

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia

Briefing to the Security Council on Somalia

13 September 2018

Madam President

My tour of duty comes to an end next week. On the day that I arrived in Mogadishu in January 2016, I was taken straight to the President's office to discuss a threat by federal member states' to suspend cooperation with the central government.

When I left Mogadishu two days ago, the country faced a similar situation.

The structural problems that shape Somali politics and security have not changed. But this should not obscure some remarkable achievements in the last three years.

There was a peaceful transition of presidential power, with a result that was accepted as legitimate.

A new Upper House representing the federal states came into being. The percentage of women MPs went up from 14 to 24%, higher than both the African and global average.

A famine was averted in 2017 thanks to national mobilization, better preparedness and the generosity and speed of donors in providing funding. This is a largely untold story that is a credit both to Somalis and to the UN.

The federal map is being filled in. One year ago, HirShabelle state was created.

There have been successes in conflict prevention and resolution. I just crossed lines and went shopping in Galkacyo, a town that was until recently very insecure and bitterly divided.

Other conflicts such as between Puntland and Somaliland have been prevented through intense diplomatic activity by the UN, IGAD and others.

A framework for addressing chronic insecurity is in place: the National Security Architecture and the Comprehensive Approach to Security.

The plan for transition of lead security responsibility from AMISOM to Somali forces is being implemented. Somali forces just took over Mogadishu's iconic stadium and adjacent areas.

There is a government with a compelling reform agenda, anchored in the strong partnership between President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmaajo' and Prime Minister Hassan Khayre.

Its centrepiece is to make the country more creditworthy and accountable as a step to regain full sovereignty, reduce dependency, and attract both public and private investment.

IMF benchmarks are being met, domestic revenues are increasing, public financial management is improving, business confidence is growing, and the prospect of arrears clearance and debt relief is closer.

Legislative and institutional frameworks are being developed for the 2020 elections. Real progress is being made to review the constitution. Federal Member states have been more engaged on a range of issues to define Somalia's federal model and the 2020 electoral model through the work Federal Negotiation Technical Committee.

A National Reconciliation Framework is being developed with a view to all players in Somali society playing a part in addressing grievances and resolving conflicts.

Madam President,

Somalis can draw strength from these positive changes. However, no-one should delude themselves about the challenges ahead, many of them structural.

Somalis continue to experience profound insecurity: high and costly levels of violence, ruthless attacks by Al-Shabaab, limited access to justice and basic services, absence of local governance, chronic poverty, lack of income and jobs.

The country is vulnerable to climate shocks. 2.6 million people are internally displaced. It is one of the most disadvantageous places in the world for women, and the education, work and life opportunities for young people remain heartbreakingly limited.

Abuse and deprivation of human rights is common, including sexual violence, harmful traditional practices, limited freedom of expression and arbitrary arrests and detentions, including of children. A National Human Rights Commission has yet to be established.

Disputes over borders, resources and revenues, power sharing and grievances between clans and interest groups, have the potential to turn violent and result in further human misery and displacement.

The 4.5 power sharing convention that accommodates the interests of powerful clans at the expense of weaker ones and minorities has allowed progress but is a source of exploitable grievances.

Rule of law is weak. A Justice and Corrections model is close to being agreed, but capacity remains very limited. The government lacks the means to ensure that judgements are implemented; too often, people turn to Al-Shabaab instead.

Corruption is systemic, used to gain and retain power. It penalizes the poor, the majority. Untraceable money changing hands continues to be a defining feature of Somali politics.

Tackling corruption also requires structural change - building and funding independent justice institutions, appointing well trained and competent staff in the civil service.

Somalis are proud of their clan lineage, but the country cannot afford to let clan identity be the only basis for determining appointments. Young people in particular deserve institutions that deliver services.

Madam President,

The government is fully aware of these challenges. The issue is whether it will be able to tackle them, whether the international community will be able to provide coherent, adequate and timely support to help it do so.

There are many risks. Four stand out.

First is the risk that Al-Shabaab and other extremists will derail progress. Despite the success of AMISOM and Somali security forces in containing Al-Shabaab, it remains resilient.

It uses targeted assassinations, improvised explosive devices and extortion both of communities and businesses, including in Mogadishu and other towns.

Managing and mitigating this risk requires systematic degradation of Al-Shabaab as well as increasing the legitimacy and capacity of government. One without the other will not work.

Accelerated implementation of the National Security Architecture and investment in the Comprehensive Approach to Security are essential. These can facilitate more coherent approaches by international partners.

But success depends primarily upon implementation of agreements among Somali leaders on security roles and responsibilities throughout the country.

Second is the risk that political differences will bring progress, passage of key legislation, and implementation of the government's reform and security agenda, to a grinding halt.

The deficit of trust between central government and federal member states, and the recent decision by the latter to suspend cooperation, are very worrisome.

Failure to restore trust and cooperation sends a negative signal both to Somalis and to those international partners trying to make a case to sceptical capitals that Somalia is ready for more financial and security support.

Federal states should use the upcoming National Security Council convened by the President as an opportunity for constructive engagement.

Building upon progress to date, there is scope for more investment in the capacity of federal states, and for more outreach and communication from the centre.

Securing the buy in of key constituencies to the national agenda - not just federal states, but also parliamentarians, clan power brokers, the business community including in the diaspora, and traditional elders - gets tougher, and more expensive, as state and national elections approach. But it is essential.

Mitigating this risk requires a twin track approach.

Fundamental issues, including how power should be shared, allocated and separated, the nature of the federal state, the respective powers of the federal and state governments, should be addressed through the constitutional review. Young people, women and minorities need to be consulted.

Strong and differing views about federalism are legitimate but if the political culture is to change these need to be resolved through dialogue and not through unilateral action.

More immediately, the greatest challenge is to reach political agreements that allow forward momentum without prejudicing the outcome of the constitutional review. These include the Electoral Law, integration of security forces, and resource and revenue sharing agreements.

Here, trust is the key ingredient, difficult given that politicians suspect or assume that their opponents' principal pre-occupation is to remove or replace them.

The concept of patriotic opposition is weak, and the rules of the political game are blurred and blunt. Motions of no confidence, of impeachment and elections are abused and used for financial and political gain. They need to be revamped.

Politicians' role should be to get things done rather than promote clan or personal interests. This will take time, and will only happen if agreements and processes are seen as viewed as legitimate and as the result of constructive engagement.

Trust requires respect for due process and commitment to non-violence, a willingness to engage, to make compromises for the broader good. This was my parting message to Somali leaders.

The third risk, notwithstanding Council unity, is fragmentation in the international community. There are a number of dimensions to this.

The government's security, political and economic reform agenda will be far more successful if partners work with each other on the basis of agreed national plans and capable management systems.

In some areas, this works, and the results are impressive - including humanitarian, electoral support and economic and financial reforms. Strong partnerships are brokered by the UN and the international financial institutions. Much higher levels of budget support are now in the pipeline including from the EU and Norway.

But in other areas, notably security, more bilateral approaches prevail, complicating the chances of success.

Another area where fragmentation must be resisted is the basis upon which AMISOM will stay in Somalia.

AMISOM deserves predictable funding and a clear horizon for drawdown, based on reconfiguration around progress in degrading Al-Shabaab, and on evident Somali capacity to assume security responsibilities.

Premature departure of AMISOM could be disastrous; but to be sustained, support for AMISOM as well as support for Somali security institutions requires success in improving the population's security.

The Somalis have taken ownership of a conditions-based transition; AMISOM can help drive its success.

UNSOS's role will need to evolve as transition advances; the current UNSOS review will throw light on this.

A further test of international unity relates to Somalia's vulnerability to partners' rivalries, including in the Gulf.

The atmosphere created by the resurgence of diplomatic activity in the Horn and the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea may, I hope, prove contagious.

The beneficial knock on effects could include containment or swifter resolution of conflicts among Somalis, including talks between Hargeisa and Mogadishu which need to resume, and finding a respectful basis upon which Somalia can benefit from historic links and support with *all* its partners.

A fourth risk is that the population will once again face the prospect of humanitarian catastrophe. Unfortunately, the risk of this happening is high, and millions are already living on the edge of dignified existence.

Future crises will result from the combination of climate related shocks, armed conflict provoked by Al-Shabaab and unresolved grievances, competition over natural resources and systemic marginalization of certain groups.

The objective should be to reduce human vulnerability by creating jobs, investing in urbanization, water management, access to clean power and adding value to the country's enormous economic potential whether in livestock, fisheries, agriculture or IT.

Madam President

The future of Somalia is in the hands of the Somalis. This government recognises that, and I pay tribute to its determination to reassert Somalia's sovereignty.

Political will alone, however, is not enough. Practical capacities are essential, as is success in fostering truly inclusive politics – far from easy in a political economy scarred by 30 years of violent conflict, with spoilers who benefit from insecurity.

Success depends upon political, business, traditional and other leaders working together for the common good, leveraging the country's potential wealth to transform prospects for people – especially the young.

Cynicism about the likelihood of this ever happening, of Somalis being able to find a basis upon which to resolve their problems, has been punctured in the last few years. There is now a sense of the *possible* – not just of the *impossible*.

The more that political leaders show unity, the greater the opportunity, and the responsibility, of international partners to invest in all parts of the country and its leadership.

Let me conclude, Madame President, by thanking this Council for its continued support to Somalia, to the UN and to me and my team. It has been a privilege to work with international partners, and above all, with the leaders and people of Somalia.