



UNSOM

ISSUE 25 | QUARTERLY
DECEMBER 2022

NEWSLETTER

/UNSOMALIA

/UNSomalia

unsom.unmissions.org

**Serving the people
of Somalia**

HIGHLIGHTS

- 16 Days of Activism: UN in Somalia calls for greater protection for women and girls during humanitarian crisis
- Security Council extends mandate of UNSOM
- Public discussions spotlight Somalis' democratic rights
- On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UN calls for Somalia to build on commendable progress
- Nimo Abdillahi Muhumed: Rebuilding from the ashes of the Waheen market fire
- UN condemns Al-Shabaab attacks



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM: UN IN SOMALIA CALLS FOR GREATER PROTECTION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

At the start of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in November, the United Nations in Somalia called for a redoubling of efforts to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

"The ongoing humanitarian crisis and conflict in Somalia have displaced large populations and put women and girls at

greater risk of violence, including sexual violence. Gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence severely impact on the right to life, livelihoods and dignity of women and girls," said the Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, Anita Kiki Gbeho.

"Making humanitarian response more gender-inclusive and creating a safe environment for women and girls are critical," Ms. Gbeho added.

The theme of this year's campaign – 'UNITE! Activism To End Violence Against Women & Girls!' – highlighted the urgent need to come together and prevent violence against women and girls.

Ending discrimination on all grounds, including gender, is stipulated in Somalia's Provisional Constitution of 2012.

The annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which runs from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, is a reminder of the unfinished work to realize gender equality, peace, and security for all, in every sphere of life, including in public and political spheres.

During the 16 Days campaign, the UN joined hands with the Somali government and civil society organisations in advocacy and awareness-raising activities to address violence against women and girls.





SECURITY COUNCIL EXTENDS MANDATE OF UNSOM

In October, following the Secretary-General's strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the Security Council extended the Mission's mandate and tasks until 31 October 2023. Below is an abbreviated recap of the meeting from UN Department of Global Communications' Meetings Coverage Service:

Adopting resolution 2657 (S/RES/2657(2022)) by a vote of 14 in favour to none against, with one abstention (China), the Council requested UNSOM to maintain and strengthen its presence across Somalia and continue to cooperate with that country and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

Recognising renewed operations against Al-Shabaab, the Council also encouraged UNSOM to support Somalia in several areas, including ensuring that plans are in place to protect civilians and

communities in areas of military operations; supporting Somali civilian leadership, ownership and oversight in the planning and coordination of stabilisation efforts; and promoting the expansion of governance and service delivery to areas and districts where fragility persists.

The Council encouraged the Government of Somalia to deepen cooperation and collaboration at all levels towards several ends, including creating a conducive political and security environment for more inclusive democratic processes across Somalia and promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Through the resolution, the Council also condemned any misuse or obstruction of humanitarian assistance, demanding that all parties allow and facilitate full, safe, rapid and unhindered access for timely aid delivery to persons in need across Somalia. Further, the organ called on all relevant actors to facilitate, support and, where appropriate, implement durable solutions for internal displacement.

Speaking after the vote, James Kariuki (United Kingdom) said that the adoption sent a powerful message of the Council's

support — not just to UNSOM but to Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and all Somalis. UNSOM has played an important role in Somalia since the Mission's inception, and the recent strategic review found its mandate well-aligned with Somalia's national

“The Council encouraged the Government of Somalia to deepen cooperation and collaboration at all levels towards several ends”

priorities. The successful conclusion of the electoral process — and a peaceful transition of power — would allow the country to achieve national objectives and successfully fight Al-Shabaab. He said the United Kingdom would continue to stand with them, also commending President Mohamud's determination to defeat Al-Shabaab.

Jeffrey DeLaurentis (United States) said that renewing UNSOM's mandate will further the Mission's support to the Somali Government in addressing serious

challenges. These include responding to unprecedented drought, promoting reconciliation among the Federal Government and the Member States, completing the review of the Constitution, and achieving debt relief. He also welcomed that the resolution incorporated recommendations from the strategic review, including further coordination between ATMIS, the United Nations

“UNSOM should work closely on the country’s priorities, and its work should be clearly evaluated”

Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the relevant country team. Additionally, he condemned the attack by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu of 29 October.

Martin Kimani (Kenya) said the resolution would help Somalia accelerate stabilisation efforts and enable the implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan, among other initiatives. Condemning the attack by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu, he reaffirmed full support for Somalia’s counter-terrorism efforts. He underlined the need for greater support for Somalia, including enabling its purchase and storage of arms to allow the armaments of its military and police to exceed those of Al-Shabaab.

He called on the Council to strengthen measures to curb the activities of that group, adding that doing so within the sanctions Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia “will not be easy, but it must be done.”

Dai Bing (China), spotlighting his delegation’s abstention, said that improvement was needed on issues such as the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and climate change. Condemning the attack in Mogadishu by Al-Shabaab on 29 October, he expressed hope that the Somali Government would effectively assume the primary responsibility of maintaining peace and security in the country. He also voiced his hope that the Government will make greater efforts on humanitarian issues, including protecting the safety of vulnerable groups and humanitarian workers. Recalling that the Secretary-General recently submitted his report to the Council with recommendations on the country’s sanctions regime, he stressed that the Somali Government must continue strengthening its weapons and ammunition management.

Anna M. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) expressed condolences to the Government and people of Somalia following the recent terrorist act in Mogadishu. She said her country supported the resolution but shared the views expressed by China regarding the imbalanced nature of some of its wording, including on human rights issues, child protection in armed conflict and human rights. She voiced regret that the resolution did not sufficiently reflect the recommendations from the strategic review, noting that the Mission’s

mandate had lost balance over recent years. “UNSOM should work closely on the country’s priorities, and its work should be clearly evaluated,” she said, stressing the importance of respecting Somalia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity.

Lana Zaki Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) welcomed the adoption, noting that recent terrorism — such as the attack in Mogadishu — highlighted UNSOM’s important role. The Mission’s support is particularly vital for nation-building efforts and strengthening security and government institutions to address complex challenges, foremost of which is the fight against Al-Shabaab. She also recalled that, during negotiations on UNSOM’s mandate, her country proposed replacing the term “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)” with “Da’esh.” This was to ensure that the Security Council did not give credence to terrorist groups’ exploitation of Islam to justify violence and hate through self-proclaimed Islamic appellations.

Abukar Osman (Somalia) said that the United Nations must renew its commitment to the Somali people and strengthen coordination among different entities. It is essential to create an environment capable of advancing the Government’s efforts to achieve stability and security. He also noted that, despite completing the UNSOM strategic review, the transition from a special political mission to the country team is not well-defined. Therefore, UNSOM must have a clear understanding of the Government’s shared vision for an exit strategy.





PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS SPOTLIGHT SOMALIS' DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

People's ability to influence the future of their country by exercising their democratic rights was a topic of public discussions in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Kismayo, Garowe and Jowhar during October and November.

Supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the public discussions brought together members of civil society representing women, youth, elders, persons with disabilities, minorities and marginalised groups, as well as local media.

One person, one vote

Participants spoke about the need for 'one person, one vote' elections rather than the current indirect elections that limit voters' rights to elect leaders of their choice. They were in agreement that direct elections would benefit the country.

"We hope that our country will fully embrace democracy by adopting the one person, one vote model," said Fartun

Aden Hayefow, Chairperson of the Middle Shabelle Youth Association, addressing the audience gathered in Jowhar.

"Everyone who is eligible should be able to contest or vote for the candidate of their choice. If this happens, it will be a huge opportunity for the youth to contest for political positions. In addition, it is true that any government elected by the majority of the people will be more responsive to the needs of the electorate," Ms. Hayefow added.

In the discussions, the opinions of the various groups about the future of democratic rights in Somalia often echoed each other.

"For this country to move forward and for our government to have real legitimacy, we need to have a one person, one vote election in which every eligible citizen takes part. Our democracy will be strengthened if we hold universal, free, and fair elections," said Garaad Abdullahi Ducaale, a clan elder from Mogadishu.

Since 2004, Somalia has been holding indirect elections through which traditional leaders select clan delegates, who in turn elect members of parliament. The members of parliament then elect the president of the country.

These clan elders work under the 4.5 system, which gives the country's four major clans the same weight, while a

group of minority clans get the remaining half a point.

This method was criticised by some during the discussions for excluding the majority of Somalis from direct voting. In the words of one of the panellists in Baidoa, Salima Sheikh Shuceyb:

"The 4.5 system is a challenge faced by every Somali, not only by women. If there is one person, one vote election, we [women] will give our vote to anyone we feel we can count on for our rights. It doesn't matter a man or a woman; we want to elect someone who can be trusted. If all Somalis come together, one person, one vote election will benefit the entire Somali nation.





We need to move away from indirect elections to one person, one vote so that women can freely campaign for political office or vote for candidates of their choice

Still, I would like to encourage women to cast their votes, be heard and participate in politics."

Inclusive politics

Somalia has one the world's biggest 'youth bulges' – that is, around 60 per cent of its estimated population of 16 million people is under the age of 30, according to the World Population Prospects, produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The significant number of young people means a greater need to deal with challenges related to their education, employment and a range of other issues, including their representation in the political and government spheres.

"If we adopt the one person, one vote method, it means that capable young people will no longer have to go through clan elders. Direct elections will offer an avenue for us to be elected on the strength of our campaign strategies and the policies presented to the people," said student leader Muya Mizan Muya, on the sidelines of the public discussion in Kismayo, in Jubaland state.

Creating an enabling environment for persons living with disabilities to fully participate in political processes as candidates or voters featured prominently during the discussions.

"I want to run for political office, but I am at a disadvantage because I am visually impaired and also because I come from a small clan that has no power or say on who is elected as our representative in the 0.5. The only chance I have is if direct elections take place," said Dalmar Adow Maalin, a 32-year-old, visually-impaired aspiring politician from Mogadishu.

The electoral process, based on the provisional constitution adopted in 2012, stipulates that women need to make up at least 30 per cent of the seats in parliament. However, there are no policies or laws in place to protect this quota.

Fatima Mohamed Ahmed, a women's representative in Jowhar, Hirshabelle state, said that a country could not make progress if it left the majority of its people (i.e. women) unrepresented and kept away from decision-making processes in

matters that affect these people's lives.

"We need to move away from indirect elections to one person, one vote so that women can freely campaign for political office or vote for candidates of their choice," she added.

The public discussions are part of ongoing efforts to promote the inclusion of all Somalis in having a say in the future of their country. The UN and international partners are committed to continuing to provide political, financial, technical and logistical support to Somalia's electoral process.



3 DECEMBER INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



UN CALLS FOR SOMALIA TO BUILD ON COMMENDABLE PROGRESS

Marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in December, the United Nations in Somalia commended the Somali authorities for their progress in recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities and encouraged them to build on their achievements.

“In 2019, the Federal Government of Somalia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – this was a historic moment for Somalis with disabilities and their families, and one that demonstrated their country’s commitment to promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities,” said the UN Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Anita Kiki Gbeho. “For a truly inclusive society,

physical and communication barriers must be removed and with draft legislation on disability rights, as well as the establishment of the National Disability Agency, Somalia has signalled its commitment to make this happen. The United Nations encourages Somalia to continue efforts to mainstream disability inclusion into the country’s development and stands ready to support,” added Ms. Gbeho, who also serves currently as the Officer-in-Charge of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The UN in Somalia’s work in this area includes ongoing consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, in partnership with the National Disability Agency (NDA), which was launched in 2021 as part of the Government’s legislative response to the ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Access to statistical data on disabilities in Somalia is limited, which makes gauging the overall situation challenging. Better data is essential for mainstreaming disability into development so that it is inclusive and accessible. The UN is currently supporting the NDA in designing a survey to reach

Somalis with disabilities – the first of its kind in Somalia.

Around the world, persons with disabilities have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. This is largely due to the lack of services available to them and the many obstacles they face in their everyday lives. Evidence and experience shows that when barriers to their inclusion are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life, their entire community benefits.

The theme for IDPD this year is ‘Transformative solutions for inclusive development: the role of innovation in fuelling an accessible and equitable world.’

Observed annually on 3 December, the UN General Assembly established IDPD in 1992. The Day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

NIMO ABDILLAHI MUHUMED

REBUILDING FROM THE ASHES

OF THE WAHEEN MARKET FIRE

Nimo Abdillahi Muhumed knows a thing or two about patience.

Nimo Abdillahi Muhumed knows a thing or two about patience.

The 36-year-old spent almost two decades building up her small business selling vegetables, clothing, perfumes and cosmetics in a store at the Waheen Market in Hargeisa, the largest marketplace in Somaliland.

On the evening of 1 April 2022, she lost it all.

"It was a great shock because my business was consumed by fire after it had grown so much, after a long period of building it up," Ms. Muhumed says.

She was one of the 5,000 small-, medium- and large-size business owners whose establishments were destroyed in a blaze which consumed the Waheen Market. The value of the goods lost in the fire was estimated to be around \$1.5 billion, and some 12,000 jobs were believed to have been lost, according to the Joint Report of the Effects of the Waheen Market Fire issued by the Somaliland administration

and a team of United Nations technical experts, which was sent to support on-the-ground relief and reconstruction efforts on 10 May.

Small beginnings

Being a small business owner had not always been Ms. Muhumed's dream.

Born and bred in Hargeisa, she attended local primary and secondary schools but was unable to continue with her higher education because of financial challenges. Her focus turned elsewhere. She first started selling vegetables in the city's Hawaadle neighbourhood and, subsequently, expanded her wares and her aims in the Waheen Market.



"I started a business because I had a big dream of becoming a millionaire entrepreneur"

"I started a business because I had a big dream of becoming a millionaire entrepreneur," she says. "The initial phases of building the business were like a tortuous road as there was a small number of customers, but it picked up steadily to become profitable."

The business' success was important beyond Ms. Muhumed's personal goals – her mother, five siblings and three nephews depend upon her as the family's sole breadwinner, and she had three salespeople relying on their employment for their own families' needs.

Her stock was worth \$25,000 when the fire destroyed her business. Records of loans she had obtained from lending institutions, as well as customer dealings, were also destroyed.

Starting afresh

The recommendations from the local authorities and UN team's report included building a high-rise structure at the Waheen Market site to accommodate all businesses, including those on the streets beside the market. It also identified six temporary locations for people who had lost their businesses.

The assessment also resulted in some business owners receiving small grants from the government – Ms. Muhumed was one of those awarded a grant.

“Everything happened because of God's will, and we are now working hard to recover”

“Everything happened because of God's will, and we are now working hard to recover. Somalis have a saying that, 'falling is not your fault, but failing to stand up again is,'" she says. "I have now opened a small business out of the ashes of my bigger one. It is in a temporary location."

Rebuilding her business from a new site, located about a kilometre from the ruins of the Waheen Market, has not been easy with her usual clientele dispersed.

"It's hard to find all my customers as soon as I would like. It will take time. But we are working hard, and we will not give up," Ms. Muhumed says. "Regardless of what happened, I'm very optimistic now. I still have my dream of becoming a millionaire, and I will one day become one."

Return to Waheen

Regardless of the obstacles, Ms. Muhumed hopes to return to the Waheen Market location once it has been rebuilt.

"The details we have are scanty. We now know that the market will be rebuilt. Everyone hopes to get space and be able to trade at the famous Waheen market again," she says.

"We are committed to do our best to recover from the loss; however, we cannot do it alone so we need the support of the international community and any other entity that would like to support us," she adds.

And as tough as the rebuilding of her business may be, Ms. Muhumed is aware that others have also had a difficult time.

“We are committed to do our best to recover from the loss; however, we cannot do it alone”

"The government compensated me with \$1500. I gave \$750 of that money to a young lady who used to run a small henna business next to my shop so that she could revive her business. We weren't close friends, but I empathized with her situation when I saw it," she says.

In June, the authorities in Hargeisa showcased an attractive and modern design of the future Waheen Market and said that the construction work would start this year.

Women in business

A Gender Gap Assessment conducted in 2019 by the Nagaad Network, an umbrella group made up of 46 local women's organisations across Somaliland, found that women in Somaliland have less than 50 per cent of the employment and finance opportunities than those offered to men.

Furthermore, a lack of access to finance is the barrier for women to sustainably grow their businesses. While access to the formal banking system is limited in general, women face greater barriers to financial means than men. Men, for example, are twice as likely as women to have an account in their own name at a financial institution.

According to the United Nations, empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.

The private sector is a key partner in efforts to advance gender equality and empower women.

“A lack of access to finance is the barrier for women to sustainably grow their businesses”



UN CONDEMNS AL-SHABAAB ATTACKS

In October, a major Al-Shabaab attack near government premises in the city of Belet Weyne, in HirShabelle, drew condemnation from the UN in Somalia, as well as from UN Secretary-General António Guterres. The attacks resulted in multiple casualties, including government officials. It was a similar response to another major Al-Shabaab attack in Kismayo, in Jubaland, and another one in Mogadishu that month which killed at least 100 people and injured more than 300 – in the latter instance, the UN Security Council also condemned the attack “in the strongest possible terms.”

In November, the UN in Somalia, as well as the UN Secretary-General, condemned an Al-Shabaab attack on the Villa Rays Hotel in Mogadishu. The world body expressed its condolences to the families of the victims

and wished a speedy recovery to the injured, reiterating the UN's commitment to standing with the Somali government and people against terrorism and violent extremism.

Earlier, on the fifth anniversary of the Al-Shabaab attack in the Somali capital on 14 October 2017, the UN in Somalia joined the Somali people and government in remembering the victims and survivors of the bombing.

That attack killed more than 500 people and injured more than 300 others, making it the deadliest ever terrorist bombing involving the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Africa.

