Statement to the UN Security Council (via VTC)

By

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Mogadishu, 21 May 2020
Mr. President,

COVID-19 has not spared Somalia. Corona Virus is threatening our collective efforts in the country and the progress the Federal Government and Federal member states were able to make to date. We have set up an AMISOM COVID-19 Response Taskforce which is working closely with UNSOM, the central Government and the Governments of the Federal Member States in all AMISOM Sectors.

Despite the disruption that COVID-19 is currently causing in Somalia, and its potential to derail the implementation of the country’s outstanding priority tasks, it is with admiration that we witness the effort Somalia is making to contain terrorism, build peace through dialog and reconciliation and develop the country through state building, reconstruction and recovery. In this context, developments in three key areas deserve highlighting, namely Somalia’s economic recovery, inclusive politics, and security.

**Economic Recovery**

In October 2019, at the Somalia Partnership Forum (SPF), the Federal Government committed itself to continue with stringent economic reforms, as part of its journey towards achieving debt relief.
Having reached the Decision Point, there are important economic hurdles the country needs to overcome to reach the Completion Point for full debt cancellation.

To achieve its next milestone, the Federal Government must now embark on new short-term targets which includes 1) provision of food assistance to about 5.2 million people, 2) addressing the needs of those in IDP camps, 3) educating those out of school, and 4) creating around 400,000 jobs each year. This is a daunting task if we take into account the adverse conditions brought about by the combination of terrorism, recurrent natural disasters and the impact of COVID-19 on Somalia’s economy. Already, there are indications that remittances are declining, trade dropping, and household incomes facing a downward trend. A potentially more worrying concern is, if the trend of decreasing revenues continues due to COVID-19, there is a risk the Federal Government will struggle to meet some of its obligations. As partners of Somalia in our common endeavour to help the country remain on its feet and progress, we need to envisage ways of helping Somalia overcome these trends and meet the conditions required to be eligible to full debt cancellation.

Inclusive Politics

Mr. President,

While the Federal Government is yet to fully enjoy cooperative relations with all of its Federal Member States, in recent months, we have
witnessed a degree of readiness to move forward on key national issues. I take note, with satisfaction, the Federal Government’s role in strengthening its technical level engagement with the Federal Member States line ministries to ensure that important ‘must not fail’ priorities are achieved.

In February, after hosting a consultative conference, the Puntland President announced his intention to advance dialogue with Mogadishu. This we hope, in addition to other ongoing initiatives, will lead to both the Federal Government and Federal Member States to begin articulating a common vision for Somalia.

Beyond the encouraging signs of a much-needed national dialogue soon, we have seen progress on reconciliation and dialogue processes, both at the state and local level.

In Galmudug, the deployment of AMISOM troops in Dhusamareeb has contributed to the creation of a conducive environment for the holding of a successful all clan reconciliation conference and to a substantial advancement of the state formation process. The process saw elections take place in February and more recently, we witnessed the formation of an all-inclusive Galmudug cabinet and a peaceful transfer of power from former President Haaf to the new incumbent, President Qoor Qoor. We welcomed these significant developments and, building on these important steps, we are optimistic about the future of Galmudug.
In Jubaland, we take note of the recent developments that saw the Jubaland leader and Ogadeni opposition figures reach a settlement that led to mutual recognition and cohabitation. We, however, insist on the need to go further and ensure that all clans come together in an All Jubaland stakeholder congregation to find a lasting solution to the political, social and economic problems that continue to besiege that Federal member state.

At the local level, similar reconciliation efforts were also promoted in April as part of bringing violent clan conflicts to an end. In Lower Shabelle, the swift intervention by the South West President saw conflict between the Galjeel and Shanta Caleemood clans come to an end. And in a similar approach in Galmudug, the new administration’s efforts resulted in a cessation of hostilities between the Wagarda’a and Habar Gedir clans.

Mr. President,

Efforts to prepare for elections, have continued. I would like, in this context to applaud the commitment of the Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections and the tireless effort of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC). Despite the COVID-19 disruptions, both the Committee and the NIEC have opted to continue most of their work through the use of technological platforms. Pursuing this option has
allowed for the critical drafting of recommendations to complement the National Electoral Bill passed in February.

In addition, I commend the vital work of the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF). Under adverse conditions, the Task Force has increased its activity which has recently seen an agreement reached on its Terms of Reference and the adoption of the concept of security for voter registration.

We have also seen further progress with the Task Force holding a two-day workshop in March to conduct assessments on the potential of securable areas across Somalia and prepare plans for the commencement of mapping potential voter registration centres.

Mr. President,

It is abundantly clear that holding national elections is a top priority for Somalia. I am also convinced, from my engagement with key election stakeholders, that they too view this as a matter of necessity and urgency. The recent return to Mogadishu of the two Speakers of the Federal Parliament is an encouraging sign – and will allow the NIEC’s Chairperson’s report to be delivered on 27 May.

However, I am concerned that against a backdrop of genuine preparations for elections, there are outstanding and potentially
contentious issues that must be immediately addressed and completed. These include:

i. Making the electoral law implementable, particularly ensuring a 30 per cent quota for women’s representation; and

ii. Parliament adopting the Amendments to the Political Parties Law.

But above all, Somalia’s election will require the political support and involvement of all Federal Member States. There is urgency in this happening as time is running out. I therefore call on all stakeholders at the Federal and regional levels to overcome their challenges and allow free and effective presence and action of the National Independent Electoral Commission in all the federal member states so that credible, free and fair elections can take place.

*Security*

**Mr. President,**

During the reporting period, there have been tangible security gains, which are aimed at degrading and disrupting Al-Shabaab’s operational capabilities across Somalia. On 16 March, under operation “BADBAADO” Al-Shabaab was dislodged from the bridge town of Janaale in Lower Shabelle. The recovery of Janaale represents a serious
blow to Al-Shabaab, as the town was a strategic stronghold for the group’s operations in Lower Shabelle and Mogadishu. Janale was also a hub for manufacturing VBIEDs and IEDs. Beyond Janale, targeted operations by AMISOM and Somali security forces (SSF) in Bula Xaaji on 20 March has destroyed enemy positions and considerably reduced the group’s capabilities.

Somalia Transition Plan

In line with the Security Council resolution 2472 (2019), AMISOM has completed its mandated draw-down of 1000 troops by 28 February 2020 without handing over or collapsing any of its FOBs with the view to avoiding abandoning the population to the mercy of AL Shabab and ensuring the preservation of the gains made over the years. As agreed at the Kampala Operational Coordination Committee (OCC) meeting, each TCC took charge of the expenses related to maintaining its forces in the FOBs that were earmarked for collapsing.

The implementation of phase one and two of the Transition Plan has seen AMISOM and the Somali Security Forces conduct several joint operations as part of the efforts to disrupt and degrade Al-Shabaab.

There is, however, a lot still to be done to fully implement the tasks set in the two phases of the transition plan which will end next December. However, if the process of generating sufficient, well trained, well equipped and regularly paid Somali security forces continues at the current
pace, we may not, by the end of 2021, be able to achieve the goal of producing a critical mass of Somali forces capable of taking over from AMISOM, hold and preserve the gains accumulated over the years with so much sacrifice. This fact alone (there are a number of others), calls for an urgent reconsideration and readjustment of the way and pace at which all stakeholders involved in supporting the peace building and state building effort in Somalia, together and individually, implement the tasks outlined in the Somalia Transition Plan.

Your Excellencies,

AMISOM effectiveness in the theatre of operations should be seen from a wider context of being part of several actors who play specific roles in responding to Somalia’s fundamental problems of terrorism, political disagreements, lack of reconciliation and economic underdevelopment. It is in this context that the Comprehensive Approach to Security (CAS), which is underlying the implementation of the Transition Plan and outlines division of labour in its five strands, remains the most viable vehicle in ensuring that all fundamental aspects of the Somali crisis are taken into account and effectively tackled. CAS may be reviewed if necessary, to ensure enhanced effectiveness. In this regard, such a framework would ensure that all actors participate in a shared responsibility and help overcome challenges related to poor coordination and coherence, erratic information sharing, lack of trust and mutual accountability which are serious handicaps in our Joint endeavour in Somalia.
The current rate of force generation is too slow and, if not changed, will take several years to reach the threshold for effective transition. The recent successes in Lower Shabelle under Sector 1, were possible because of generation of national forces that relieved AMISOM forces to create mobile units that have made a difference.

**Future of AMISOM**

Mr. President,

In the coming days, this Council will consider AMISOM’s mandate renewal. On 7 May, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) in its Communique 923rd (2020) renewed AMISOM’s mandate for 12 months. But as the Council deliberates on AMISOM’s mandate renewal tasks, a key focus will be the future engagement of Somalia’s key security investors – and in particular, the need to base this future engagement on a comprehensive independent assessment.

As members of this Council are aware, the African Union Commission is currently undertaking its own comprehensive assessment of what future support the African Union will provide to Somalia through AMISOM beyond 2021. In addition, we are exploring options that will allow other key international partners, including the United Nations, to better re-align their support to Somalia.
To achieve this, and as agreed during the recent High-Level Virtual Meeting on Somalia, there must be consensus on formulating a comprehensive approach to Somalia’s stability and security – and as noted earlier, a commitment by all Somalia’s security investors to not only revise and update the Transition Plan but to also take into account of its implementation modalities for all stakeholders.

I thank you.