

The importance of fair elections, security and humanitarian assistance in Somalia

Mr President, on behalf of the United Kingdom, I want to first express my condolences to the family and friends of those killed in the recent Al-Shabaab attack in the Elite Hotel in Mogadishu. I want also to reaffirm our solidarity with all Somalis in the face of such attacks. Deplorably, these attacks, despite Covid-19 and the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire, continue to undermine peace and security in Somalia. We condemn these attacks and we pay tribute to the ongoing commitment and sacrifices of AMISOM troop-contributing countries and the efforts of the Somalia Security Forces to counter Al-Shabaab.

Mr President, as we have heard today, Somalia is at a critical juncture on its journey towards a long-term political settlement and the peace, security and stability that it will enable. Somali leaders and international partners have committed to supporting and advancing democracy in Somalia. With the deadline for elections fast approaching, an agreement on a way forward is urgently needed.

A timely and inclusive way forward is also critical – a way forward that respects the principles and commitments agreed to in the Mutual Accountability Framework, including at least a 30 percent quota for women parliamentarians. This agreement should represent clear progress from the 2016 election model, moving Somalia away from clan-based selection processes to direct elections and enable as many citizens to vote as possible, as set out in the Provisional Federal Constitution. And so we welcome the ongoing consultations between leaders of the Federal Government and the Federal Member States in Dhusamareb. We have always been clear that the electoral model will require broad based support among all Somali stakeholders.

To that end, we regret, as SRSO Swan and Ambassador Madeira both said, that President Dani of Puntland and also President Madobe of Jubaland have not yet joined the talks. We call for them to attend as a matter of urgency. It is vital that all stakeholders, the Federal Government, Federal Member States, Parliament, the Electoral Committee and Joint Parliamentary Committee work together in a spirit of compromise to reach agreement and avoid unilateral or provocative acts that would undermine the hard-won stability in Somalia and the partnership with the international community. We stand ready to support agreed outcomes that strengthen inclusive politics and include a significant element of direct voting.

Mr President, turning to the human rights situation, we too share the concerns expressed by the UN and indeed the SRSO today about the "sexual intercourse related crimes bill." It was encouraging to see so many Somalis speak out against it. We urge Parliament to give first reading to the original Sexual Offences Bill submitted by Cabinet. Any bill passed by the

Somali Parliament must reflect its international obligations and commitments on the protection of children, women and girls.

Mr President, I want also to express our deep concern about attacks on freedom of expression and against journalists and media workers in Somalia. Media freedom is a vital component of our democratic society, and the media has a vital role to play in Somalia. We call for journalists and media workers to be able to perform their work freely and safely.

Mr President, Somalia faces a protracted climate and conflict-induced humanitarian crisis. This crisis has been exacerbated by the global Covid-19 pandemic, floods and locust infestation. We call on the international community to provide more funding for the humanitarian response and to step up efforts to build resilience and mitigate the long-term effects of climate change. The United Kingdom gave \$420 million in the last financial year to Somalia and is now working to support the Covid-19 response. It is vital that the Federal Government and Member States facilitate the delivery of relief aid to all those in need and ensure the safety of aid workers in line with international humanitarian law.

I return finally to the security situation in Somalia. Somalia has made important progress in recent years, but the security situation, as we've heard, remains difficult. Next year's deadline for transition of greater responsibility to the Somalia security authorities presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Mr President, it is vital that all those who have invested in supporting AMISOM and building Somalia's security forces now work together to agree to a future of international support to Somalia's security. Without this, we risk wasting the progress and sacrifices made to date the UN-led independent assessment on post-2021 security should offer the forum for these discussions, and I urge all partners to engage proactively with it.

In conclusion, Mr President, I want to emphasise three points:

First, I want to reiterate our call, which the Security Council has made many times, for the Federal Government and all Federal Member States to come together and reach a decisive and inclusive agreement on elections soon.

Secondly, I want to underline the importance of this Council, the United Nations, the AU, and wider international community continuing to support Somalia to achieve progress on political and security reform.

And finally, I want to stress the importance of a united response supporting Somalia in its fight against Covid-19 and protracted humanitarian crises.

Mr President, Somalia, through the determination of its people and the support to the international community, has come a long way. We shouldn't lose sight of this. We stand ready to lend our support to navigate this next stage and to help Somalia realise its goal of peace and security.

Thank you, Mr President.