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## NEWSLETTER

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- UN recognises Somali women's contribution to building a better Somalia
- UN Deputy Special Representative briefs the Security Council on Somalia
- International partners call for de-escalation of violence in Laascaanood
- Empowering Somali women in the maritime sector
- Ali Abdirahman Abdulle: Bringing school closer to internally displaced children in Bosaso

## UN RECOGNISES SOMALI WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING A BETTER SOMALIA

**On the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March), the United Nations in Somalia congratulated Somali women for their continued contribution to their country's development.**

**"F**rom peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts to the stabilisation activities in areas recently recovered from Al-Shabaab control and the humanitarian response to the ongoing drought – Somali women continue to contribute significantly in all facets of public life," said the UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Anita Kiki Gbeho in a statement.

Somali women's contributions include organising the provision of humanitarian support – such as food and other essential supplies, and accommodation – for people

affected by conflict and the long-running drought.

The United Nations in Somalia recognises the ongoing efforts of Somali women over the years and urges all Somali stakeholders, particularly the country's leaders, to ensure greater inclusion, voice and participation of women in all national and state-level bodies as part of efforts to realise and sustain peace, prosperity and development in Somalia.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is 'DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality,' and aims to highlight the importance of digital technology as an opportunity to narrow gender gaps by enhancing women's access. If women are unable to access the Internet and do not feel safe online, they will not be able to develop the necessary digital skills to engage in digital spaces.

The United Nations in Somalia encourages Somali women to embrace the use of technology in their work to help build a better Somalia. Somalia's rate of internet usage has been climbing steadily over the

past few years and rose by 16.4 per cent from 2021 to 2022, according to digital usage tracking firm DataReportal.

International Women's Day has been observed around the world since 1975 when the United Nations started marking the occasion to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality.

**"The United Nations in Somalia urges all Somali stakeholders, particularly the country's leaders, to ensure greater inclusion, voice and participation of women in all national and state-level bodies."**





## UN DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON SOMALIA

**In February, the UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Anita Kiki Gbeho, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Somalia at a session held under the theme of "Somalia: a Women, Peace, and Security Perspective."**

Below is the transcript of her remarks:

*Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Council,*

*Thank you for the opportunity to brief on the situation in Somalia at this session held under the important theme of "Somalia: a women, peace, and security perspective."*

*I am pleased to do so alongside the recently appointed Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ambassador Souef Mohammed El-Amine, with whom I collaborate closely and the Executive Director of UNWOMEN, Ms. Sima Bahous.*

*Madam President,*

*Since the last Security Council session on Somalia on 7 September last year (2022), the Federal Government of Somalia has – despite many challenges – made significant progress in advancing its key national priorities. Close cooperation with Federal Member States has been sustained, momentum in the fight against Al Shabaab regained, and Somalia remains on track to complete the debt relief process in 2024.*

*Through regular meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC), His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has undertaken efforts to prioritise Federal Government and federal member states relations, and to advance state-building priorities.*

*In the December meeting of the NCC, Federal Government and Federal Member State leaders, with the exception of Puntland, agreed a federated model regarding the allocation of powers and on justice; both of which are key elements for the completion of the Constitutional review. Puntland requested additional time to consider its position on these matters and has asked for further consultations with the Federal Government of Somalia. I encourage the Federal Government and the Federal Member states to continue*

*dialogue within the NCC framework toward consensus on Somalia's state-building agenda.*

*Madam President,*

*I welcome the Federal Government's continued commitment to implementing women, peace, and security agenda, as demonstrated by the launch of the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325. The launch of the National Action Plan is timely as it provides a framework to address the challenges that persist for women in Somalia. More has to be done to enable equal representation in all facets of public life.*

*To this end, enhancing women's political participation also remains critical. This includes that the commitment Somalia's political leaders made on the 30 per cent women's quota is not only codified in relevant legal and electoral frameworks but also safeguarded by all entities.*

*In this regard, the United Nations continues to support newly elected women representatives. For example, through the Women, Peace and Protection Joint Programme, the United Nations supported the establishment of the Federal Parliament's, Upper House, women's caucus. Moving forward, we must remain focused on advancing women's participation and equality. I call on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts towards achieving this objective.*



Madam President,

As the government seeks to advance its post-election priorities, including conducting operations against Al-Shabaab and managing the devastating impact of the drought, recurrent political conflicts continue to command the government's attention. In South-West State, for instance, clashes took place on 23 December related to the timing of the state presidential election. A South-West State reconciliation conference held under the auspices of His Excellencies, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the Speaker of the House of the People, Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur, was able to avert an escalation and address political grievances. In Laascaanood town, Sool region, the fighting that broke out on 6 February continues, and has led to increased humanitarian needs. An interagency assessment reports more than 185,000 people displaced, (89 per cent of whom are women and children). At least 63 civilians were killed and over 363 injured. Efforts to stop the fighting are ongoing, but the situation, including the targeting of civilian infrastructure, remains alarming. I would like to reiterate the previous statements by the United Nations and international partners condemning the violence, calling for the resolution of political tensions through dialogue, and calling for unhindered humanitarian access to urgently address the needs of those displaced and impacted.

Madam President,

Al-Shabaab continues to pose a serious threat to peace and security in Somalia. The year 2022 was the deadliest for civilians since 2017, with 60 per cent increase in civilian casualties as compared to 2021. Over the past few months, the Federal Government has made progress in countering this threat by targeting Al-Shabaab's military and financial operations and ideological narrative. The Somalia Security Forces, reinforced by the use of local militias, have conducted successful operations against Al-Shabaab in Hirshabelle and Galmudug States. Operations are expected to gradually move into other areas of Somalia.

Consolidating gains in the newly recovered areas will require strong linkages between military operations and stabilisation initiatives, comprised of reconciliation and justice components and aimed at bolstering good governance and service delivery. In this regard, and in line with Somalia's National Stabilization Strategy, efforts have focused on supporting communities and newly established district authorities in several recovered areas.

In parallel, the Government continues efforts towards generating forces, to gradually assume security responsibilities in line with the Somali transition plan. The handover of the

ATMIS Maslah camp to the Somali National Army in mid-January was an important step in this process, having paved the way for the handover of such camps in future. However, funding remains a critical challenge. I reiterate previous calls by the Secretary-General to ensure predictable and sustainable funding to ATMIS and adequate resourcing for Somali security forces. This remains vital to the security transition.

Madam President,

With five consecutive poor rainy seasons, the current drought is unprecedented in its severity. Humanitarian needs continue to steadily rise, with about 8.3 million people – nearly half of Somalia's estimated population – requiring assistance and protection in 2023. Needs are also more pronounced with minorities and marginalised groups.

I welcome the Federal Government's continued commitment to implementing women, peace, and security agenda.

Thanks to the generous donor support, Government efforts, and local community initiatives, humanitarian organisations scaled up response and reached 7.3 million people in 2022. While famine has been prevented for now, famine remains a threat if the April to June rains underperform as forecast and humanitarian assistance is not sustained. The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, launched on 8 February, seeks \$2.6 billion to meet the priority needs of 7.6 million people. I urge donors to stand with Somalia at this difficult time by providing the required resources early.

Madam President,

Despite great adversity, the people of Somalia continue to demonstrate strength, resilience, and resolve.

The progress made by the Federal Government of Somalia to advance peace, security, and development, has generated a positive momentum to enable further advances in the state building agenda. At the core of this agenda lies the completion of an inclusive and consensus based constitutional review process. This remains a priority in the period ahead.

As the United Nations, we stand ready to support with these efforts and as always, to support Somalia in implementing its vision of a secure, stable, and peaceful nation.

I thank you.

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN LAASCAANOOD



**During January and February, international partners expressed grave concern about the violence in Laascaanood. In subsequent statements they condemned the violence.**

**At** the beginning of the year (2023), as tensions in Laascaanood escalated, international partners, including the UN, expressed concern about the violence resulting in civilian deaths and casualties. They noted that preventing violence and ensuring the protection of civilians was paramount and called for calm and restraint. "Tensions must be resolved through de-escalation and dialogue," they said.

In February, international partners reiterated their calls for an immediate de-escalation of violence, the protection of civilians, unimpeded humanitarian access and for tensions to be resolved peacefully through dialogue.

"We are also deeply concerned about the shelling of civilian infrastructure, which has resulted in casualties and widespread displacement. Attacks against civilians must stop immediately. We urge all sides to adhere to the ceasefire, exercise restraint, and engage in constructive dialogue to establish a pathway towards a peaceful resolution," they said.

Read the statements: [14 February](#), [7 February](#), and [1 January](#).





# EMPOWERING SOMALI WOMEN IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

**A new national action plan for enhancing and empowering Somali women in their country's maritime sector was launched in February at a high-level event bringing together senior government officials and representatives from civil society and the international community, including the United Nations.**

**"I** can assure you that if we put all our efforts and work towards empowering women, especially in the 'Blue Economy' and around climate change, we will definitely have success," Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister, Salah Ahmed Jama, said in his speech at the event to launch the

Women in Maritime Sector (WiMS) National Action Plan.

"The 'Blue Economy' that we want to exploit includes fisheries from our waters and all the goods that pass through it; we also have to consider the value chain from the fisherman, to the buyer, to the marketer and to the investor. In order to succeed in this venture, we need to empower women across the whole value chain," he continued.

"The WiMS National Action Plan will help to ensure that women operating across the maritime domain are provided increased visibility and opportunities to not only participate in, but also benefit from, the sector," the UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Anita Kiki Gbeho, said in her remarks.

"Opportunities are limitless in the maritime domain. With its vast coastline, Somalia's 'Blue Economy' could be at the forefront of delivering change and generating wealth for Somalia's women and, indeed, for

the nation," added Ms. Gbeho, who also serves as the Officer-in-Charge of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

Others attending the launch included Somalia's Minister of Women and Human Rights, Khadija Diriye; its Minister of Ports and Marine Transport, Abdullahi Ahmed Jama; and the Head of Delegation of the European Union, Ambassador Tiina Intelmann.

## Plan's culmination

The WiMS National Action Plan marks the culmination of a Somali-led process that began in September 2019, with coordination and support from UNSOM and the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia).

"This Action Plan takes a lead in ensuring that women are included in this area and will contribute wider to gender equality in Somalia," Amb. Intelmann said in her remarks at the launch.

With its key location along main international shipping routes, 3,333 kilometres of coastline and extensive







sea-based resources, Somalia's maritime domain is widely considered as providing immense economic opportunities in the 'Blue Economy.'

However, there is a critical shortage of maritime skills due to the lack of educational and institutional capacity. Also, there remains a significant gender inequality which deprives Somali women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities, including maritime education, economic participation and access to financial resources.

The Action Plan, developed through an inclusive approach involving the Federal

We need a gender responsive maritime domain, with new procedures and structures that bring real change.

Government of Somalia and the country's Federal Member States, was designed to collectively develop women's needs and priorities in the maritime sector, within both the private sector and government institutions.

#### Plan's implementation

Those involved in developing the action plan over the past six years also include the Federal Government of Somalia's Ministries of Port and Maritime Transport, Women and Human Rights Development, Fisheries and Blue Economy, Education, Labour, Internal Security, Justice and Planning, as well as a range of corresponding ministries from the country's Federal Member State.

In their remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister and the UN Deputy Special Representative noted the important role of international partners.

"Organisations should work on empowering women. We are hoping that our donors and partners will consider investing in women in this sector," Deputy Prime Minister Jama said.

The UN's Ms. Ghebo emphasised that it was now crucial to transform the Action Plan into projects that can be supported with technical and financial assistance.

In this respect, she also encouraged UN agencies such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to continue their support.

"The collective commitment we are making jointly in launching the WiMS National Action Plan is of vital importance," she

said. "We need a gender responsive maritime domain, with new procedures and structures that bring real change. We need a sector that recognises and promotes women's willingness and agency to work in maritime, fisheries, mineral extraction and law enforcement sectors."

"The UN believes," Ms. Ghebo continued, "an ocean of opportunities exists for Somalia to explore; I can see its Women in Maritime are ready to be part of the exploration team."

The Women in Maritime Sector National Action Plan will help to ensure that women are provided opportunities to participate and benefit from the sector.





## ALI ABDIRAHMAN ABDULLE

BRINGING SCHOOL CLOSER

TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED CHILDREN IN BOSASO

**Somalia has around 2.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs). Their opportunities for a normal life have been disrupted by being forced to move due to conflict and climate change.**

**O**f these, some 300,000 are estimated to be school-age children. For them, the displacement also means a disruption to their chance at an education.

In the northern city of Bosaso, Ali Abdirahman Abdulle is doing what he can to bring an end to that disruption.

"It's concerning that many children who could lead this nation are unschooled," the 56-year-old grassroots-level educator says.

Mr. Abdulle runs the Hayatul Islam School at the Ajouran IDP camp, located on the eastern corner of the coastal city, which has ten IDP settlements within its boundaries.

He is determined to make a difference, with his passion partly stemming from his own experience as an IDP.

### From farm to IDP camp

Hailing from a farming family in the Wanlaweyn district in the Lower Shabelle

region of Somalia's South West State, Mr. Abdulle was born in 1967.

His family's circumstances led to him leaving primary school early as he needed to help provide for his family. Nonetheless, he was able to learn how to read and write thanks to Somalia's acclaimed mass literacy campaign in 1974–75. During this time, secondary schools were closed, and students and volunteers were sent to rural areas to teach people how to read.

In 2005, the civil war in Somalia led him to flee South West State to Puntland, in the country's north, where he and his family still live in the Hamarwayne IDP camp, located near the Ajouran IDP camp.

In 2018, seeing the number of young children missing out on school due to their circumstances as IDPs, he decided to act on some ideas that he had been considering.

"I could not stand idly by while numerous Somali youngsters, including my own children, were growing up without receiving an education. When I realised the persistence of this challenging situation, I devised a plan to assist children in acquiring at least the basics of an education," Mr. Abdulle says.

"I decided to start from scratch, so I built the school and sought volunteer teachers to help me provide basic education for 130 pupils – including in social studies, mathematics, English and the Quran," he adds. "I asked the displaced community

members who had teaching experience to step forward and assist me in maximising the potential of these youngsters."

His efforts culminated in the establishment that same year of the Hayatul Islam School, for which Mr. Abdulle serves as manager and teaches religious studies.

"I could not stand idly by while numerous Somali youngsters, including my own children, were growing up without receiving an education."

### The challenge of poverty

Staffed by three teachers in a ramshackle building, the Hayatul Islam School currently provides classes covering standard subjects for grades one to four in the mornings and religious instruction in the afternoons, to 130 children, of whom 40 are girls.

While progress has been made, with enrolment having risen over the past five years,





it has not been easy, primarily due to the limited financial resources common to IDPs.

"It is very challenging for us to continue the education of these children," Mr. Abdulle says. "The most important phase of education, despite being burdensome to most parents, is primary school. The families of children in Bosaso city pay \$10 to \$20 per month for private and government-run elementary schooling. A displaced person cannot find that kind of money, making it difficult for their children to pursue opportunities for a future like that of other children."

Because of this, most of the 130 students at the Hayatul Islam school are enrolled for free, and the few families who can afford to pay are asked to contribute \$3 each month to help cover the school's low operating costs.



### Ensuring attendance

Mr. Abdulle's own five children, aged between seven and 16, also attend the school, and he is diligent in ensuring their attendance and that of others, despite the challenges.

"I don't let my kids or the other kids in the IDP camp miss school," he says. "Some children still miss classes for other reasons, including those who help their parents meet their basic needs. I believe education is not a priority for the families at IDP centres because they struggle for survival."

Knowing that, and having been in a similar situation, the education activist takes things a step further by going to the homes of students to encourage their parents to ensure they are able to go to school.

"I strongly encourage parents to send their children to school. I try to convince them that their financial difficulties should not prevent their children from attending school," he says.

The IDP school receives support from a few local community members in Bosaso, and, of late, Mr. Abdulle has been considering expanding the initiative to other locations. He has reached out to government and humanitarian agencies to seek support.

"I am also going to seek assistance from Puntland's Ministry of Education to provide free education to children in internally displaced camps," Mr. Abdulle says.

### Education and human rights

The United Nations in Somalia strongly advocates for increased funding of its education sector to ensure education is accessible to all communities.

The United Nations is also heavily engaged in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The fourth SDG is centred on education, with the premise being that when people are able to get quality education they can break from the cycle of poverty, thus reducing inequalities, enabling upward socioeconomic mobility and helping to reach gender equality.

Part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone everywhere, and were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda, which sets out a 15-year plan to achieve the SDGs.

In addition, education is a human right, according to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is the foundational document for much of the world's human rights developments.

“It’s concerning that many children who could lead this nation are unschooled.”

"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It will advance the UN's efforts to maintain peace by fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, regardless of race or religious affiliation," the UDHR states.

One of the six guiding principles in the segment on education within the Five-Year Puntland Development Plan for 2020-2024 is that of access, which is defined as the ability of every learner to have equal opportunity to access education, regardless of their social class, age, gender, race, ethnic background, or disability. This principle aligns with the values of the UDHR, which emphasizes the importance of equal rights and non-discrimination for all individuals, including in the realm of education.