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STATEMENT BY SRSR JAMES SWAN TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

25 May 2021, the UN Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, briefed the Security Council meeting on the latest developments in Somalia.

"Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief on the situation in Somalia. I am pleased do so together again with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira. This underscores the importance of the relationship between our two organisations in Somalia. AMISOM continues to play a critical role in Somalia every day, and I commend the bravery and determination of Somali and AMISOM forces as they advance peace and security in the country. I also look forward to the comments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, His Excellency Mohammed Abdirizak.

Mr. President,

The political process to implement elections in Somalia has faced many obstacles in recent

months. Talks between Federal Government and Federal Member State leaders that began in March regrettably broke down in early April. The House of the People of the Somali Parliament then adopted a "Special Law" abandoning the 17 September electoral agreement, reverting to a one-person-one-vote model, and extending the mandates of current office holders for up to two more years. Opposition to these moves led to the mobilization of militias and exposed divisions within Somali security forces. Violent clashes ensued on 25 April, risking broader conflict.

Since then, Mr. President, Somalia has come back from the brink of this worst-case scenario.

Under intense pressure, the House of the People on 1 May reversed the Special Law, at the request of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo." The President subsequently empowered the Prime Minister to lead the FGS involvement in the electoral process, including security arrangements and negotiations with FMSes. These measures greatly eased tensions.

I commend all the Somali leaders who sought compromise and consensus during this period, and who worked to de-escalate the situation, in the interest of the nation and the Somali people. This spirit of compromise remains an urgent necessity going forward.

Prime Minister Muhammed Hussein Roble convened a new FGS-FMS summit on 22 May. This is a welcome return to dialogue after the

earlier period of confrontation. Following a series of closed-door confidence-building meetings, discussions are now centred on resolving the outstanding issues related to the implementation of the 17 September Agreement and the Baidoa Technical Committee proposals. We are encouraged that, so far, a positive atmosphere prevails, and all sides report progress being made in the discussions. And if I may add, Mr. President, the news this afternoon is also highly positive, and it appears the Somali principles are very close to an agreement, but it will be for them to announce this and we hope it will be delivered in the coming hours.

The United Nations team is supporting the Office of the Prime Minister in arrangements for the summit, and greatly appreciates the contributions of key donors in this regard. We are coordinating closely with the African Union, the European Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, and other partners in our diplomatic engagements. In regard to these concerted diplomatic efforts, we deeply regret the Somali Government's rejection of the African Union High Representative for Somalia.

I once again urge Somali leaders to find solutions in good faith, and to demonstrate the leadership the country requires of them at this historic moment. The signatories of



the 17 September Agreement must now commit to a clear way forward with the holding of elections. Without this, progress on key national priorities will continue to be hampered, or worse, reversed, in critical areas, including in the security, economic and development sectors.

In proceeding to elections, it is crucial that the women's minimum 30 per cent representation in both Houses of the Federal Parliament be implemented. The inclusion of women, but also of youth and minority groups, in political decision-making going forward is necessary to ensure the development of the country and sustainable peace in Somalia.

Mr. President,

The security situation continues to be of grave concern. Al-Shabaab remains a serious threat manifesting the ability to plan and execute complex attacks on a range of targets across Somalia. Recent incidents are outlined in greater detail in the latest report of the Secretary-General. Suffice it to say that Al-Shabaab has demonstrated both initiative and resilience in recent months. The operations of the Somali Security Forces and AMISOM therefore remain crucial in maintaining the pressure on this group.

Some progress has been made in the implementation of the revised Somalia Transition Plan. Key developments include the handover of Forward Operating Bases in Awdheegle and Barire to the Somali National Army near the end of 2020. In early April, these FOBs came under attack by Al-Shabaab, but Somali forces displayed great courage and held their ground. The pace of implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan has been impacted by the ongoing political impasse. Major commitments are behind schedule, and significant efforts will be needed to accelerate progress.

United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) continues to provide logistical support to AMISOM and stands ready to

continue to furnish non-lethal support to the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force using voluntary contributions to the Somali Security Forces Trust Fund, as authorised by this Council. I note with great concern that the Trust Fund will be depleted by the end of June. Without urgent contributions, this vital operational and life-saving support to the Somali Security Forces will cease.

Meanwhile, the United Nations and the African Union continue to engage on the way forward in relation to the Somali

security transition and the future reconfigured AU-mission. The AU and UN are in the initial stages of these discussions at Headquarters level, and further updates will be provided to the Council as preparations advance in line with the relevant resolutions of the Council.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian situation is still dire, with 5.9 million Somalis - or more than one-third of the population - in need of humanitarian assistance this year. Of these, over three million are in acute need of life-saving assistance. While 80 per cent of the country is impacted by drought conditions, heavy rains are at the same time causing seasonal flash flooding in some riverine areas. Erratic climatic shocks have led to greater displacement and increased food insecurity.

Regrettably, only 19 per cent of the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021 has so far been funded. This will not be enough to respond to the lifesaving needs of Somalis across the country. I appeal to member states to make further contributions.

On a more positive note, Somalia received the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility in March. The United Nations has worked closely with Government counterparts to ensure the effective distribution and administering of the vaccines to frontline workers. As of today, Somalia has been able to administer 42 per cent of 300,000 doses of the vaccines it had received. Going forward, it is essential that the international community continue to support Somalia's needs for achieving optimal vaccination coverage.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by underscoring the opportunity now before Somalia's leaders. It is imperative that the ongoing summit in Mogadishu yield an implementable agreement to hold elections in the shortest time possible. Without such an agreement, along with the goodwill and sincerity to implement it, the gains which have been made in Somalia in recent years may be reversed, risking further instability and insecurity. I therefore greatly appreciate the close attention the Council continues to pay to the situation in Somalia.

Thank you."

Read the Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia ([S/2021/485](#))

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS STATEMENT TO WELCOME THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE FGS-FMS SUMMIT

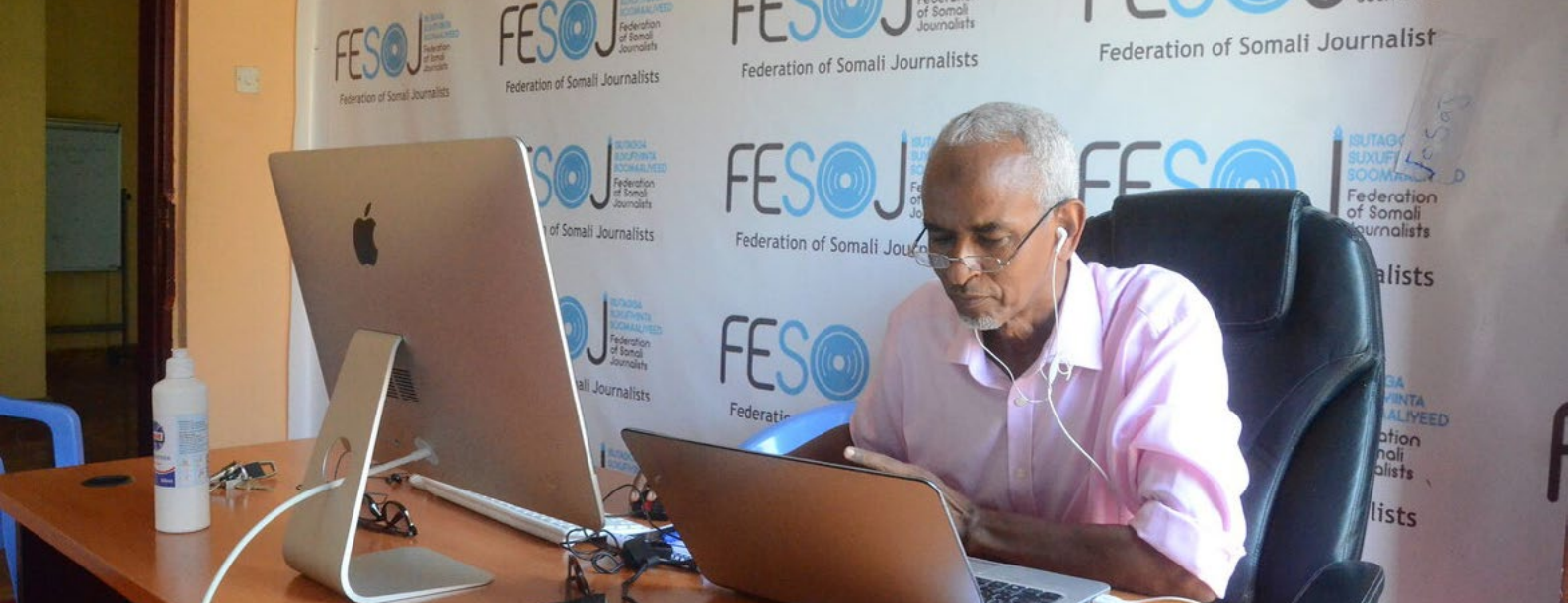
Somalia's international partners* welcome the successful conclusion of the Federal Government of Somalia – Federal Member States (FGS-FMS) summit in Mogadishu.

We commend Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble for his leadership of this process, as well as the Federal Member State Presidents, the Governor of the Banadir Administrative Region, and other political figures who engaged constructively in the talks. We thank President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmaajo' for his appeal on 1 May to revert to the consensus-based 17 September electoral model.

We now urge all stakeholders to move forward swiftly to organize inclusive and transparent elections without delay. We call on Somali leaders to resolve any future disputes through regular dialogue among the signatories of the 17 September Agreement.

International partners stand ready to support Somalia's leaders to implement this historic agreement.

*African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, European Union (EU), Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Japan, League of Arab States (LAS), Netherlands, Norway, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Poland, Qatar, Russian Federation, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, and the United Nations.



UNSNOM CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SOMALI JOURNALISTS ON COVID-19 AND COVAX ROLL-OUT

How can Somali journalists help in the fight against COVID-19? What role can they play in keeping individuals and communities safer? A two-day online training for Somali journalists just recently ended, focused on these questions and more, as it addressed safety and prevention measures against COVID-19.

The training was followed by a one-day panel discussion on awareness-raising programmes and promotion of the COVAX vaccine roll-out.

Overall, 45 journalists from various media outlets – radio, TV, and digital news platforms – from Mogadishu, Baidoa, Garowe, Kismayo, Beletweyne, Jowhar, Galkayo, Marka and Qardo have participated in the three-day event.

The virtual training workshop and panel discussion have been facilitated by the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ) and organized with support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSNOM).

COVAX Vaccine

The training aimed at reinforcing journalists' capacity to support community pre-

paredness for vaccine distribution, and advocate for the benefits of vaccines as a way to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Somalia, through media reporting and advocacy campaigns.

"The training focused on the main themes like safety procedure on COVID-19 prevention, media coverage and advocacy campaign for COVAX vaccine introduction in Somalia, and production of radio drama for awareness-raising on the COVAX vaccine rollout to curb the spread of the pandemic," FESOJ Secretary General, Farah Omar Nur, said.

He also added that the key topics covered included introduction to the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, dismantling misconceptions about the vaccine, the need for the media to support advocacy related to the vaccination roll-out, and safety guidelines for the journalists reporting on the pandemic.

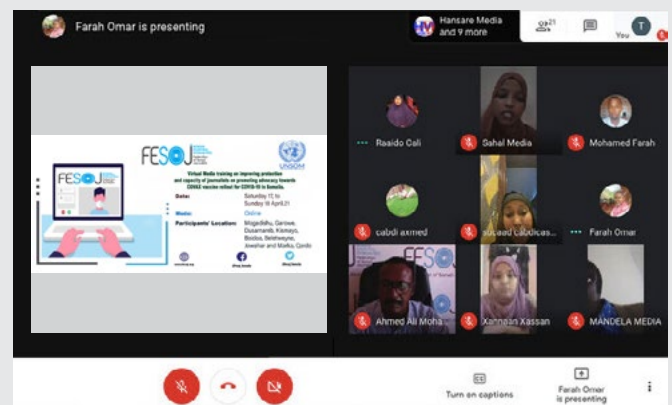
"We emphasized that journalists must adhere to ethical principles of reporting about COVID-19 vaccines. Journalists must check the accuracy and veracity of the information before they report. They should not contribute to circulating fake news and misinformation," he said.

Hanan Hassan, a medical doctor participating in the sessions as trainer, stressed the imperative for jour-

nalists to be well-informed on the importance of the vaccine, so that they can inform the community.

"The public has accepted the vaccine inoculation, despite dissemination of fake news saying the vaccine causes blood clotting. The public has understood the background and origins of the pandemic, and the values of the vaccine. Furthermore, frontline health workers and vulnerable people will be given priority for immunization, and journalists are needed to pass on that message to the people," Dr. Hassan said.

During the panel discussion, Dr. Mohamed Mohamud Fuje, Somalia's Chief Medical Advisor and Chairperson of Somali National Committee for COVID-19, stressed the importance of COVAX vaccines in fighting the spread of the virus. He noted that the National Committee for COVID-19, comprising representatives of the Federal Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information and Banadir Regional Authority, was responsible for approving the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and for supporting



communities to accept the vaccines to contain the spread of the disease in Somalia, and plays a key role in the efforts to fight the rumours against the vaccine.

Validating the medical experts' views, Mohamed Mohamud Adde, a media professional and former BBC Somali news presenter, highlighted that journalists had a critical role in disseminating the right information on the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine. He further added that the public would benefit from thorough, accurate reporting and reliable information.

Impact on Journalists

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the training and were enthusiastic about putting what they have learned into practice.

"I am pleased to have taken part in this training, as I have gained useful knowledge. A well-informed journalist can pass on accurate information to the public, and this will, in turn, contribute to better awareness and understanding of the values of the COVAX vaccine," said Sucaad Abdiaziz Dahir, a reporter from Mogadishu working with the Somali Cable TV.

Another participant, Burhan Adeysay, a producer working with Puntland TV in Galkayo, considered himself empowered with the necessary skills to produce programmes and promotional campaigns on vaccines.

"We have learned lessons on the best practices to advocate for preventing the spread of COVID-19, and we have been endowed with the necessary skills to prepare media programmes on COVID-19," he said.

The case was also true for Shukri Ismail, a radio/TV journalist from Baidoa.

"I had the opportunity to be trained on ethical COVID-19 situations reporting, the difference between fake news and propaganda, and the role of influencers and prominent community members in the media advocacy campaign for the COVAX vaccine," she said.

UN Support

With support from the UN, Somalia received the first consignment of 300,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine on 15 March, under the COVAX initiative that aims to ensure fair and equitable access of all nations to the pandemic-beating solution.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 2 May 2021, there were 13,915 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 713 deaths, and as of 27 April 2021, a total of 122,235 vaccine doses have been administered.



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Somalia, James Swan, reaffirmed the importance of this annual celebration, as it provides an opportunity to advance the principles of press freedom and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

SRSG Swan noted UNSOM's role in contributing to a vibrant media in Somalia through several trainings. "This year the Mission plans to conduct capacity building trainings for about 160 journalists, to date approximately 45 journalists have been trained. The workshops aim at strengthening the capacity of Somali journalists in freedom of expression, rights and responsibilities and women's political participation."

A free, independent and pluralistic media has never been so important to

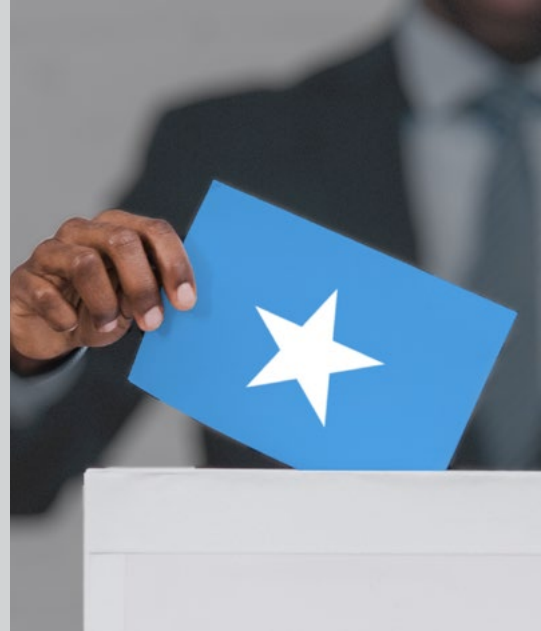
empower Somali women and men, strengthen good governance and the rule of law, and take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"This year's theme, 'Information as a Public Good' responds to the covid-19 global pandemic, recognizing that with information which is freely distributed and received, families and communities can be guided and saved."

"In April UNSOM supported the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESOJ) to hold a three-day virtual capacity-building workshop for journalists from the different federal states on promoting advocacy towards COVAX Vaccine Rollout for COVID-19 in Somalia," Swan said.

SRSG Swan noted that although this year celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic African Press, it should also serve as a reminder that the media are still being censored, fined, suspended, harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which Somalia is party to, establishes that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right.



UN HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR PERSEVERANCE AND COLLABORATION ON MINE ACTION DAY

Marking the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the United Nations in Somalia highlighted this year's theme of 'Perseverance, Partnership, Progress' in working to eliminate the threat of explosive hazards to Somalis.

“While the country is improving in preventing explosive hazards, we must continue to work together to rid Somalia of this scourge which not only kills and injures so many innocent civilians each year, but also puts a brake on the country's development,” said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan.

In 2019, there were 1,140 civilian casualties due to Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). In 2020, that number dropped to 454. Also, in 2019, there were 59 civilian casualties due to Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and that number dropped to 53 in 2020.

While there has been a welcome decline in the number of casualties, they are still a major concern which requires our

dedicated attention, according to the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Somalia.

“The major impact of explosive hazards is on civilians and, particularly, on children. Together, we must press on to reinforce the development of national mine-action capacities and continue to support Somalia, ensuring protection of civilians as well as social and economic development,” said UNMAS' Programme Director in Somalia, Qurat-ul-Ain Sadozai.

UNMAS is working with the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States, along with national and international partners, to support the Somalia Transition Plan. This includes clearing explosive hazards, delivering explosive ordnance risk education, raising awareness at the community level, enhancing national mine action capabilities, and supporting government efforts to serve survivors of landmines and explosive remnants of war and persons with disabilities.

UNMAS' efforts advance the UN's collective commitment to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Adopted by all UN member States in 2015, the Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone everywhere.

STATEMENT ON RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE SOMALI HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Canada, Denmark, European Union (EU), Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the United Nations are deeply concerned by passage on 12 April in the House of the People of a resolution to replace the 17 September agreement with an electoral process that will result in a lengthy extension to the mandates of the President and Parliament.

We have repeatedly stated that a parallel political process, partial elections, or new initiatives leading to an extension of prior mandates will not be supported.

The 12 April resolution undermines peace, security, and stability in Somalia and beyond. This resolution will also further delay holding the credible elections awaited by the Somali people.

We are convinced that implementation of the 17 September agreement remains the best available course of action and so urge Federal Government and Federal Member State leaders to return urgently to talks to agree on a way forward. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, continue dialogue, and avoid unilateral actions that may inflame tensions.

We stand ready to provide good offices to facilitate and revitalize inclusive dialogue on the basis of the 17 September agreement.



UNSOM SUPPORTS THE TRAINING OF 60 SOMALI JOURNALISTS ON MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATIONS

A three-month virtual training workshops funded by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and jointly facilitated by the Somali Women Journalists Organization (SWJO) and the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESJO) concluded on Thursday, 17 June.

During that period, sixty (60) journalists from Mogadishu, Puntland, South West, HirShabelle, Galmudug and Jubaland were trained. The majority of those trained were females – 60 per cent [that is 36 female journalists].

The trainings aimed to increase Somali journalists' skills in advocating and championing women's political participation and increase the media coverage for women candidates or political aspirants in the upcoming 2021 elections.

Furthermore, skilled and informed journalists are crucial for enhancing and strengthening the role of women's participation in politics and decision-making processes in Somalia.

"These trainings are about women's political participation and the role the media can play. Half of Somalia's population is women

and the other half is what they have raised, so they are important within the community. The last thirty years, women have been the backbone of the Somali community but a limited number have participated in decision-making tables, that is why we decided to train the journalists to raise the awareness of women and increase their participation in politics," FESJO Chairperson, Abadir Abdulkadir Elmi, said.

Media's responsibility

The media's role in advocating, effectively engaging and building media skills of women political contenders was also stressed.

Ms. Hanifa Mohamed Ibrahim, Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, addressing the participants via Zoom, noted that during the 2016 elections the media played a vital role in securing the 24 per cent quota for women in parliament.

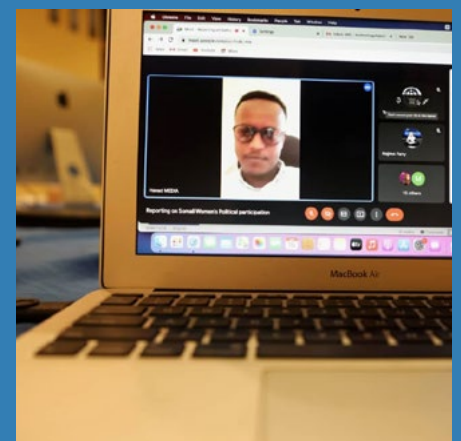
"The Somali media have played a huge part and supported women, and that is why we have achieved 24 per cent for women's representations in parliament. This time round, in 2021, we hope to achieve 30 per cent, and the role of the media is very important. The media contributes in many ways to the dissemination and awareness of women's work in society and their political participation," she said.

On her part, Farhia Mohamed Kheyre, SWJO Chairperson, stated that journalists' role in the campaigns of women's political participation have yielded tangible results.

"To advocate for women's political participation, we have agreed to employ the expertise of the journalists since they are the backbone of the community and are capable of using their influence to boost the advocacy campaign on political participation. Many women are willing to participate in politics, but unfortunately, they do not get good support from the community. We therefore want the media to play a key role in highlighting and promoting the role of women in politics," she said.

Participants' views

The main topics addressed during the virtual trainings included the mechanics of writing, especially feature stories, long news articles, and opinion pieces, strengthening of structural and institutional reforms for women inclusion, ways of achieving full women political participation as well as barriers their political participation and women's role in good governance.



“Women political participants face challenges. Some have made progress. And those who face challenges – their challenges must be highlighted, so they can be resolved. Also, those who have worked for 20 years or over – their stories need to be told – so that it will be an example for other women who want to participate in politics,” said Zamzam Mohamed, Reporter, Mustaqbal Media, Mogadishu.

“For example, during the training it was agreed that media managers, editors and journalists have a vital role in creating these stories. And once these stories are made, they must be at the top of the news bulletin and transformed into special programs on women's political participation.”

Participants praised the trainings as well.

“This was the first type of training I participated in on women's political participation, and the role of the media in providing visibility to them. During the training we learnt how to do reports, interviews and round table discussions for women political participants. And by using our journalistic skills to produce more women political participants,” said Shukri Ismail, a reporter working Radio Warsan, Baidoa.

Echoing Shukri's sentiments, another participant, Abdullahi Sheikh Don, Reporter for SBC TV from Garowe, said that he would pass on the skills and knowledge he gained to his colleagues.

“For the last three days of the training, we benefited immensely. All that we have learnt we will take it back to the society, Insha'Allah. For example, what I have learned is that the media should increase media coverage of women in politics and encourage their participation in politics,” he noted.



More trainings needed

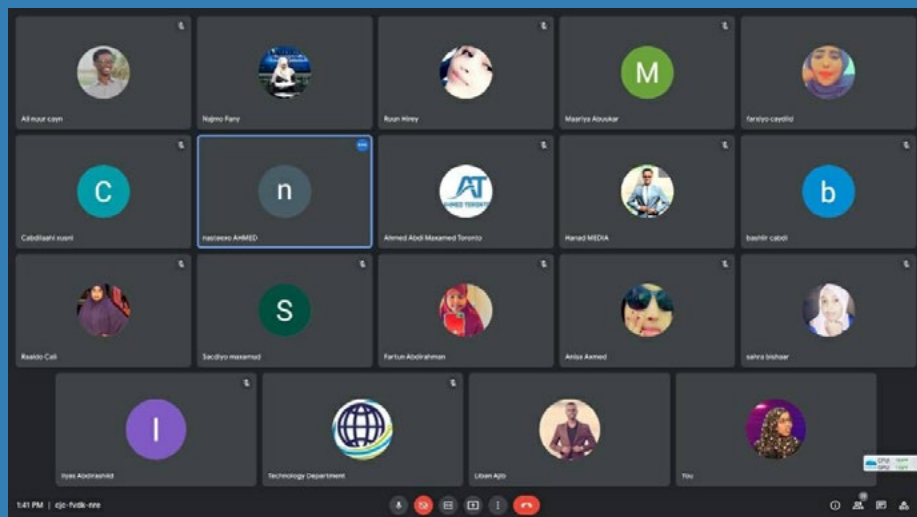
Finally, the organisers thanked UNSOM and urged the participants to write more stories and give wider coverage to women political aspirants.

“One of the many things that was taught in these trainings was for Somali journalists to write more stories about women political participations. There was a need for this kind of training, whether it is for individual journalists or their media houses. We really thank UNSOM for supporting us, and in helping us in producing professional journalists capable of writing quality stories, especially those concerning women political participations,” said Nasriin Mohamed Ibrahim, Deputy Chairperson SWJO.

UN supports

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in partnership with the United Nations in Somalia, and other partners has developed initiatives to ensure that the 30 per cent quota for women is supported and fully implemented

In this regard, senior officials from the United Nations, AMISOM, EU and IGAD in Somalia have been meeting with federal government and federal member states leaders and urged them to safeguard the women's minimum 30 per cent quota in the upcoming 2021 elections.



STATEMENT ON OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN MOGADISHU

International partners* strongly condemn the outbreak of violence in Mogadishu on 25 April.

We have repeatedly warned that the extension of mandates would lead to a political crisis and undermine peace, stability and security in Somalia. In the wake of the violence on 25 April, we urge all sides to exercise maximum restraint, resume dialogue, and avoid unilateral actions that may lead to a further escalation.

We are alarmed especially by the emerging fragmentation of the Somali National Army (SNA) along clan lines, which detracts from its primary task of combating Al Shabab and protecting the Somali population. Use of security forces for pursuit of political objectives is unacceptable.

We reiterate that the 17 September agreement remains the only agreed model for elections and we urge the signatories of this agreement to return immediately to talks on that basis.

We welcome the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to appoint a Special Envoy and urge that this high-level representative arrives in Mogadishu and to begin work as soon as possible. We stand ready as partners to extend our support to this Envoy, and meanwhile we continue efforts to bring the parties together.

We reaffirm our respect for Somali sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, and independence.

*African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, European Union (EU), Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the United Nations.