

SRSG JAMES SWAN

REMARKS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA

21 August 2019

Thank you, Madam President, Members of the Council,

I am pleased to address you for the first time, since assuming my duties in June. I want to begin by affirming to you my full commitment to implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia approved by the Council in Resolution 2461, as well as other relevant Council resolutions. I also want to stress at the onset the central importance in all that we do of key crosscutting priorities, including human rights, women, peace and security, youth engagement, and inclusion of civil society, among other issues.

Since my arrival in Somalia, I have been grateful for the warm welcome by the Federal Government, Federal Member States, and all of the Somalis I have had the pleasure of meeting. I also appreciate the collaboration to date of the international partners in Somalia, and look forward to reinforcing it. I am particularly grateful for the counsel and close partnership of Ambassador Francisco Madeira, the Special Representative of the African Union Commission Chairperson, and I pay tribute to the continued heroic sacrifice of AMISOM forces for the cause of peace in Somalia.

Madam President,

Since my return to a country I have followed closely for many years, I have been impressed by many visible signs of progress. I have visited each of the Federal Member States and 'Somaliland', where I had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of their leaders and people. In my travels around the country I have observed many examples of recovery, development, improving security, and functional state institutions. I have been deeply impressed – even moved – by the resilience, commitment, and courage of Somalis I have encountered.

This progress is testimony to the ambitious -but achievable- peacebuilding and state-building agenda, to which Somalia's leaders are committed.

Somalia and its international partners are eager to see this progress advance between now and the end of 2020 through constitutional reform; advances in security operations and security sector reforms; achievement of debt relief leading to predictable financing for development; and delivery on the anticipated national elections.

We must acknowledge the gains made to date towards achieving these priorities.

Yet, the window to achieve further necessary progress on these issues is narrowing. Key benchmarks risk falling behind agreed timelines. Further progress may be delayed without renewed dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders.

Setting the stage to achieve these goals between now and 2020 will require accelerated efforts in the next several months. This will also require political consensus and compromise among Somali leaders at the national level – both the Executive and Legislative - and particularly between the Central Government and Federal Member States, on how best advance.

We look forward to the next meeting of the Somalia Partnership Forum, in October, which will provide an opportunity for Somalia and its international partners to agree on the priority areas for action and to catalyze progress on Somalia's state-building priorities between now and the end of 2020.

Madam President,

The national electoral cycle in 2020/21 offers an opportunity to advance decisively the process of democratization. Technical preparations continue to make progress, a draft electoral law is under review by the Federal Parliament, and the National Independent Electoral Commission is preparing for voter registration.

I encourage Parliament's House of the People to expedite its review and adoption of the electoral bill, including further consultations to achieve broad political support. To that end, I welcome the resumption of cooperation between the two Houses of Parliament.

I also encourage the Federal Government to establish an electoral security coordination task force, to develop the arrangements by which the election will be secured.

We also urge that the empowerment of women in the political processes should be enhanced.

Even as we look ahead to national elections in 2020/21, we must be attentive to electoral processes in the Federal Member States. We are following closely developments in Galmudug where, with the support of the Federal Government of Somalia, a reconciliation forum is being put in place. We encourage this effort to achieve a broad-based consensus on Galmudug's electoral process.

In Jubaland, we continue to urge a single, agreed, consensual electoral process, without which there is an increased risk of instability if there is a contested outcome. The UN and other international partners have pressed all sides to seek compromise on an agreed path forward, but time is now regrettably very short. Disorder in Jubaland would place in jeopardy not only gains made in that Member State, but also many critical national priorities, including preparations for the 2020 elections, the fight against al-Shabaab and the development agenda.

Whatever the outcome in Jubaland tomorrow, I implore all stakeholders to show restraint, refrain from violence, and resolve grievances through dialogue.

As noted at the beginning of my remarks, I visited 'Somaliland' in July 27-28 and had informative consultations with its leaders. We continue to encourage dialogue between authorities in Hargeisa and Mogadishu, and others, building on past efforts.

Madam President,

The Federal Constitution, once adopted, will provide a common vision for all Somalis, while defining clearly the respective roles of the organs of the federal state, and relations with and between federal member states.

Progress has been made in the technical review process but Somalis need now to pursue an inclusive dialogue to reach agreement on outstanding critical issues,

including the allocation of powers, intergovernmental relations, system of governance, resource sharing, and the status of Mogadishu.

Madam President,

The security situation in Somalia remains a serious concern. The brutal al-Shabaab attack on the Benadir Regional Administration on July 24 served as a painful reminder of the threat that terrorism poses to progress. I pay tribute to the victims of this and other attacks.

Yet, there are encouraging security developments. Somali Security Forces, working with AMISOM, the United Nations and international partners, are making progress in recovering and stabilizing areas of Lower Shabelle, on the periphery of Mogadishu that had been held by al-Shabaab. These operations have shown the effectiveness of this collaboration and reinforced the commitment of key security actors to the Comprehensive Approach to Security.

The operations are simultaneously supporting implementation of the Transition Plan and National Security Architecture by advancing institutional reforms designed to generate, professionalize and sustain Somali military and police forces, as well as rule of law and justice institutions.

Madam President,

Somalia is making steady progress towards economic recovery, and efforts are ongoing to improve the country's economic resilience as well as the inclusiveness of this growth. Government authorities have made important strides towards improving fiscal performance and strengthening governance. Decision Point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) is within sight. The Federal Government of Somalia now needs to ensure that it achieves the remaining pre-conditions for reaching Decision Point in early 2020, which will require close collaboration with Parliament to pass necessary legislation, and with Federal Member States on the fiscal federal framework.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis in Somalia remains among the most protracted in the world. Currently, 2.2 million Somalis are facing acute food insecurity, and 2.6 million are internally displaced, fleeing conflict and drought.

The UN and Somali Government together issued a Drought Impact Response Plan requesting US\$686 million, of which about US\$350 million has been secured. I call on Member States to urgently resource this Plan. At the same time, we must focus on legitimate Somali priorities for longer-term development, as reflected in the Recovery and Resilience Framework and preparations for the new National Development Programme.

Madam President,

Almost eight months have passed since 1 January, when the UN family was shaken by a mortar attack on our Mogadishu compound.

Since that day, we have made substantial progress to enhance the safety and security of UN personnel. Staff security and staff welfare will remain a priority for me throughout my tenure.

Allow me to express my appreciation to my Deputy, Raisedon Zenenga, for his leadership in the challenging months before my arrival. I also thank the United Nations Support Office in Somalia for its steadfast assistance to AMISOM, the Somali National Army and the UN family in Somalia.

Madam President,

Building sustainable peace and stability in a country that has suffered the trauma and shocks that Somalia has experienced over many decades will take perseverance and patience. With the continued support of this Council, and the wider international community, UNSOM remains committed to assisting Somalis on their journey towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

Thank you.