

Ensuring an inclusive electoral process and a united response to humanitarian crises in Somalia

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and my thanks to our briefers, to SRSW Swan, to Ambassador Madeira and also to Ms Hassan for that really useful and detailed update.

Madam President, regrettably, I must open on a sombre note because, despite the Secretary-General's calls for a ceasefire, Al-Shabaab continue to launch their attacks. We strongly condemn all terrorist attacks, including the murder of two humanitarian workers just last month. The UK expresses its condolences to victims' families and reaffirms its solidarity with Somalia in fighting terrorism. Let me reiterate, it is vital that all parties ensure unimpeded access and safety of aid workers in line with international humanitarian law.

Madam President, as we near the end of the current political cycle, I would like to reflect on Somalia's progress. And there has been progress. In March this year, Somalia achieved Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief. They achieved this decision point after impressive economic performance and can now access new international finance. The federal government has increased its revenue base with international support. Somalia is making progress in building resilience to humanitarian shocks and, with support from AMISOM, the Somali National Army has taken back and held territory from Al-Shabaab.

This is a marathon, not a sprint. But at the moment, we are making progress.

As the electoral processes commence in Somalia, we acknowledge the federal government and member states' agreement on an electoral model for 2020-21 and stress the importance of preserving this spirit of consensus. We now urge all stakeholders to work together to deliver an inclusive, timely and credible electoral process, which includes a 30 percent quota for women. And I want to just reiterate to Ms Hassan how useful it was to hear from her on how civil society's activity on this is working to achieve this target, but also the challenges they still face.

Madam President, I want to express deep concern about the growing number of attacks on freedom of expression, including the killing, assault and intimidation of journalists. As Somalia prepares to hold an electoral process, Somali leaders must ensure political space remains open, allowing the expression of a diversity of voices.

Beyond this electoral process, commitment to effective federalism is critical for Somalia's long-term stability. Building institutions of state and ensuring resources and power can be distributed in a way that best serves the Somali people. We urge Somalia's leaders to set out their vision for steps

towards an inclusive political settlement, finalising the constitution and ensuring direct elections in 2024-25. We encourage them to maximise the benefits of debt relief through better federal economic cooperation. And we urge Somalia's leaders to continue to articulate a clear vision for the security transition after 2021.

As we enter the next political cycle, Somalia and the international community should recommit to principles of mutual accountability. The United Kingdom reaffirms its support and commitment to Somalia's long-term stability and growth.

I turn again now to the security situation in Somalia, which remains a significant challenge. Firstly, I would like to restate our tribute to the continued commitment and sacrifices of AMISOM troop contributing countries and to Somalia's security forces. We welcome the renewal of the Somalia sanctions regime and the international resolve to counter Al-Shabaab through tackling their access to arms and illicit finance.

We express deep concern about the worrying statistics on children and armed conflict and sexual and gender-based violence in Somalia. We welcome the tasking in the UNSOM and sanctions mandates to report on human rights. All tools must be used to ensure people do not suffer.

And we welcome also the efforts by the federal government to renew the Somalia Transition Plan. The deadline at the end of 2021 for Somalian authorities to take greater leadership from AMISOM is a momentous one. Our partners in the African Union and the AMISOM TCCs have made enormous sacrifices in supporting Somalia as it works to retake control of its own security. It is clear this support will be needed after 2021. But it's also clear we have an opportunity to support AMISOM as it evolves towards a role where it can enable the Somalis to manage their own security.

International conversations, including the upcoming EU Conference on security and critically, the independent assessment mandated by this Council, are necessary for partners to reflect on how we can collectively implement Somalia's security vision. I encourage constructive engagement with these processes as we come to a new mandate next year.

Finally, Madam President, Somalia faces a protracted climate and conflict-induced humanitarian crisis, compounded by what SRSG Swan called the "triple shock" of COVID-19, locusts and floods. The United Kingdom gave 64 million pounds in humanitarian aid in the last financial year to Somalia. We call on the international community to provide more funding for the humanitarian response and efforts to build long-term resilience.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise three points. Firstly, a united international response is crucial to supporting Somalia and its fight against protracted humanitarian crises. Secondly, I reiterate our call for the federal government to ensure the agreed electoral process is inclusive, credible and timely. And finally, that Somalia's long-term peace and stability depends on a clear plan for ensuring its security, a political vision for better federal cooperation, and continued international support

and commitment to mutual accountability.

Thank you, Madam President.