

Rapid completion of credible elections crucial for Somalia

Thank you Madam President, and can I start by thanking SRSG Swan, Special Representative Madeira and Ambassador Skoog for their briefings.

Madam President, I want to focus my remarks today on four topics: elections, security transition, piracy and the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

On elections, firstly, the UK welcomes the recent increase in the pace of elections to the Lower House. Completing the electoral process will avoid prolonged political uncertainty, avoid increased risks to Somalia's security and stability, weaken Al-Shabaab, and help pave the way for Somalia to access much-needed international funding.

So we therefore urge all Somali political leaders to put the national interest first, prioritise the conclusion of a peaceful, credible electoral process, and ensure that security forces are not used as political instruments. We hope to see the conclusion of the Lower House elections by 25 February, and the achievement, as a minimum, of the target of 30 percent of parliamentary seats won by women.

Secondly Madam President, on the security transition, I want to underline the importance of reaching swift agreement on a reconfigured African Union mission in Somalia which is realistic, effective and affordable, and which can support implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan.

We welcome the positive progress made in recent weeks by the UN, the African Union, the Somali government and other stakeholders towards this end. It is critical that this process continue at pace.

We also encourage the Federal Government of Somalia to provide clarity on how it will generate the forces and capacity required to implement the Somalia Transition Plan. This is the best way to protect AMISOM's successes – won by AMISOM Somali forces at such great cost – and to address the evolving threat of Al-Shabaab.

Thirdly Madam President, on the subject of piracy, the UK commends the successful efforts of the Somali, and international efforts, to counter piracy off the Somali coast.

We have no objection, in principle, to the Federal Government of Somalia's desire to move to a bilateral maritime cooperation framework. However, we support an extension of resolution 2608 until such a framework is in place to avoid any operational gaps, which includes ensuring that the EU's Operation Atalanta can continue to function.

Finally Madam President, on the humanitarian situation, I want to say a few words about the backdrop of severe humanitarian need – against which these other challenges are unfolding.

The UK has recently announced an \$18.3 million in additional support to address the effects of the current drought, on top of the \$47.5 million of humanitarian assistance already committed. But more funds are needed. It is vital that we, the international community, learn the lessons from 2017. We need to act fast to improve access to affected populations, as well as helping to build longer-term resilience to climate shocks.

In conclusion, Madam President, there is no overnight solution to these complex peace, security and humanitarian challenges. However, the rapid completion of credible elections, as agreed by the National Consultative Committee last month, will be a critical step towards keeping vital economic, security and constitutional reforms on track.

I thank you.