

SRSG James Swan

Remarks to the Security Council on the Situation in Somalia

21 November 2019

Madam President, Members of the Council:

I congratulate you Madame President on the presidency for the month of November 2019. I am honoured to report to you today on the situation in Somalia.

Let me begin by recognizing the important progress achieved in Somalia over the past decade. This progress has included building national and federal member state institutions; scoring significant military gains against Al Shabaab; and enhancing economic growth and improved public sector management.

Somalis want to see this progress consolidated in 2020 and indeed made irreversible. So do their international partners and friends.

I am pleased to confirm a number of examples of further progress since my last report to the Council three months ago. Somalia remains on the path to debt relief, with favorable assessments by the International Monetary Fund and strong creditor support. A new National Development Plan was adopted by the Government in September and will guide international partner programs. Somali National Army troops have held territory they captured from al Shabaab earlier this summer in Lower Shabelle. On the diplomatic front, President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' and his Kenyan counterpart President Uhuru Kenyatta, met last week and announced plans to normalize bilateral relations that had been strained since February.

To boost prospects for further advances in 2020, the Somali Government hosted the Somalia Partnership Forum on October 1st and 2nd. The Partnership Forum identified critical priorities for 2020 and defined specific objectives and timelines in a 'Mutual Accountability Framework' agreed with partners.

Madam President,

Progress on the ambitious agenda for 2020 will require a high degree of political consensus. This will entail dialogue and compromise between the central government and federal member states; between the executive and legislature; between current office-holders and those now out of power; and between elite leaders and those community elders, civil society organizations, women's and youth groups who give voice to so many Somalis.

After more than a year without effective cooperation between the Central Government and key Federal Member States, this situation has become an obstacle to improving and achieving important national priorities. Somalia's leaders must act urgently to break this stalemate between the Center and the Federal Member States in the interest of the nation.

Madam President,

Political dynamics in Somalia are increasingly driven by a focus on the 2020 election. I wish to underscore the critical importance of Parliament passing the electoral code and adopting amendments to the political parties law before the end of December. Any delay in this timeline puts the 2020 electoral calendar at risk.

I commend the government for confirming an initial tranche of financing toward costs related to voter registration. I also commend the

government for naming in September the National Electoral Security Task Force, which must now urgently begin its important work.

While this technical progress is encouraging, I must again underscore the need to forge a broad political consensus on the electoral system for 2020. In this regard, I very much welcome yesterday's meeting between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' and his two predecessors and encourage more such consultations.

As the election approaches, I call on authorities at all levels of government to ensure that political space is preserved. Citizens must have the right to speak out, to access media, to organize and meet, and to travel to engage fellow Somalis throughout the country.

At the same time, I call on all political leaders to act with responsibility, to eschew violence, and to protect the integrity of national institutions.

Madam President,

Somalis are also paying close attention to reconciliation and electoral processes at the Federal Member State level. Reconciliation efforts in Galmudug state now face challenges as competition intensifies over the composition of the parliament. In Jubaland, tensions stemming from the disputed electoral process in August continue to pose risks of violence, clan divisions, and even external intervention, if not carefully managed. We urge that these situations be addressed through dialogue, compromise and pragmatism.

With respect to relations with Somaliland, we urge authorities in both Mogadishu and Hargeisa to focus on the needs of the population and to remain open-minded about new initiatives to encourage dialogue. With parliamentary elections also expected in Somaliland in 2020, it is

important that political freedoms and human rights be respected there, too.

Madam President,

The Federal Government has committed to adopt an amended Federal Constitution by June 2020. Somali leaders and stakeholders must now redouble efforts to complete this foundational document. It must address central issues of the federal model, such as allocation of powers, the structure of government, and the status of the capital, Mogadishu, and guarantee women's political representation.

Peace and stability in Somalia require strong institutions to protect the human rights of citizens and build trust in the state. I call on the Central Government and Federal member states to reach agreement on the Justice and Corrections Model, and establish the Constitutional Court, Judicial Services Commission, and the Human Rights Commission. Among other priority legislation, I urge expedited consideration and passage of the Sexual Offenses Bill by parliament.

Madam President,

Insecurity remains a major challenge to progress in Somalia. Al Shabaab continues to execute deadly terrorist attacks against civilians as well as military targets.

To disrupt attacks in Mogadishu, the Somali National Army, with support from AMISOM and international partners began operations in April to recapture territory from al Shabaab in Lower Shabelle region. After its last offensive in August, the Somali National Army has successfully held its ground despite repeated al Shabaab counter attacks. Additional force generation is now required not only to

continue these advances but also to support other institutional reforms needed to implement the Security Transition Plan.

Madam President,

On the economic front, Somalia is on track to reach decision point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative by early next year. The Federal Government and Federal Member States have cooperated fully at the Finance Minister level to progress toward this shared goal.

I welcome the Federal Government's adoption of the new National Development Plan. It was thoroughly consulted with Federal Member States and international partners alike. Donors have pledged to align their programs to this plan.

While the Government and partners remain committed to the longer-term peacebuilding and development agenda for the people, Somalia regrettably continues to be hard hit by humanitarian crises. Thanks to the leadership of the Somali government's humanitarian team and the generosity of many international partners, lifesaving support has been afforded to those most in need. We express our steadfast solidarity with those Somalis affected by these recurring crises.

Madam President,

In closing, I commend the courage and tenacity of Somali and AMISOM forces in their continued efforts to improve security throughout the country. I underscore the centrality of respect for human rights in all of our collective efforts in Somalia. I reiterate the importance of women, youth, and civil society as vital partners in building Somalia's future.

I thank you.