

Speech: London Somalia Conference 2017: UN Secretary-General's opening remarks

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, spoke at the start of the London conference on Somalia's future.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, we are here to support Somalia at a moment which is both tragic and hopeful. And I do believe that Somalia can be in the near future the kind of good news that we badly need in the international community and in our troubled world.

I thank the United Kingdom, as well as President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo of Somalia, for co-hosting.

I deeply appreciate the leadership of the African Union and the vital work of AMISOM [the African Mission in Somalia]. I thank Chairperson Faki for joining us today.

I commend the President, along with Prime Minister Khayre, the new cabinet and leaders of the federal member states, for their political will to work together in Somalia.

Like all of us, I was deeply saddened by the tragic death last week of the Minister of Public Works, Abbas [Abdullahi Sheikh] Siraji. He grew up in a refugee camp and went on to become a powerful symbol of Somalis' hopes for the future. His unfortunate death must not diminish our resolve to see these hopes realized.

On the contrary, his sacrifice must encourage all Somalis to maintain the spirit of inclusiveness, embracing women, youth, minorities, business leaders and all members of society, and must encourage us all to support that effort.

The significantly enhanced representation of women and youth in the new Federal Parliament shows Somalia's positive trajectory.

We are here to listen to Somalia's leadership – and to agree on a framework for cooperation.

This unique chance to build on progress comes thanks to the courageous and selfless service of the men and women of AMISOM. I want to pay tribute to them.

But I also want to say that I visited Somalia several times. I was in Mogadishu several times escorted by AMISOM. And I have seen the precarious conditions in which AMISOM soldiers were not only protecting the Somali people, but also our global security.

I remember Mogadishu when Al-Shabaab controlled half of Mogadishu. AMISOM had no helicopters, no night-vision systems, and armoured cars that were vulnerable to the weapons of Al-Shabaab. And AMISOM soldiers, women and men, and AMISOM police were fighting to protect our global security.

And they were doing so under a Security Council mandate, without enough support and with unpredictable funding. I think this is the moment to seriously look into the predictable way to fund AMISOM – I myself am favourable to the consideration of possible assessed contributions in relation to, at least, parts of AMISOM efforts.

I know the African Union is working on partially funding its own operations but this is something that we need to solve to give AMISOM the capacity to really create the conditions to allow the Government and the new security institutions of Somalia to then be able to assume the responsibility of the security of their own country.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, more than 6 million people in Somalia need assistance – or nearly half the population. Some 275,000 malnourished children are at risk of starvation.

I went to Somalia in March on my first visit to the field as Secretary-General and I saw the challenges. Somalia has to rebuild security, foster transparency and accountability, deal with a crippling drought, and avert a famine. But I saw an opportunity to build on the momentum of the electoral process and achieve lasting stability.

We have a firm platform to improve security, deepen federalism, resolve residual conflicts and advance reconciliation, and then complete the review of the Constitution.

The drought is the most pressing priority. This morning, we presented a revised Humanitarian Response Plan seeking an additional \$900 million through the end of the year.

We also need to address the damage caused by climate change and conflict.

Indeed, fighting continues to devastate Somalia. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law occur with impunity.

We are still seeing Al-Shabaab recruiting and exploiting children, and also children that are arbitrarily detained. And I am particularly concerned about widespread sexual violence. Internally displaced women and girls, and members of minority clans, remain the most vulnerable. They need human rights urgent protection.

The historic agreement among Somali political leaders laid the foundations for Somalia's National Security Architecture. We must better support the Security Pact and the Somali security institutions.

And again, we need to make sure that we are able to be coordinated in supporting the Somali government to build up the Somalia National Army and the Somali Police. What we have had until now are different efforts by

different countries doing different training programmes in different areas of the country, that do not match, that do not create the conditions for a unified national army and a unified police force. It is time to overcome this lack of coordination. It is time to have one single programme of training of Somali soldiers and Somali police and that single programme of training to be lead by the Somali institutions. The UN will be totally committed to support that way of doing business.

I welcome Somalia's first National Development Plan in 35 years. I also commend the government for its commitment to progressively create and strengthen the institutions of a true state.

I hope that we will soon be able to see a country able to collect its taxes, to have its own police and security forces, to provide basic public services and guarantee the security of its citizens through its own police force and army. We all must support the realization of this vision. I see progressively the future AMISOM being able to reduce its role after the initial necessary surge and national institutions to be fully able to function.

I urge partners to align their support to the Plan. It can help Somalia achieve economic progress, generate revenue, reduce over-reliance on donor resources, and create conditions for debt relief. And I think debt relief is not only an essential economic and financial question – it is also a moral question.

The present generation of Somali children we see living in dramatic circumstances are burdened by a debt that that was contracted in completely different circumstances by completely different actors. Now I know that there are a number of technical issues that need to be properly addressed. I know that debt relief needs to be sustainable. But I think we also need a strong political commitment to make it really happen and to create the conditions for development to be much more strongly supported by the international community.

This [conference](#) aims to agree on a New Partnership as Somalia turns a page.

The United Nations will do everything possible to make this the start of a new chapter of sustainable prosperity and lasting peace for Somali, to the benefit of us all.

Thank you very much.