

**Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Swan,
Remarks at the Meeting of the OIC Contact Group,
Doha, 3 November 2019**

Honorable Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I extend thanks to our Qatari hosts from their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for this meeting. I also want to express our solidarity with the Somali victims of the tragic flooding in Belet Weyne. The United Nations family — including the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Program, among others —has responded swiftly to provide assistance, thanks to generous support from donor partners.

Honorable Chairman,

On behalf of the United Nations, thank you for the opportunity to address this meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Contact Group on Somalia.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is a key partner of Somalia, as it continues to make progress toward becoming a peaceful and secure state.

The decision by the OIC to establish a full mission in Mogadishu is a welcome reinforcement of its support to Somalia. I congratulate Ambassador Mohamed Bamba M. Boba for his appointment to head this mission.

Honorable Chairman,

The Somali Government has renewed its commitment to an ambitious state-building and peace-building agenda, as endorsed at the Somalia Partnership Forum it hosted last month in Mogadishu, with active participation by the OIC.

Somalis have charted a course for political reforms, security and stabilization, and economic recovery and development. Their commitment is matched by that of international partners to provide coherent support.

Honorable Chairman,

Impressive progress on public financial management reforms means that Somalia is now very close to achieving decision point on debt relief.

Debt relief will benefit Somalis across the country by enabling access to greater resources from International Financial Institutions, laying the foundation for more inclusive growth. We also commend the Government's adoption of the new National Development Plan, which will guide both national and partner efforts in the coming years.

Honorable Chairman,

The Federal Government has committed to finalize the Electoral Bill by the end of this year and to hold universal suffrage parliamentary elections in the last quarter of 2020.

The National Independent Electoral Commission is making plans for voter registration. An Electoral Security Task Force has been established.

However, there is as yet no broad political agreement among Somali leaders on the electoral model. It is imperative that consensus is reached quickly, so that resources can be mobilized and technical preparations advance on time.

Honorable Chairman,

Somalia has also committed to adopt an amended Federal Constitution by June 2020, and has made some technical progress toward this goal.

Yet, there is no clear national consensus on the character of the federal model. Remaining contentious issues include the allocation of powers and the structure of government, among others.

It is important for Federal and state leaders to resolve these outstanding questions, in consultation with a broad cross-section of society.

Honorable Chairman,

Improved security is central to further progress in Somalia. There have been some welcome gains in recent months in dislodging Al-Shabaab from areas of Lower Shabelle region. Yet, attacks by Al-Shabaab persist and remain of great concern.

Further efforts are needed on institutional reforms and –especially – to generate more Somali security forces. This will permit Somalis to assume primary security responsibility as agreed with partners in the Security Transition Plan.

Honorable Chairman,

Progress on these and other national priorities requires inclusive dialogue and political consensus at all levels of government -- especially between the Federal Government and Federal Member States.

Despite challenges, Somalia has achieved significant progress and has the potential to make further important gains in 2020.

The United Nations remains committed to accompanying Somalia on its path to peace and development. At this critical moment, Somalia needs the unwavering support of all its friends. We are honoured to join with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and other partners, on this common endeavour to benefit the Somali people. I thank you.