

UNPOS Press Conference

31 October 2011

UNON Press Centre--Nairobi

CPIO Nick Birnback:

Good afternoon and thank you for coming. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Dr. Augustine Mahiga, will make a few introductory remarks and then take your questions. We have around an hour, and please identify yourself when you speak. A kind reminder as well to please turn off your blackberries and mobile phones. SRSG, over to you.

SRSG Augustine P. Mahiga:

Good Afternoon to all of you. It has been quite awhile since I had my last press conference and I thought it was appropriate that I update you on the latest developments especially on the political and security fronts but also on the position of the UN and IC as a whole on the Somalia Peace process.

You will recall that before we had our important meeting in Mogadishu to adopt the Mogadishu there had been speculations of whether this meeting had been inclusive enough. Fortunately, it was indeed was a very inclusive meeting, attended by all major stakeholders and the Roadmap [on ending the Transition] was adopted on 6 September. It was attended by the TFG, by Parliament, the President of Puntland, the President of Galmudug and representatives from Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'a. These are the major stakeholders at the moment. We were going to include in that meeting the Civil Society, but because of some organizational difficulties, they were not able to participate, but plans are underway to bring Civil Society participation in before the end of this coming month of November. They will be fully integrated into the implementation of the Roadmap, and we hope that brings added value to make this Roadmap different from any other previous agreement, where inclusiveness was a missing factor. This time we've brought this inclusiveness to the extent possible and we hope it should bring about a difference.

As I have said before, this Roadmap has a time table and has compliance mechanisms; we are working on a very tight timetable. It was, from the date of signing the Kampala Accord 12 months, but now time has gone and from the date of signing the Mogadishu, 12 months should be just about towards the end of August. Only a few months are remaining, so we have a very tight schedule and work is in progress all the same.

The technical implementation committee has already met and there are subcommittees that are already working on the four key areas of the Roadmap—that is, security; the constitution; political outreach and reconciliation; and governance. So far, inclusiveness is maintained, but the key important factor is the political commitment of the stakeholders. Thus far we are quite satisfied that both the political commitment and the implementation are going apace.

In the month of September, I brought these important developments to the international community. I traveled to New York to give a report to the Security Council at the time when the General Assembly was opening and when a mini-

Summit on Somalia was being held on the margins of the General Assembly and attended by Heads of State and key Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the important countries that are supporting the peace process. The message was very clear: to support the Kampala Accord and the Roadmap which had just been adopted, to urge the stakeholders to continue maintaining their unity, cohesiveness and stability and their commitment to the Roadmap. After that, we met in Copenhagen for the periodic meeting of the International Contact Group, which not only endorsed the Roadmap, but also gave encouragement of political engagement with the stakeholders. That meeting was, for the first time, attended by the signatories to the Roadmap and that brought, again, added cohesion and signaled the continuing international commitment to the Roadmap.

As we sit here, you all know that on the security front, AMISOM has virtually taken full control of Mogadishu. On the 6th of August, when Al Shabaab withdrew from Mogadishu, we were talking of five per cent still not under the control of AMISOM, but now we can safely say that up to 98 per cent of Mogadishu is under the control of the TFG forces and AMISOM.

The Al Shabaab had announced as they were withdrawing that they would resort to changed tactics and this has come to pass. Indeed, they have resorted to more asymmetrical attacks rather than the conventional war in which they had been previously engaging. In the two short months since their withdrawal, we have witnessed some of the most tragic terrorist attacks in Mogadishu, including the innocent and cold-blooded killing of over 70 young men and women who were writing exams to be recipients of scholarships to go to Turkey. And when the final tally of that incident was closed, it was found that actually 100 people died, innocent civilians, not to mention the high numbers, much higher numbers of people who were wounded.

Reports we are receiving from the Mine Action in Mogadishu show that the number of explosives and unexploded ordinances that have been defused in Mogadishu has indeed increased, compared to any previous years. The number of suicide bombs has also been on the increase and there have been quite a number of incidents of maiming and killing, all innocent civilians. But, what is important is that Mogadishu is under the control of the TFG forces and AMISOM. Four months ago, this was unthinkable, but now it is the reality.

In this last effort to clear Al Shabaab in the northeastern corner of the city, we are witnessing a combination of conventional warfare as well as terrorist attacks warfare. And it is, of course, quite a challenge and in a sense an important reminder to the troop-contributing countries and to the international community that we must expedite the deployment of the remaining 3,000 troops which have authorized by the Security Council. The renewal of AMISOM's mandate on 30 September did, indeed, underscore the need for getting this deployment as quickly as possible and we do hope that the African countries will deploy these troops soon, and, of course, we continue to call on the international community to provide the necessary equipment the mission needs, especially what are called enablers, like helicopters and engineering teams to confront these new challenges. Simply put, there is the need for a reorientation of the fighting forces of AMISOM to deal with these unconventional methods of warfare.

On the humanitarian front, there is no doubt that Al Shabaab continues to be a major obstruction in terms of access and security in the areas they control. There has been negotiated access here and there, much to the credit of our humanitarian colleagues, but still the needs are tremendous and the famine and the drought continue to rage. Assistance is needed and many of the areas that are still problematic are those under the control of Al Shabaab. The IDPs in Mogadishu are likewise an issue. I was there this last week end and they are actually still coming. We were expecting some returns, indeed there are some as I understand to take advantage of the very good rains this season. But, of course, security remains a major deterrent to the IDPs going back. The IDP camps are also beyond Mogadishu in other areas of Somalia, like Puntland and as far north as Somaliland and there are more people that are still crossing, to some extent into Ethiopia and also into Kenya, although their numbers have significantly scaled down—proof that aid in situ is really a way of providing assistance rather than letting people travel long distances.

With these introductory remarks, I hope you ask questions where I can have the opportunity to elaborate more on what I've said by way of introduction. Thank you.

AP

Q) How does the UN view the introduction of Kenyan troops into the south of the country in terms of either harming or helping the fight that's taking place with Al Shabaab?

A) Somalia and Kenya have issued statements that they have a common enemy and that common enemy is Al Shabaab which has been the major obstruction to humanitarian assistance. We share that view because the UN agencies and the other NGOs that have been operating in Somalia see the Al Shabaab problem of access and security of all humanitarian workers as a major obstacle. For the time being, as the operation continues, we understand that it has been agreed between the two governments, that they face a common enemy and the assistance that is coming through to the people in need is mostly coming through Mogadishu, but with great difficulties to reach the Al Shabaab areas. And, we do hope that as this joint operation continues, there'll be greater territorial access to the victims of the famine and the drought and there'll be greater humanitarian space, which the people of Somalia have been denied by the controls imposed by Al Shabaab. So, we think this in the end will contribute to the sum total of gaining more territory, greater security and, therefore, more access to the victims of famine and drought especially in south central Somalia.

BBC

Q) You say the Somalis have signed the Roadmap, so how can you explain the development of how those sectors are generating those provisionally signed documents?

A) The Roadmap has four pillars: security; constitution-making--which also includes reform of parliament--political outreach and governance. Two weeks ago we formed subcommittees which will be responsible for the implementation of the four pillars. The subcommittees are co-chaired by all the stakeholders and the Transitional Federal Government is a chair in all the four subcommittees. This weekend, the subcommittee on security--which is at the same time the Joint Security Committee which is co-chaired by the Prime Minister and myself and the African Union, and now

it will also include IGAD--met and started deliberating on what specifically needs to be achieved to implement the Roadmap in the coming ten months. This is a very commendable development and tangible examples of how to assist the TFG to develop the security sector, military, police, corrections and judiciary. We made important agreements and that meeting was, for the first time, attended by all the stakeholders. The other subcommittees are already meeting; the subcommittee on the constitution is chaired by Puntland and of course co-chaired by the TFG and it has started meeting as well. The other subcommittee is on the reform of parliament, which is part of the constitutional pillar. It is chaired by parliament and, of course, co-chaired by the Government. The one on political outreach is co-chaired by Galmudug. And the one on Governance will be co-chaired by Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'a—but Ahlu Sunnah will also be co-chairing some aspects of the implementation. So, there is a role for all the stakeholders. Now, that implementation is going on. I've just come back from Mogadishu and I was also in Mogadishu the previous week. I met with the President and the Prime Minister; I've met with President Farole before he traveled to Europe last week. I've met with the leadership of Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a and I met with the leadership of Galmudug, including the President, with whom I last met in Copenhagen. I have been assured of their political commitment. What we are looking for now is the necessary resources that are needed to implement the Roadmap. We have just finished the assessment of the requirements--both human and financial resources for the implementation and the process is on course. Later today, the head of the political department in NY will be giving a second briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of the Roadmap. The first one was two weeks ago and the one today will reflect the ongoing work with in the subcommittees and we hope this will continue within the scheduled time, although the time frame is really challenging.

Reuters

Q) What information do you have on the current air strike on a camp yesterday by the Kenyan forces? Can you confirm that civilians have indeed been killed? That is information on deaths that Kenya and Somalia have denied. And, if it was indeed an air strike on an IPD camp, what is the UN's reaction?

A) No, we certainly do not have first hand information on this incident. The Kenyan authorities have denied this, and actually reported the killing of Al Shabaab personnel and the wounding of several of them as well. Some of those agents that are on the ground have given imprecise information of what has happened with regard to civilian casualties.

But, our position has always been that in whatever operations, by whatever parties, civilian lives must be spared and the safety and protection of civilians must remain paramount. We are getting more information—it's still very sketchy, very preliminary information—I am not in a position to confirm or deny the accuracy of this report. But, I can state in principle that the lives and safety and protection of civilians in conflict, must remain primary and one of the major concerns and preoccupations by all the parties involved in the conflict.

Spanish News Agency

Q) Let us hear if AMISOM troops are expected to support the Kenyan reintegration of Somalia at some point in the near future? Thank you.

A) AMISOM is under the mandate of the United Nations, under Chapter 7. It is the partnership between the AU and the UN. Operations related to AMISOM in numbers and materiel depends on authorisation of the Security Council. The decision by Kenya to enter Somalia is a bi-lateral agreement between the Kenyan Government and the Somali Transitional Federal Government as expressed in the joint communiqué signed by the two Governments on 18 October and subsequent clarifications that have been issued to confirm their joint effort against a common enemy and their respective concerns on the territorial integrity of the two countries. As we are speaking today, the Prime Minister of Somalia is meeting his counterpart of the Kenya Government. Last weekend, as I attended the Joint Security Committee meeting in Mogadishu, it was confirmed by the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff of Defence of the TFG, that this incursion by Kenya is led by the TFG forces and Kenya is providing support in the way of artillery and air force as we were told, but the lead fighting force is the TFG forces that are along side the Kenyans. So there is no correlation between what Kenya and Somalia are doing in the southern part of the country and what AMISOM is doing in Mogadishu. And there is at this time no effort to converge the two mandates. That is what I can reply. And, AMISOM is still confined in Mogadishu, although its broader mandate says for all of Somalia, but it has still confined its clearing of Mogadishu and seeking to hold Mogadishu with 98 per cent of that portion under the control of TFG and AMISOM.

BBC

Q) I'm asking about the peacekeeping mission in Somalia. So now we have only Uganda and Burundi Do you expect any other countries to join the peacekeeping mission soon?

A) There are 9,000-plus troops in Somalia; all of them are from Uganda and Burundi. They are remaining another 3,000. Among those 3,000, there are also some police elements. We are hoping--there have been indications--that troops might be coming soon from Djibouti and from Sierra Leone. The Djibouti contingent could be deployed any time now, and the Sierra Leoneans may not be able to come before the end of the year, but they could be part of the rotation later in the year or the beginning of the new year. What is being repeatedly said is to diversify the composition of AMISOM troops from African countries and I hope this will be responded to. There were times when we heard that there might be a contingent coming from Guinea, Conakry, but that has not materialized yet. But, for the time being, if we have to reach expeditiously the 12,000, most likely they will again come from Burundi and Uganda, because in extending the mandate on 30 September, the Security Council said that it was ready to review the request from the African Union for more troops once the 12,000 has been reached. So, the sooner the troop-contributing countries under the African Union reach that number, the sooner the Security Council will review the need for additional troops for AMISOM as per the Resolution 2010 of 2011 adopted 30th September.

Thank you for your attention.

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