



United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UN SOM)

Briefing to the UN Security Council by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia Mr. Michael Keating

New York, 19 April 2016

Mr. President,

It is an honour to be here with H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Allow me to acknowledge the unfailing cooperation and friendship that he has extended to me, and to recognise his leadership role at this pivotal moment in Somalia's history.

The last time I addressed you I had only been in the job for a few days. I said then that success in 2016 would depend upon seizing opportunities that political progress could bring. In the last few weeks the President and leaders of Somalia have done just that. And progress – though not irreversible – is being made.

Mr. President,

Last week, Somali leaders from all federal member states and interim regional administrations reached agreement on the electoral model to be used later this year. This significant achievement paves the way for practical planning. I commend the statesmanship shown by the National Leadership Forum. And I welcome the Federal Government's engagement of Puntland to address its concerns in the agreement signed in Garowe on April 3rd, which cleared the way forward.

The electoral process envisaged for 2016 will be significantly different to 2012. The electoral college will be one hundred times larger. There will be a genuine choice of candidates. Voting will take place not just in Mogadishu, but in each of the capitals or seats of government of the existing and emerging federal member states. A two-tier structure comprising federal and state-level representatives will implement the process. And 30% of the seats in Parliament are being reserved for women.

Much remains to be done in a very short period. For example the admirable commitment to reserve 30% of parliamentary seats for women necessitates the identification of specific seats, in a balanced manner, to be contested exclusively by women. Realising this commitment in practice will not be easy in a clan based model. But it could mark a major milestone in making women's political empowerment and leadership a reality.

Once the cabinet has formalised the NLF decision, it will go to the Federal Parliament. We call upon Parliament to expedite endorsement of the model to allow timely implementation. I welcome the continued commitment by Somali leaders, in line with this Council's expectations, that there will be no extension of constitutionally mandated term limits.

The 2016 electoral model will be literally unique, a once-off. It is in every sense a midway point between the elections of 2012, when only 135 electors selected 275 MPs, and 2020 when all Somalis will have a say. Work is now underway to that end. Somali leaders have agreed to adopt a political roadmap for the period 2016 to 2020, including for civil voter registration, boundary demarcation, strengthening of independent electoral bodies and preparation of relevant legislation, including relating to political parties.

Mr President,

There are many outstanding issues. The state formation process in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle has encountered difficulties and delays. The international community is eager to support an inclusive agreement reached among clan leaders in both regions. We hope that the formation of this next state administration will take place soon. That will set the stage for agreeing the status of the Federal capital.

The breakthrough in the electoral process is generating broader momentum. The technical review of Somalia's Provisional Federal Constitution has advanced. The first reading of constitutional amendments in Parliament took place in February. Regional consultations are now underway. Politically contentious issues are scheduled to be discussed at the next Leadership Forum meeting in May. That discussion will immediately precede a ten day National Constitutional Conference, to be held in Garowe, Puntland.

This activity amounts to a historic opportunity for all Somalis to contribute to shaping the political and legal foundations of their country. Some major issues may only be addressed after the electoral process. But already there has been significant developments. The rule of law and its centrepiece, the Federal constitution, will be the strongest guarantee of long-term stability and democracy in Somalia.

Mr President,

This progress is taking place amid great insecurity – another reason why progress is reversible. Too many civilians and too many soldiers are dying. Al Shabaab remains a potent threat. An Al Shabaab incursion into the coastal area of Puntland in mid-March highlighted the vulnerability of

the north. It also beamed a spotlight onto the recruitment practices and abuse of children by Al Shabaab – which is beyond appalling. The attack was contained thanks to the swift actions of Puntland’s forces and the support of the Federal Government.

Although facing significant casualties, AS continues to carry out repeated asymmetric and conventional attacks. They will try to disrupt an electoral process that they see rightly as threatening their agenda. I pay tribute to the bravery of AMISOM and its troops, and to the courage of the Somali security forces and Somali people in confronting Al Shabaab. They need and deserve our continued support. The trilateral partnership – between the Federal Government, the African Union, and the United Nations – remains a cornerstone of the peace- and state-building endeavour in Somalia.

I am encouraged by the commitments made by AMISOM troop contributing countries when they met in Djibouti in February. There is recognition that command and control arrangements and Force Headquarters must be strengthened, including by placing critical enablers under the Force Commander’s tasking authority. I hope a new Force Commander will be in place soon.

I have just come from Addis Ababa where the first AU-UN Task Force on strengthening AMISOM was held. This will advance our combined efforts to meet the shortfall in AMISOM funding, to strengthen its capacity and to secure the electoral process.

The SRCC and I have identified common strategic objectives, in line with Resolution 2245. Compacts between me and the Head of UNSOS, as well as between the head of UNSOS and the SRCC, are being finalised for the delivery of support to UNSOM and to AMISOM, respectively. We are committed to implementing the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, to promoting respect for broader human rights, and to following up on allegations and ensuring accountability. UNSOS’s own capacity is being strengthened including through deployment of a team of UK military experts from this month.

Mr President,

The Federal President is committed to strengthening Somali security capabilities. I applaud him for this; it is a complex and sensitive issue, absolutely fundamental to state building, and to consolidating progress. I am therefore pleased that the Federal Government has developed a National Threat Assessment and a National Security Policy. These have been shared with the regional authorities within the country. Recommendations will hopefully be agreed at the next National Leadership Forum meeting in May. Detailed work will still have to be done on financially sustainable plans for the military, police and justice and corrections systems.

Political subscription to a national security architecture must be complemented by police, justice and corrections models that are appropriate for Somalia’s unique circumstances and its federal future. I am delighted to report that a new policing model emerged last month from consultations between the Federal Government and regional states and administrations. This includes roles and responsibilities at both federal and state levels and accountability to civilian authorities.

I share the President's concerns about inconsistent payment of salaries to security sector personnel. Last month international security partners met with him and the Minister of Finance to discuss coordination of salaries and stipends. Timely and regular pay, by electronic means, and transfer to a unified biometric registration system is the way forward. There is also scope for greater coherence by international partners to supporting the Somali security sector on the basis of the security architecture and plans now under discussion.

Mr. President,

Somalia's economy is dependent upon favourable weather and the entrepreneurship of her people, including in the diaspora. Building greater trust and identifying the mutual benefits from stronger state/business relationships could yield enormous benefits, including to strengthen institutions that can deliver greater security, financial accountability, a favourable macroeconomic and regulatory environment and basic services such as energy, education and vocational training. These are in the interests both of business and of young Somalis, most of whom lack job prospects.

Somalia continues to make progress in economic management. The Anti-Money Laundering Bill was signed into law in February. Empty seats on the Central Bank Board have been filled. There is a long way to go, including to tackle corruption and reduce financial leakage. But the direction of travel is encouraging.

Recognising this, last week the International Monetary Fund announced its intention to propose a Staff Monitored Program. This will help Somalia to establish the track record required to begin the process of debt relief, and eventually eligibility for concessional lending from the International Financial Institutions.

The Federal Government is central to moving this agenda forward. Success would yield benefits for all parts of the country, helping to attract both public and private investment in areas that will boost Somalia's competitiveness and ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. We are grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations for calling upon Somalia's external creditors to accelerate preparations for in-depth discussions on eligibility at a high-level Roundtable chaired at the Spring Meetings last week in Washington.

Mr President,

Somalia's security and prosperity depend upon success in reversing dependency upon aid and in addressing the root causes of fragility, conflict and violent extremism. A comprehensive political strategy is required, embracing economic investment in the drivers of growth, job creation, education including for girls and women, the rule of law and respect for human rights – as well as in capable security and counter terrorism forces.

This is a formidable agenda. It requires commitment both by Somalia's political and traditional leaders as well as concerted support from its neighbours and international partners. It also requires addressing short term realities

One of those realities is drought, now affecting Somaliland and Puntland. Drought in 2011 triggered a famine that resulted in the deaths of some 260,000 people. This must not happen again.

On top of acute food insecurity, continuing drought could have a negative impact on broader security — strengthening Islamist jihadists currently on the back foot in those areas — and increase displacement and migrant flows.

Timely and appropriate action now will mitigate the possibility of another catastrophe. The resources needed to tackle the problem now are immeasurably less than the costs later - whether measured in money or, more importantly, lives. Somali authorities have established national and regional drought committees to raise funds and coordinate the response.

However, this is not enough. Humanitarian organisations have received only US\$145 million of the \$885 million in the consolidated appeal for 2016. On 31 March, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia Peter de Clercq launched a Call for Aid seeking US\$105 million to step up drought response. Donors are responding, for which we are grateful, but so much more is needed.

Mr President,

The challenges faced by Somalis are formidable. The progress is real but reversible. The state formation and electoral processes remain vulnerable spoilers. AMISOM needs more support and cannot stay forever.

So we must do our best to make sure that the progress is not reversed – to get the electoral process for 2016 completed and elections in 2020 prepared; to build national capacity of the Somalis to take over from AMISOM; and to generate the jobs and revenues needed for a sustainable state.

Our – and my – efforts to do this depend in large part upon the unity of this Council, for which I must thank you. It also depends upon the coherence of the broader international community, not only the African Union but also IGAD and the European Union, and also Somalia's principal bilateral partners and neighbours.

I look forward to the visit of the Security Council next month, and to joining the leaders of Somalia to ensure a brighter future for all Somalis.

Thank you.