

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia
Statement to the Security Council
24 February 2020

Mr. President,

2020 has the potential to be a transformative year for Somalia. A number of key national priorities are due to conclude and will impact Somalia's trajectory for years to come.

Last October at the Somalia Partnership Forum, Somalia and its international partners agreed the main priorities on which Somalia 'must not fail' in 2020.

These include achieving debt relief, holding one person one vote elections, finalising the federal constitution, advancing the fight against al-Shabaab, and consolidating the federal state.

Already there is good progress on Somalia's economic priorities. The Executive Boards of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have confirmed Somalia's eligibility for debt relief under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. This milestone demonstrates, that with unity and common purpose, the federal government and federal member states can achieve even highly ambitious goals.

There has been progress too in the passage of key legislation to strengthen Somalia's fiscal framework, such as the Companies Act and the Public Financial Management Act. The 2020 budget approved by Parliament and signed by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' reflects steadily increasing revenue generation.

In the area of human rights Somalia has submitted its first ever treaty report on the Convention Against Torture, it has signed the Kampala

Convention on the protection and assistance of IDPs, and it has approved its National Policy on Refugees-Returnees and IDPs.

Mr. President,

As I reported to this Council in November, for Somalia to navigate the remaining challenges and achieve its ambitious priorities, all Somalia's stakeholders must work together in the national interest. This responsibility begins with Somalia's leaders. It is for them to engage in dialogue in a spirit of national unity and set aside narrow political interests to strengthen Somalia's state, security and prosperity.

In my last remarks to this Council, I welcomed the meeting in November between the President and some political party leaders. Regrettably these consultations have not continued. Meanwhile, the Federal President and Federal Member State leaders have not met together as a group since May 2019. The protracted absence of a broad political consensus on the way forward in 2020 remains a threat to further progress.

In December, I led representatives of the African Union, European Union, and Intergovernmental Authority on Development in a series of consultations with political leaders and civil society groups in the Federal Member States, as well as with the federal executive and legislative branches, and other key stakeholders. We briefed President 'Farmajo' on our findings and emphasized the urgent need to resume dialogue. We and international partners stand ready to support this as required.

While technical advances across political, security, economic and humanitarian agendas have continued, I must underscore that these gains will quickly reach their limits without the necessary political agreements. I call on Somalia's leaders as a matter of urgency to meet and engage in dialogue on Somalia's national priorities.

Mr. President,

In 2020 Somalia will face a critical test of its statebuilding progress through the holding of historic one-person-one vote elections.

In recent years Somalia has established a track record of regular, peaceful transfers of power. This commendable achievement must now be preserved in 2020. In addition, a move to one-person-one vote elections will mean a shift from the elders-based selection of recent political cycles to direct voting by the people of Somalia.

The new electoral code has now been approved by the House of the People and the Upper House and signed into law by the President. While an important step, the new law regrettably does not address many outstanding questions necessary to implement the code. These questions relate to the locations of constituencies, how to guarantee 30 percent of seats for women, and the modalities to enable Somalis from across the country to participate. I call on the Federal Parliament in collaboration with the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) and in consultation with the Federal Government, the Federal Member States and other stakeholders to resolve these issues urgently so that technical preparations can get underway. This must include the Federal Member States ensuring that the NIEC can maintain offices across the country to organise elections.

Elections must be held too in “Somaliland” where parliamentary elections were last held in 2005, and I urge the authorities and all political actors to find a way through the current impasse for both parliamentary and local elections to take place in “Somaliland” before the end of 2020.

Political space and debate will be an essential component in the year ahead in Somalia to enable candidates, journalists, civil society and international partners to engage frankly in the political discourse. We especially look forward to hearing the voices of women, youth and minorities in an open debate on Somalia’s future.

Continued efforts towards reconciliation will also be necessary to forge unity on Somalia's future. We call on political actors in Galmudug and Jubaland in particular to engage in dialogue, to refrain from violence, and to avoid divisions that will be exploited by al-Shabaab. We note recent security deployments in Jubaland's Gedo region have led instead to increased tension.

Mr. President,

Turning to the security situation, let me first pay tribute to the courage of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia in confronting al-Shabaab.

There has been steady, commendable progress in rebuilding Somalia's security institutions including implementation of biometric registration, electronic payment of salaries for the security forces, and personnel records. Unfortunately, military operations have slowed since mid 2019 and force generation has, to date, not been sufficient for the tasks required in 2020, including priority operations against al-Shabaab and for re-opening Main Supply Routes. Despite efforts by the SNA, AMISOM and international partners, regrettably Al Shabaab retains the ability to conduct large scale attacks in Mogadishu, including against the UN and the international community, and in the recently recovered areas in Lower Shabelle. It is also able generate significant revenue through extortion, as well as to conduct operations beyond Somalia's borders.

It is essential that the Somali government clarify its operational priorities and generates the necessary forces to enable operations to degrade al-Shabaab, defend recently recovered areas and reopen main supply routes. These must be conducted with respect for human rights and sequenced with the return of legitimate local governance, rule of law, and stabilisation activities in order to be sustainable.

AMISOM has committed to implement the reduction of 1,000 soldiers by February 28 as decided by the Security Council in resolution

2472. Prior to the drawdown, the Somali Government, AMISOM and UNSOM prepared a Joint Threat Assessment as requested by the Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. AMISOM remains essential to security under current circumstances, but it is also time to begin inclusive discussions on the strategic outlook and requirements to enable AMISOM to progressively hand over security ownership to the Somali authorities in a manner that preserves hard won gains while achieving greater strategic effect against al-Shabaab.

Mr. President,

Vulnerable Somalis continue to face extreme humanitarian challenges. Back-to-back droughts, flooding, conflict and insecurity have left 5.2 million people in Somalia in need of assistance. This was before the worst locust outbreak Somalia has experienced in 25 years. The Food and Agriculture Organization is supporting the government to mitigate the potentially catastrophic impact on food security. I call on donors to urgently provide funding and support for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan. Longer term, we must align behind the Somali Government's National Development Plan to advance humanitarian, development and peace building goals.

Regional cooperation is essential to address the many challenges in the Horn of Africa. I welcome efforts by the President and regional leaders to resolve differences and strengthen ties. In this regard, we note that Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed earlier this month arranged a meeting between President Farmajo and "Somaliland" President, Muse Bihi Abdi. We look forward to their further engagement with a view to constructive dialogue.

Mr. President,

There is much to do in the year ahead. Only by working together, as Somalis, as partners, and in a spirit of unity and compromise, will progress be made. Further impetus and consensus-building are needed to

ensure that key 2020 benchmarks for elections, security, and relations between the Federal Government and Federal Member States do not fall further behind schedule. I look forward to Somalia's leaders taking the bold steps necessary to enable such progress in this critical year. I also look forward to the United Nations continuing to play its role through full implementation of the mandate authorised by this Council.

Thank you.