



SOMALIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. ABDIWELI MOHAMED ALI,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA
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ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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New York

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just over two weeks ago, Somalia took a bold and decisive step away from decades of division, disorder and conflict, and instead towards the reconstitution of a more representative, more democratic Somali republic at peace with itself, with its neighbours and with the rest of the world.

On August 1st this year, a National Constituent Assembly adopted the new Somali Constitution; on August 20th, a new Parliament was sworn in, which elected our new president, His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on September 10th. In the coming weeks, the President will appoint a Prime Minister and a new Cabinet will be duly established.

Let me take this opportunity to convey the sincere regrets of President Mohamud – he would have liked to be here himself to address you on this great occasion however the tremendous scale and urgency of the challenges of leading Somalia and the demands of the new role did not permit him to travel here to New York to present his remarks in person. However he asked me to come here to convey his warm greetings and his vision for Somalia's future.

Excellencies,

For more than two decades of crisis, the Somali people have suffered and endured, but we have not done so alone. The United Nations have stood by us, providing humanitarian assistance to those of our people in need, helping us to rebuild from the ruins of war, bringing us time and again to the negotiating table to resolve our differences, and maintaining the dignity of the Somali nation by keeping our flag flying through these long, dark years. As we emerge from the long dark days, I wish to express my personal thanks, and that of the Somali people, to the Secretary General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga, for their tireless support and crucial role in helping to open this new chapter in Somali history.

Somalia's progress is also due in great measure to the selfless courage and sacrifice of our brothers and sisters in the African Union, including our closest neighbours, whose forces have fought long and hard, with so many laying down their lives in the battle to give our children a better future. With the support of AMISOM and other partners, our armed forces are becoming increasingly experienced and capable, but we will need AMISOM's steadfast presence and mentoring for some time to come, and we call upon our brothers in the African Union to renew their commitment as we move forward to assume our own responsibilities in full. We thank our international partners who are diligently supporting AMISOM, especially the European Union and the US amongst others.

The members of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Conference have also extended the hand of friendship to the Somali people during these difficult times. We are especially grateful to the government and people of Turkey, for their faith, courage and leadership in ending our long isolation, and building bridges between Somalia and the rest of the world.

But now, with all these partners standing by us we must increasingly learn to travel our own path with our own energies, developing the ability to stand on our own feet, and step free from the reliance of our kind friends. Already, the Somali diaspora from around the world are returning to the country with investment and skills that will build the future Somalia. We can learn from how peace and growing prosperity has developed in other parts of the country. We must build on the return of normality in Mogadishu, and elsewhere in Somalia, and growing public confidence in the future. It is the Somali people, in the villages and the nomadic pastoralists, with their resilience, drive and dynamism that are best placed to lend real stability to Somalia's future.

Excellencies,

The end of Somalia's transition was brought about by the tremendous joint efforts of the Transitional Federal Government, Somali regional administrations, civil society and our traditional elders. Against all odds, within one year, Somalis were able to adopt a new provisional constitution, create a new parliament and elect a new President, heralding the beginning of a new era.

This one-year experience has shown several things – when we put our minds to it, we Somalis are capable of overcoming tremendous obstacles and delivering on expectations. It has shown that we can effect our political transitions within our own

country. It has shown that Somalis are indeed ready for a new chapter, and are calling for a permanent government that can build on the foundations of this remarkable year.

Excellencies,

Somalia's transition has officially ended, but the work of rebuilding our nation continues. The new administration has four short years to translate agreements and objectives made on paper into concrete, tangible progress for our people, and to place Somalia firmly on an irreversible path to enduring peace and growing prosperity.

The most urgent challenge is to restore peace and security throughout Somali territory. Our forces, together with our African Union allies, are making great progress in this regard. But a stable peace cannot be achieved through military means alone. We must practice the politics of inclusion, establishing a credible, representative, inclusive and capable government: a government by the people, for the people; not government of the few, serving the interests of the few. Initially that government must be about delivering real governance and connections with the people; it must be about the process of building local representation, addressing community justice and seeking to build basic services, rather than about distant institutions of government from Mogadishu, or even provincial centres.

Power and responsibility must be devolved as close to the people as possible in accordance with the principles of federalism. It will be important to recognize the existence of other Somali authorities, as well as de facto political and military forces across the country, with whom we will work to establish a vibrant, prosperous and stable representative government democracy, firmly adhering to and grounded in Somali and Islamic values.

And we will require a fair and independent judiciary, resistant to executive interference, that will meet the needs and earn the trust of ordinary citizens, while bringing an end to the culture of impunity that has gripped our nation for the past two decades.

We have repeatedly extended olive branches to the government's adversaries and although these have been repeatedly rejected, our new President will continue to reach out and offer peace. Al-Shabaab is a complex and heterogeneous movement: most of its members are ordinary citizens who have aligned themselves with Al-Shabaab out of fear or a sense of grievance. At the same time we must also be honest with ourselves that some sentiment comes from a nationalist, conservative faction of our fractured country that has been disillusioned and damaged by decades of conflict and have sought refuge in an extreme and harsh source of justice and security. To them we must prove that there is a better way. To them we have always said and will continue to say: "Brothers and sisters, lay down your arms and let us talk."

We Somalis have a saying: "*Colaad kasta nabad baa ka dambeysa*" – after every war comes peace. So let us remember that we have no choice as a nation but to live together; let us settle our differences through dialogue and compromise, so that there is no longer any justification for any Somali to take up arms against another.

To these few ideological extremists in Al-Shabaab's ranks who remain committed to the use of terror and the murder of innocents to achieve their aims, we say: there is no place in Somali society, nor in international society, for you and your violent creed. We will

fight you until Somalia is once again a nation founded on peace, tolerance and management that constitute the true spirit of the great religion of Islam.

Excellencies,

As we focus our energies on the immediate challenges, we must nevertheless keep our longer-term goals clearly in view. The new government understands clearly that its purpose is not to entrench itself indefinitely in power, but to lay the foundation for a democratic system of governance, anchored in Islamic values, and based on universal, competitive elections, by August 2016.

The new government has just four short years within which to establish the states and regions of this federation, and to do so in a way that unifies our people rather than dividing them. We must validate the new Constitution through consultation and referendum; establish systems of governance that serve the interests of the Somali people. And we must design representative electoral systems that serve to heal the divisions of our society, rather than to aggravate them.

As we move away from transitional government, into the era of permanent government, we must establish a new compact for national coexistence, in which the aspirations of all Somalis are reflected, not only some. We recognize that the bonds of love and solidarity that bound us together in 1960 have been heavily damaged and sorely tested. The talks initiated earlier this year between the Transitional Federal Government and the Somaliland administration have begun well, and we intend to continue them. We will not use military or political coercion to bring out an artificial unity: we want genuine unity that results from negotiations, mutual respect and mutual agreement.

Excellencies,

The durability of our stabilization efforts will depend in large part upon our ability to revive and develop the Somali economy. Security and durable peace cannot exist without jobs and food therefore we must work hard to ensure that food is on the table of the average Somali family, to create job opportunities and to enable Somalis to work for themselves.

Our country is abundant in resources – we have the longest coastline in Africa, 9 million acres of fertile land, the highest per capita livestock in the world. We have oil and minerals. We are strategically located at the gateway of the Middle East and Africa, at the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. Our challenge as Somalis is to use these resources to bring our country and our people back onto the global economic playing field.

On the topic of resources, we are committed to strengthening the government's financial accountability. Somalia is a poor country and we cannot afford corruption. We seek the assistance of our international partners in establishing and strengthening transparent systems of public financial management.

Excellencies,

The problems of Somalia have spilled far beyond our borders. Foreign countries have taken in hundred of thousands of Somalis fleeing the crisis in our country, at

considerable sacrifice to their own citizens; Somali pirates have become the scourge of shipping far from our shores. Extremists from across the world have used our territory as a base from which to plan and launch attacks against foreign countries.

As Somalia reclaims its status as a full member of the International Community, we must acknowledge our responsibility as a nation, both for the proliferation of these problems and for their eventual resolution. We recognize the urgency of tackling these threats to international security, but we are also conscious of their complexity, and that lasting solutions can only be achieved through reflection, consultation, the force of law and only, as a last resort, the judicious use of force. We intend to engage with our international partners on all of these fronts, as we strengthen our own internal capacity to address these challenges.

Excellencies,

The road ahead is long, but we the Somali people are committed and we are ready. We have created the guideposts, and we have chosen a new leadership to help us move forward. We are grateful for the support of the world community – we would not be here today without your moral, political and financial support. Most dear to us is the personal sacrifices made by our African brothers and sisters who have come in person to help us protect our country and people. We cannot thank you enough and we hope one day to be able to repay you.

As many today have noted, the United Nations was founded on the conviction that the nations of the world could come together in the spirit of cooperation to tackle their common problems for the sake of the whole of humanity.

The world is going through a challenging period – economic crises, religious tensions, resource disputes. Every nation has its own challenges and priorities. And yet, we come together as the United Nations to forge a common way forward because we recognize that this small earth is all the space we have and we must find a way to share it and coexist peacefully.

As Somalis, we have learned this hard lesson through bitter experience, and we are living through it every day, each time another young man chooses to take his own life and the lives of others; each time a young mother has to bury a child. Let us not forget that in rebuilding a nation, or in steering the world to a better place, we are dealing with the lives of human beings, each life as precious as the next. For the future of our children, we must work harder to make our world peaceful and prosperous.

In this context, on behalf of the Somali people, I want to convey our condolences to the United States and Algeria for the recent violent loss of their senior diplomats. Diplomacy is a peaceful calling and the foundation of the United Nations, and we must protect diplomats for their important role in promoting dialogue and better understanding across countries and cultures.

The Members of this Assembly are not strangers to conflict and war. Many countries have experienced violence and destruction equal to or greater than my own. But few other countries in modern times have experienced such a prolonged period of 'statelessness': a nation without a recognized government, a valid passport or a convertible currency.

But it is not just the material attributes of statehood that we have missed. To be 'stateless' in this world of States is injurious to a people's identity, to its rights and privileges as a nation, and to its dignity.

It is time for us to reclaim Somalia's rightful place in the community of nations, to shoulder our duties and obligations, and to place our country in the service of peace, security and prosperity of this planet we share.

On my behalf and on behalf of the people of Somalia and our President, H. E. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, I thank you.