

2019 ‘a critical year’ for Somali politics and development says Security Council

In the wake of the Somali Government's decision last week to expel the head of the UN's assistance mission, [UNSOM](#), the Security Council on Saturday cautioned that 2019 would be "a critical year" for the east African nation that is reconstituting itself after decades of conflict.

In a statement following on from UN Secretary-General António Guterres [on Friday](#), deeply regretting the Government's declaration that Nicholas Haysom was persona non grata, the 15 Council members expressed their regret, and thanked the veteran South African lawyer and senior UN official "and underlined their full support" for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and its mandate provided last year under [Security Council Resolution 2408](#).

The members of the Security Council underlined that 2019 would be a critical year for Somalia, and called on its leaders to work together to advance political and security reform – *Press Statement*

"The members of the Security Council underscored the strong and continued commitment of the international community to support peace, stability and development in Somalia, and reiterated in this regard their expectation of full cooperation between Somalia and the United Nations."

Mr Haysom was accused by the Somali Federal Government of interfering in its internal affairs, by questioning the detention of an opposition candidate for state-wide office, who had been a leader in the extremist Al-Shabaab group, before defecting. The Government said he had not undergone sufficient rehabilitation or proved his commitment to democratic politics. In protests against the jailing of the candidate in South West state days before the vote, at least 15 died and many were detained, according to news reports.

Mr. Guterres said on Friday that in the interests of putting the Somali people, and the work of UNSOM first, he would be appointing a new Special Representative and head of mission, "in due course". He offered Mr. Haysom his "full confidence" in his long and successful track record on service to the UN.

Strained relations between central and regional government, and the legislature, together with the complex web of inter-communal politics, have caused tensions across the country, as further elections on Somalia's road to full democratic government beckon next year.

"The members of the Security Council underlined that 2019 would be a critical

year for Somalia, and called on its leaders to work together to advance political and security reforms. The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia”, said the statement.

Members also “paid tribute to the contribution of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), UNSOM, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), and all Somali and international actors working to bring peace and stability’.