

Joint Security Committee Meeting

Sat 07 / Sun 08 August 2010

Opening Statement

Prime Minister, H.E. Omar Sharmarke

Your Excellency, Special Representative of the Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank the SRSR and his team for the organisation of this session of the Joint Security Council, and your immediate focus on this issue since taking office. Somalia and the TFG remain indebted to the UN, AU, and the wider international community for your continued support and commitment to helping us improve our situation.

Let us begin by reminding ourselves why we are here and what our overall objective is. It is to build a secure and prosperous Somalia, at peace with itself and its neighbours, where its citizens can go about their daily lives in safety and provide for their families with confidence and dignity.

I am Prime Minister of a transitional administration designed to initiate the establishment of legitimate and accountable public institutions and give the space to enable the people of Somalia to decide for themselves how they want to be governed in the future.

Given the current situation in Mogadishu and southern Somalia this all might seem a long way away. But it can be achieved.

We are trying to develop a new inclusive constitution that will form the basis for free and fair elections when the security situation permits.

We are working towards building professional and trustworthy and representative security forces that are answerable to our citizens.

We are trying to establish transparent and accountable public institutions based on the principles of responsibility and good governance.

We need a fair and impartial judicial system and we must increase economic opportunity through investment, training, health and education.

Again I hear you say that given our track record so far this might all seem to be an extraordinary challenge. But despite all our difficulties we have managed to:

- Draft our new constitution;
- Reach an agreement with Ahla Sunna Wah Jama
- Continue training for teachers and doctors
- Relaunch Radio Mogadishu
- Repair and rebuild schools and hospitals
- And we are currently repairing 10kms of road to Mogadishu airport.

Ladies and gentleman we couldn't have achieved this without the support of AMISOM.

AMISOM's support to the Transitional Federal Institutions and our efforts to stabilise the country is crucial. Without their protection of key locations and infrastructure our fledgling institutions would not be able to function.

Their humanitarian work in Mogadishu, especially the provision of free medical care, is an inspiration. They also work alongside us to encourage reconciliation and they assist with training for our Somali Security Forces. For all this we are extremely grateful.

And we are also thankful to all of our African brothers and sisters in AMISOM and the AU who stand shoulder to shoulder with us in confronting the foreign inspired and led insurgency that is terrorising ordinary Somalis on a daily basis.

We value them beyond words and I extend a personal thank you to the SRCC and the Force Commander for their courage and perseverance under the most difficult conditions.

But let us again remember the nature of the threat we are up against. The threat from these foreign led extremists that was characterised in the recent Human Rights Watch Report as “grinding repression” of the people of Somalia.

A repression enforced by public beheadings, amputations, stonings to death, grave desecrations, un somali dress codes and the banning of music and media reporting that doesn't support their warped and counter cultural beliefs and practice.

Such a fate would await the people of Mogadishu were we to fail and allow the city to fall to Al Shebab. And this threat is now being exported outside Somalia. At a stroke, a local conflict became a global conflict. Ahmed Abdi Godane, Al Shebab's leader, has warned that this is “just the beginning”, and threatened to launch more attacks against Uganda and Burundi.

Ladies and gentlemen the so called constructive disengagement favoured by some, is not an option.

We know that we in the TFG need to do better and we know that we need to focus much more on progress and not on process. But if we are to prevail we need more help not less.

It is unrealistic to expect our fledgling administration to behave like a government without adequate resources. We need funding and resourcing in a consistent and continuous way so that we can plan and govern with authority and certainty.

To take just one example – we need to pay and look after our soldiers and policemen much more professionally and considerably better than the opposition.

National security is the key. Security of Mogadishu is the key first step but we need and want to take on Al Shabaab right across the country in Puntland, Galmudug and South Central regions.

The announcement at the AU Summit to reinforce AMISOM is most welcome. And we hope the AU's other international partners will contribute further.

But we, the TFG, cannot deliver the well trained, well equipped Security Forces we need without your assistance. Getting Amisom troop levels up to 10,000 - 12,000 under a strong mandate would allow the force to expel Al Shebab from the greater part of Mogadishu and then reach out with momentum.

We are indeed grateful for the help the International community gives to the TFG. But I cannot stress enough the need for additional budgetary support for the TFG to enable us to build our own capacity to protect our own population and to deliver the basic public services our people need so desperately.

It is tempting to dismiss the problem in Somalia as too difficult and dangerous. Yet inaction, however attractive, is no solution. It is inaction and disengagement from Somalia that has led to the current crisis. If the international community is serious about Somalia, and it needs to be, it's not a complicated problem to solve. But it's getting more difficult by the day.