economic interests, security and political objectives.

Somalia needs respectful relations with all its international partners, recognizing that it is the prerogative of the Federal Government to lead foreign policy, and that Member States need to be fully consulted if they are to support policies that have a direct bearing on them. The best way to minimize the impact of the Gulf dispute is through greater Somali unity.

It is ordinary Somalis that will suffer most from a failure by political leaders to resolve these issues, whether through the constitutional review or through *ad interim* agreements.

The upcoming National Security Council provides an opportunity to do this under the President's leadership. Disputes that result in reduction of aid flows and economic ties, or that increase tensions and the risk of violent conflict only play into the hands of extremists and retard the state building agenda that Somalia has set itself in the coming year.

Madam President,

Regarding the dispute in Tukaraq, the facts are still coming in, but fighting has erupted and there are reports of deaths and casualties.

I associate myself fully with President Farmaajo's call a few hours ago for an immediate ceasefire and a resumption of political dialogue between the leaders of "Somaliland" and Puntland. In the last few days, both President Bihi of "Somaliland" and President Gaas of Puntland have assured me that they want to avoid and cannot afford hostilities. The approach of Ramadan makes a ceasefire particularly important.

At risk is not only the welfare of hundreds of thousands of people and the possibility of mass displacement at a time when humanitarian funds are already low, but the remarkable progress that both "Somaliland" and Puntland have made over the years. Conflict could unravel more than 20 years of relatively peaceful co-existence.

I urge Council members to engage with all concerned to reduce tensions and discourage those who may be seeking advantage from this situation.

Madam President,

The Tukaraq crisis could distract attention from the progress that is being made in resolving conflicts elsewhere, notably in Galkacyo which is more peaceful today than for many years, as well as in Marka, Lower Shabelle, and in Galmudug, where despite the road bumps, there is forward momentum.

The government is moving forward with a national reconciliation framework, supported by the UN and other partners, recognizing that the many conflicts in Somalia, whether over resources, clan disputes or federal state formation, need to benefit from the engagement of civil society, women and youth groups, business as well as traditional elders and conflict mediation experts.

Madam President,

Unfortunately, human rights situation remains deeply problematic, with many groups particularly vulnerable including women, IDPs, minorities, and journalists.

The signing of the Joint Programme on Human Rights in February is a positive step to strengthen protection frameworks. I urge the Federal Government to move the process of establishing the Human Rights Commission forward.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict remains dire, with a marked increase in abductions, recruitment and use of children.

Impunity for sexual violence continues to be of great concern. I strongly urge the Federal Government to enact the Sexual Offences Bill, which will strengthen the legal framework and reduce impunity for crimes of sexual violence.

Madam President,

In conclusion, the people of Somalia continue to face extraordinary challenges. They are fortunate in having a Government that is serious about tackling these. Key to success will be unity among Somali leaders complimented by the coherent support of this Council and the broader international community.

Thank you, Madam President.