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**Serving the people
of Somalia**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Interview with UN envoy
- Somali women and sea resources
- Impact of explosive hazards
- Poorest cereal harvest since 2011



UN Photo/John Arigi

INTERVIEW: UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE JAMES SWAN

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, started in his post in late June. His previous experience includes serving as a top diplomat with the United States Government, with much exposure to African countries facing complex political transitions – including assignments involving Somalia.

Since his arrival, he has met with a range of people from across Somali society, from its leadership to civil society to youth representatives, as well as with partners from the international community.

Q: What was your impression of the country so far?

It has been some years since I was last in Mogadishu and, overall, I've been impressed by signs of progress, the signs of life that I have witnessed. Recently

coming back from meetings, I've seen young people playing football in the streets, I've seen signs of economic activity, shops – even a traffic jam – which suggests that the capital is indeed coming back to life after many years of difficulty. That said, the security situation remains a concern for all of us, especially the Somali population that has suffered over many years from senseless attacks on civilians.

Q: There is almost a daily threat of attacks in Mogadishu. How does that affect Somalis who live there?

Well, they continue with their lives despite these threats. They open businesses, they send their children to school, they have weddings, they care for one another, they simply have had to move on and continue with their lives and livelihoods in spite of these threats – and I think it's really a testimony to their resilience, to their strength and to their heroism, in the face of these senseless terrorist attacks.

Q: The mayor of Mogadishu was assassinated recently. You had actually met him earlier that same day. What impact is his

passing having on Mogadishu and Somalia as a whole?

Well, the mayor, also known as Engineer Yarisow, was a well-known political figure and leader in Mogadishu and, more broadly, in Somalia. He had held a number of senior ministerial and advisory portfolios in multiple governments. He had spent many years abroad in the diaspora and I think he was an impressive example of the many Somalis who have returned from abroad to help rebuild their country, to invest their time, their energy, their expertise and their commitment in trying to make Somalia a better place.



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed



the end of this year and other technical preparations including identifying and funding the necessary budget.

The year 2020 will also be important for consolidating further progress on the security front, both in expanding on very promising operations that have been undertaken in Lower Shabelle since the beginning of April and that are continuing, but also to ensure that other security sector improvements advance. This involves not

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just the military but police, justice and corrections, so that the Somali people can live in an environment of greater security and justice.

And finally, as I mentioned, there is an important milestone in the national development agenda related to debt relief. The government has been working very hard on this priority. It requires some further consultation and support with the legislature and with the federal member states. This would be a key benchmark of accomplishment if Somalia is able to meet the requirements for debt relief in 2020.

Q: Some levels of government still struggle to perform their functions. Is there any possibility of that changing in the near future?

I've been impressed since my return to Somalia, and in the months that I've been in the country — I've had the opportunity to visit all of the Federal Member States, as well as Somaliland — overall, I have been impressed by the quality and capability of the administrations that I've encountered in these different locations.

Somalis have shown great strength in overcoming previous losses. After talking to those on his staff, I have no doubt that they will continue his work and seek to build on his earlier accomplishments as they move forward in the future.

This is the moment to try to consolidate progress and complete important goals that have been elaborated since the beginning of the presidential term.

Q: The image that many people get from the international media is that Somalia is in a continual political crisis and turmoil. How fair is that?

There are many important political decisions that need to be made in Somalia in the coming months if national priorities are going to be achieved in 2020. There are important objectives for 2020, including organizing national-level elections, continuing to make progress on security operations and broader security sector reform, as well as advancing the national

development agenda, including obtaining debt relief that would allow for predictable financing going forward.

These are important priorities that require political agreement. They require a consensus among the main Somali leaders in order to achieve the success that we're all hoping for in 2020. So yes — there is constant political debate, constant political competition within Somalia as within other countries, but what's most important now is that we move ahead with the more consensual process leading into these key goals for 2020.

Q: Why is 2020 such an important year for Somalia?

It's a key year partly because of the political cycle. In Somalia, the presidential mandate is four years and so, there is to be an election and another transition in 2020 or perhaps early 2021. So, as with any period or mandate in government, this is the moment to try to consolidate progress and complete important goals that have been elaborated since the beginning of the presidential term.

Among those are the importance of completing the electoral process itself. This will require adoption of an electoral code of conduct before



UN Photo/Abdikarim Mohamed

I think we are seeing many well-educated, dynamic and committed individuals, increasingly young leaders who are assuming responsibilities and roles in the administrations, both at the national level and at the Federal Member State level. They give me great optimism that the country is on the right path and that these individuals are going to make significant progress in being able to respond to the needs of the Somali people.

Q: There are however groups operating in the country, Al-Shabaab for one, which don't want that progress to be made. What impact are they having?

Al-Shabaab offers a negative agenda for the country. It's a destructive agenda that is seeking to disrupt efforts by well-meaning Somalis and Somali leaders to see the country advance. I think it's to the credit of the overall Somali population that Al-Shabaab has been unsuccessful in halting the progress that we have seen in recent years and that, despite the persistence of terrorist attacks, national priorities continue to advance. We want to see them further consolidated in the coming year.

Q: What role can the UN play in helping Somalia on its path towards a better future?

The United Nations family is engaged in a wide range of programming, and this

includes work on women's empowerment, youth inclusion, outreach to civil society groups; it includes humanitarian responses such as those through the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and UNICEF, coordinated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Also, it includes work on cultural and educational issues and an array of other priorities, as well as important support in the security sector, notably through the UN Support Office for Somalia.

I think across a wide range of issues, the United Nations family is contributing, in close partnership with Somalis. I would add also that UNSOM plays a role in terms of 'good offices' and efforts to support political and community reconciliation, and to see the national political project, including further democratization, move forward in the country. So, I think that across a broad range of priorities the Somalis themselves have established that we are important contributing partners.

Q: Your work has brought you to Somalia on-and-off for more than a couple of decades. What do you see as the best-case outlook for the country 10 years from now?

I think there's a widely-shared vision that we would like to see Somalia at peace within the country and with its neighbours.

We would like to see it governed peacefully, and with stability and with significant public participation through a broadly-accepted electoral process.

We would like to see it on the path to sustained development with involvement not only by development partners, but by an active private sector that is contributing to the lives and livelihoods of the Somali people. I think these objectives are widely

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shared. I think we would like to see those objectives also be inclusive in terms of participation by women and participation by young people. Around 70 per cent of the country is under 35 years of age. So the future is now in many ways for Somalia. I think that is the objective – that is the shared vision that is guiding all of us as we try to work in partnership for a better Somalia.

**"The future is now
in many ways
for Somalia."**



UN Photo/Abdikarim Mohamed

Helping Somali Women Tap into the Potential of Their Country's Maritime Resources

Since the start of Somalia's civil war and the subsequent collapse of the state in 1991, the country's 3,330 kilometres of coastline – the longest on mainland Africa – has remained one of the country's most untapped resources.

The Somali authorities are trying to change that and, in doing so, are also aiming to increase women's involvement in generating livelihood opportunities from the sea.

At the same time, they stress that women's involvement in the maritime environment is not a new development for the Horn of Africa country.

"Somali women have always worked with the sea," said the Minister for Women and Human Rights Development, Deeqa Yasin. "It is important that we understand that this is not something beginning just now but, rather, that this has always been the case in the past and will be the case in the future."

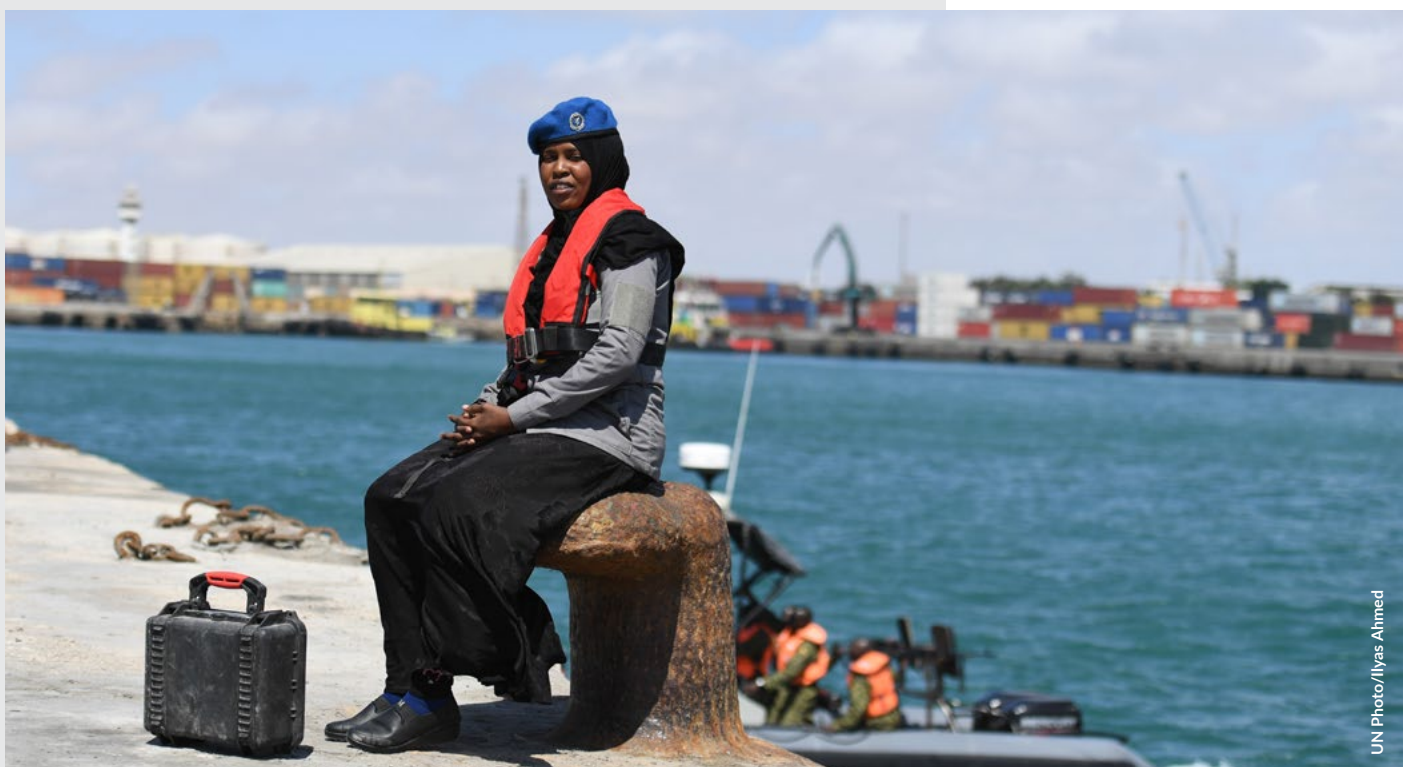
However, historically, there have been some key differences between Somali women and men's access to the economic potential and employment opportunities of the country's maritime resources.

"I think the challenges have been that they were never given opportunities equivalent to those provided to men. For example, if they have wanted to expand their businesses, they never got investment, with banks not providing them with the opportunities for getting more funding to add to their capital, or to expand and enrich their businesses," said Minister Yasin.

Conference held

With this issue in mind, Somalia's Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development and Ministry of Ports and Maritime Transport recently held – with support from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP) – a gathering of women's organisations, university students, and academia representatives from around the country.

Held in Mogadishu in early September, the Conference for Women in the Maritime Sector covered the potential economic and employment opportunities offered by the Somali maritime sector; enabling an environment in which women are attracted to career development opportunities in maritime administrations, ports and maritime agencies, encouraging ways to increase gender equality in the Somali maritime sector; and building an integrated



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

platform for information sharing for all women interested in the maritime sector.

"This meeting is about women discussing about how to best take advantage of marine resources – you know women have done a lot for the country, but in terms of sea resources it seems that we lag behind, and we, as the government, have a responsibility to encourage our Somali women to take advantage of marine resources and what we think can improve the lives and wellbeing of the people," said the Minister of Ports and Maritime Transportation, Maryan Awes.

"We know women have faced a lot of issues in this country, but fortunately there are volunteer girls who work in the seas and take advantage of its resources," she added. "But to increase that number of women who work at marine resources, they need special encouragement."

At the event, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Global Maritime Crime programme delivered a presentation on 'Women in the Maritime Law Enforcement.' It emphasized the need for further inclusion of women in law enforcement agencies and highlighted the fact that inclusion and equality of opportunities are fundamental rights which play a fundamental role on the establishment of effective agencies and are also key aspects of sustainable development.

"For those who want to join [the maritime industry] – as we have the longest sea coast line in Africa and the opportunities and resources available are numerous – we are trying to get them to meet the old ones so they share their experiences and get involved... this conference is a great opportunity for them," noted Minister Yasin.

At the end of the conference, a joint statement was issued by the two ministers and women's representatives. In it, they recognized the need to have greater women's participation in the maritime sector, and that this could be ensured by raising awareness levels, enhancing women's roles in leadership and policy-making, and creating women's associations in the maritime sector.

Role of women recognized

Somalia's National Development Plan 2017-2019 recognizes the vital role women play in supporting peace and human security, and promotes women's economic empowerment and participation in public decision-making processes.

The United Nations has emphasized that there are tremendous sustainable economic opportunities in Somalia's maritime domain, but unlocking these will require action across a range of areas, including

addressing the lack of consumer education programmes to promote fish consumption and improved infrastructure and data collection, with the direct involvement of women in every area.

"Women around the world over are assuming greater roles and responsibilities in shaping a better future for their communities and countries, and the dynamic women of Somalia are no different with their diverse backgrounds, experiences and skills – the niche maritime sector is one such area that provides a variety of opportunities for women, varying from administrative, security, economic and social roles," said UNSOM's Maritime Security Adviser, Commander Michael J.S. Morris.

"The maiden Women in the Maritime Sector conference sets the tone for such endeavours," he added, "and will make an important contribution to furthering the empowerment of Somali women in the maritime sector."



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed



EXPLOSIVE HAZARDS CONTINUE TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON SOMALIA'S SECURITY

Explosive hazards continue to have an impact on security and humanitarian access in Somalia, with explosives such as Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDs) continuing to be one of the staple weapons of armed groups in Somalia.

IED attacks are a leading cause of death among civilians and security forces throughout the country, with urban centres – such as the capital, Mogadishu – frequently subjected to high-impact attacks.

The United Nations is aiding local efforts to change this through the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), an integrated component of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). It provides training, mentorship and equipment to Somali Police Forces, of which four specialized teams have been receiving specialized training on IED disposal techniques.

“Technical training like this one is critical to address the threat of IEDs and mines. It helps our teams to stay current on best practices and the application of the latest equipment,” said Colonel Adan Mohamed Osman, the Director of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit in the Somali Police Force.

“It provides an opportunity for our teams to harness their skills and receive refreshing training using different new equipment,” he added.

IED attacks are a leading cause of civilian casualties in Somalia. They also impede

stabilization efforts and the delivery of the humanitarian aid. Strengthening the Somali Police Force in this respect is considered to be a crucial prerequisite for the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as the return of stability throughout the country.

Another critical factor underpinning the need to enhance the skills of the Somali Police Force is so that they will be better-prepared to assume greater responsibility, in the areas of EOD and IED removal, as responsibility for the country's overall security transitions from African Union troops to national forces.

Extensive and broad training

So far, some 31 police officers from Mogadishu and the Federal Member States of South West State and Hirshabelle have received UNMAS' training, which is not limited to techniques and procedures on how to safely disarm IEDs. It also teaches teamwork and develops the mental strength to work under intense pressure in challenging environments.

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“These training courses are designed to help the Somali Police Forces upgrade their skills and knowledge on how to mitigate the threat of IEDs with both theoretical and practical training,” said Dominic Smith, an UNMAS training officer. “It's also a great opportunity to build team spirit and leadership skills – especially as IED disposal is a team effort.”

The Somali Police Force teams work around the clock to respond to calls on IED threats

and the removal of explosive remnants of war. They also staff checkpoints and are present at critical public facilities to help deter as well as respond to any threats of explosive hazards.

Multipronged approach

But UNMAS' approach goes beyond training local authorities. It also provides risk education to communities living in areas exposed to the dangers of land mines and other forms of explosives, such as old ammunition and stockpiled explosives.

“Explosive hazards in Somalia are a layered and complex problem. It needs a multi-pronged approach, including technical training, effective community outreach and awareness, and conducting extensive clearance operations to remove remnants of war,” said Colonel Osman.

UNMAS has recently enhanced its outreach activities to most regional districts in south-central Somalia, where it has also been conducting operations to clear landmines and other unexploded ordnance. The UN agency recently destroyed a large number of such remnants of war after local communities informed them of their presence.

As part of its multipronged approach – which draws financial support from Japan – UNMAS is working with the Somalia Explosive Management Authority (SEMA) to develop a national plan to assist the victims of explosive hazards. The national plan is designed to establish guidelines to address the rights and needs of mine survivors and people affected by explosive hazards. UNMAS's support includes collecting information and feedback from various stakeholders throughout Somalia in order to help national authorities develop a country-wide plan of action. It also includes training the police on human rights.



SOMALIA FACING LOWEST CEREAL PRODUCTION SINCE 2011

Late and erratic rains during Somalia's 2019 Gu cropping season, which runs from April to June, coupled with low river levels, have led to the poorest cereal harvest since the 2011 famine – and threaten the fragile food security situation in the country.

According to the 2019 post-Gu data gathered by the United Nations and partners, cereal production was up to 70 per cent below average in southern Somalia for the 2019 Gu cropping season. The resulting shortfall is linked to abnormally high prices of sorghum observed throughout the season.

At a recent media launch, the report – the Somalia 2019 Post Gu FSNAU FEWS-NET Technical Release – indicates that, in the absence of humanitarian assistance, up to 2.1 million people across Somalia face severe hunger through December 2019, bringing the total number of Somalis expected to be food insecure by year's end to 6.3 million.

Climatic shocks coupled with widespread poverty and vulnerability are key drivers that have trapped millions of Somalis in severe hunger and malnutrition. An estimated 2.6 million people remain internally displaced across the country, either scattered among host communities in rural areas or living in formal and informal settlements on the outskirts of urban centres.

In addition, widespread malnutrition persists across the country and one million children are projected to be acutely malnourished over the next year, including 180,000 who are likely to be severely malnourished if humanitarian interventions are not scaled up.

Large-scale catastrophes unnecessary

"Climatic shocks exacerbate needs. However, these shocks do not have to lead to a large-scale catastrophe. We must continue to work collectively to strengthen the capacity of Somalia to withstand these climatic shocks and identify durable solutions," said Somalia's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Hamza Said Hamza, at the launch of the report.

"As we collectively advocate for and respond to urgent and acute humanitarian need, we must continue to invest in efforts to identify durable solutions," he added.

The next Deyr cropping season, which runs from October to December and which is expected to be wetter than normal in most areas, will be crucial to avoid a deterioration of the food security situation in Somalia. The rainfall forecast indicates 45 to 55 per cent probability of rains being above average in most parts of the country.

This amount of rainfall will benefit pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. However, it is expected that the rains will likely cause flooding along the country's main Juba and Shabelle rivers which, in turn, can seriously damage crops and affect cereal production.

Against this backdrop, the humanitarian operation for Somalia remains under-funded with the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan so far having received just \$487 million – less than half the amount required. Linked to that, the Federal Government of Somalia and humanitarian community have launched a so-called Drought Impact Response Plan (DIRP) that covers the months June through December 2019.

"I thank the donor community for the swift support for the DIRP, which enabled humanitarian agencies to scale-up response and keep one million people out of acute food insecurity through September 2019," said the acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, George Conway, at the launch.

"However, the DIRP is currently just under 50 per cent funded and without additional resources and sustained collective response, 2.1 million people will face severe food insecurity through December," he continued. "Humanitarian partners stand ready to respond, but they cannot do so without sufficient resources. I urge all donors to continue to step up support to enable the provision of life-saving assistance to the large numbers of people in Somalia who are in dire need of assistance."



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