

High Level Meeting on Somalia
Remarks of H.E. Dr. Abdusalam H. Omer
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion
The Federal Republic of Somalia
21 September 2016

Excellences Honourable Minister's, distinguished guests and Ladies and Gentleman,

I am honoured and privileged to be addressing you all on Somalia, a country I dearly love, represent and serve. Looking around the room, it is clear that all our partners, allies and friends across the world have recognized both the potential and strategic value of our country for international security, trade and the promotion of democracy and good governance internationally.

More importantly, this forum today provides a golden opportunity for the Somali Federal Government and our key international partners to exchange views on the current progress and remaining challenges in Somalia's fruitful journey towards democratization, stability and sustainable development.

Before I proceed with my statement, I would like to recognize the great efforts of the brotherly and supportive nations that championed this meeting today and are co-chairing with us namely Ethiopia, Italy and the UK.

I also thank all our partner nations, organizations and friends who have made the time to participate at all levels in this timely meeting.

Indeed, Somalia is taking bold and historic steps towards a better future. From the beginning, I must stress and reiterate that this would not have been possible without our resilient people and all our valuable partners, many of whom are present today. To you all, I say Somalia and Somalis have turned a new leaf and we are writing a new chapter in our history.

This chapter is characterized by hope, inclusive governance and development in various forms.

On the key issues of elections, state formation, security and economic development, I am proud to say that our Government, in cooperation with our people and valuable partners, has made enormous progress despite some obstacles along the way. However, while the role of partner nations and organizations is important in Somalia's progress, we understand that inevitably it is what the Somali Government and people do to turn the visible hope into tangible successes that will determine our common future.

The Somali Government and People, the ultimate stakeholders and beneficiaries of progress in the country, are rising up to the many challenges in order that our country and people fulfill their potential.

Excellencies, Distinguished guests and Ladies and Gentlemen,

Somalia faces a dual challenge of progressing development and reform initiatives in a complex environment. Somalia, with the support of its brave National Security Services and AMISOM, is successfully fighting a war against international terrorism.

The threat is indeed international because no country can insulate itself today from terrorism no matter how powerful they are. Al-Shabab, Al-Qaida, ISIS, Boko Haram and others are a threat to us all, wherever we are simply because we refuse to conform to their pointless violent ideology. Terrorism is truly an evil without purpose, geography and can only be defeated in partnership across all sectors internationally.

Over the past four years, the Somali National Army and AMISOM have regained key towns and cities. Today, Al Shabab controls less than 10 per cent of territory in the country. In recent months many of their key leaders have been killed, others have defected and their violent ideology is truly shunned by the Somali people.

The Somali National Forces and AMISOM have proven that Al-Shabab is vulnerable, divided and can be defeated through coordinated military action time and again.

Due to the success of the joint operations of Somali National Army and AMISOM, Al-Shabab has turned to small-team asymmetric warfare tactics to conduct higher impact terror attacks against soft targets in Somalia and increasingly in neighboring countries.

In response, our Government is working with partners and neighbours to enhance security cooperation to enable us to respond to the threat together and swiftly.

The Somali Federal Government and People are grateful to the Troop Contributing Countries within AMISOM for their support in stabilizing our nation.

We fully recognize the great sacrifices their soldiers have made and continue to make in the service of our country and our people's future. Their courage and service will never be forgotten and their memories will always be honoured by us all.

In the long term it is fundamental that the Somali National Security Forces are in a position to take over the entire security responsibilities of Somalia and for Somalis from AMISOM. This is the only way we can truly achieve sustainable peace and development both in Somalia and across the region.

In order to achieve this, there is agreement and full understanding of the importance of an inclusive political agreement on the future of Somali security arrangements, and the urgency of building up effective Security Sector Reform in Somalia, ahead of the agreed AMISOM draw down in 2018.

The best evidence of our Government's commitment to leading on our national security is that the security forces training and integration process is ongoing and the New Policing model has been endorsed by all stakeholders.

In addition, we are ensuring that our national security forces work closely alongside AMISOM to ensure that they put their training to effective use and to actively participate in liberating the few remaining areas of the country held by AlShabaab as soon as possible.

Furthermore, in the last National Leadership Forum meeting last week, the National Security Policy was endorsed. This will be our blueprint and guide to ensuring a safer Somalia, region and world through partnership and joint action.

Last week's National Leadership Forum underscored the importance of protecting our electoral process from terrorist spoilers in all areas where elections are scheduled to happen. On this matter, it was also agreed during the historic 28th Extra-Ordinary IGAD Summit of Head of States and Government in Mogadishu last week, attended by Their Excellences the President of Uganda and Kenya, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the delegations of the other IGAD member States, that the Somali National Security Forces and AMISOM will work even more closely to fulfill this need.

While our commitment to defending our country and taking full responsibility for our national security is iron cast, there is still a need for further training and mentoring for Somali National Security Forces within a coordinated framework between the Somali Federal Government and donors.

In addition, there is also a need for the adequate equipping of our national forces so that they can effectively respond to the AMISOM draw down in 2018.

Therefore, the continuing financial and technical assistance of valuable international partners to the Somali National Security Forces in a timely and responsive manner is a must.

In this regard, we welcome the communiqué of the special event for Somalia on security held in London and co-hosted by Their Excellences Tobias Ellwood, UK's Minister for the Middle East and Africa, and Mike Penning, the Minister for the Armed Forces, on the 7th September 2016 in which many of you, our partners, were also present and actively participated.

Countering Violent Extremism

Countering the poisonous ideologies of hate that terrorism recruitment and terrorists generally rely on is also of fundamental importance if we are to win the peace permanently in Somalia and across the world.

H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the President of Somalia, on 12 September 2016 officially launched the National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism for Somalia. Somalia is very pleased that the inclusive process that we begun through Tubta Toosan Initiative over 10 months ago, has successfully concluded with a comprehensive National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).

This document is the result of a rigorous, inclusive process of dialogue and discussion with all the key stakeholders over the last 10 months.

The National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism provides a holistic, “whole of society” framework for addressing domestic and international security threats including terrorism.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Federal Government of Somalia, in consultation with the federal states, has adopted credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral mechanisms.

As we meet today, the different Electoral Commissions as well as the Somali People in general, are working tirelessly on the implementation of the electoral mechanism in line with the agreed timelines.

Many aspirant Parliamentarians are returning to their constituencies to win over voters so that they can represent them in the next Parliament. I am sure you will agree that this is a truly historic leap forward in terms of democratization in Somalia.

The aim of the Federal Government of Somalia is to ensure a smooth, peaceful, inclusive and enhanced electoral process for a peaceful democratic transition in November 2016 with no extension.

We are also unashamedly championing the 30% quota for women in Parliament, as their representation and political participation is central to our national progress. These actions most certainly constitute the first step towards the implementation of the 2020 political road map for universal suffrage in Somalia which we seek to achieve only 4 years later in 2020.

It is clear from all this that in Somalia we are not short of ambition or self-belief: We are determined to achieve our state building goals with equity and good governance as a crucial baseline.

The State building process in Somalia, which is central to elections, is almost complete with only one state in the process of formation. The formation of **Hiiiraan and Middle Shabelle** state is ongoing and this process will not jeopardize the agreed electoral process which will be implemented in accordance with the agreed timeline, as stated earlier.

I am sure you all appreciate, given the histories of your own national state building processes and governance arrangements, the difficulties of transitioning from conflict to inclusive governance and development.

The Somali People and Government are jointly attempting to make the kind of national transformation which many countries have achieved in centuries and decades in just 4 years. Despite the enormity of the tasks ahead, we are determined to succeed in achieving progress and prosperity for our people, the region and the wider world.

Economic Development: National Development Plan

The Somali Federal Government is determined to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals we committed to last year at the UN General Assembly.

Realistically achieving at least some of these quickly and effectively, with a view to achieving the rest over the longer term, will ensure the success of our overall national and regional agenda for peace, sustainable development and prosperity. In terms of national development the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia will never hide away from the difficult responsibilities that lie in our path but we will continue to challenge our international partners to match our ambitions and determination in kind.

To this end, we agree that a renewed partnership arrangement between the international community and Somalia is needed to guide future international engagement in support of Somalia's progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a sharp focus on the implementation of Somalia's National Development Plan.

The National Development Plan deserves the support of each and every partner because it is inclusive, nationally agreed by all Somalis and clearly lays out the national priorities such as education, skills, institutional capacity building and investment for development.

The National Development Plan is unique in that it is a truly Somali led and owned document which has also taken into account the views of our valuable partners.

Throughout the UN the discussions have always focused on funding developmental priorities across the world, especially the Sustainable Development Goals. In Somalia, we have a solution: investment.

Somalia is a truly resource rich nation with the longest coast in Africa and 70% of its population under 35 years of age. Our Government has passed one of the most competitive investment laws in the world and we are ready to welcome all investors in each and every sector.

From green energy, infrastructure, agriculture and the Blue Economy, Somalia can become a world leader and a profitable home for investors and new enterprises with easy access to the African, Middle East and Far East markets.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In partnership and with great effort from all, especially the Somali People themselves, Somalia has turned the corner towards stability and progress.

Today, shops are open, schools are full and our markets are busy with traders and customers. We even have Turkish and Chinese investors as well as professionals from Kenya and other places working on the ground. More importantly, our Diaspora are returning to invest and capacity build our key national institution and we thank all those Government's and organizations that have and continue to actively encourage this.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Their Excellences, Michael Keating, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Somalia and Ambassador Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the

African Union Commission for Somalia for their continuous efforts on the ground in promoting progress through partnership.

Our Government values the diverse contributions of each and every partner towards our journey to progress. In light of this, we welcome the proposal of H.E. Theresa May, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to host the High Level Partnership Forum in 2017 in London.

Hope, confidence and progress defines the new Somalia and its People. There is no turning back now, only going forward together and in partnership with the region and the rest of the world.

Now as we open the floor for statements, I look forward to your own national assessments of our progress and to discuss areas of further cooperation for the achievement of Somalia's national progress and our common priorities.

I thank you all.