

Somalia: UN mission pledges support as new President will face 'daunting challenges'

8 February 2017 – Congratulating former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' on his election as Somalia's new President, the United Nations Assistance Mission in the country (UNSOM) said the UN and the wider international community are ready to assist him in addressing the myriad challenges that await his Government.

"We [...] look forward to working with him and his Government in tackling the many economic, political, security and humanitarian challenges facing Somalia," UNSOM Spokesperson Joseph Contreras told *UN News* after the presidential polling, which followed a nearly 18 month exercise that included an extended parliamentary electoral process.

"It's an historic milestone in the country's emergence from years of chaos and civil war. We feel the process, though flawed in some respects by allegations of corruption and manipulation of some of the parliamentary voting, overall, produced some very positive results," he said, noting that the new Federal Parliament that was elected is the most representative and legitimate national legislature in the history of the country.

The new president, known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner after two rounds of voting by the Somali Parliament in the capital, Mogadishu. The runner-up, the incumbent, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, chose to withdraw from a third and final round of voting and congratulated the former Prime Minister on his victory.

Mr. Contreras said that the voting today, held under "very, very tight security," was conducted in a peaceful, orderly and transparent manner according to the rules stipulated by Somalia's provisional Federal Constitution. "Voting was held at the airport and there had been some questions raised about security, but I take it everything went smoothly," he said, stressing that had been no attempted attacks on the venue whatsoever.

He went on to say that the Mission also thanked the outgoing President and his government for the achievements they registered over the past four years "and for the very good working relationship that we enjoyed as the United Nations with President Hassan Sheikh and his team."

Looking ahead, Mr. Contreras said that what is next for Somalia first of all is for the new Federal President to name a prime minister. The prime minister then in turn will appoint a cabinet.

"And then they will get down to business. The new President [...] faces a daunting list of challenges in the coming months and years. There is of course the ongoing drought crisis in many parts of the country where over six

million people are facing varying degrees of food insecurity,” he explained.

Furthermore, Mr. Contreras continued, there is a presumption of the constitutional review process that needs to take place, and that process needs to be completed this year. “Also, the new Federal President will need to promote reconciliation among various communities across Somalia who have disputes over resources, land and other matters.”

In all this, the international community, led by the UN, stands ready to work closely with the new Government and help it promote the State-building process and consolidate the peace and promote the development of the country, he stated.