

International Contact Group on Somalia

2 - 3 July 2012, Rome

Opening Statement by SRSG Mahiga

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 22nd meeting of the International Contact Group on Somalia. It is good to see so many familiar faces. Let me start by expressing our warm thanks to Foreign Minister Terzi, the Government of Italy and our colleagues from the Italian Foreign Ministry for kindly offering to host our discussions and for making such splendid arrangements in the vibrant and beautiful city of Rome.

Political Process

There is much to discuss over the next two days. Somalia stands at a crucial point in the peace process, and we have seen some remarkable recent developments. But, in seven weeks time, the Transition comes to an end – there should be no doubt about that. We must therefore begin to look to the next phase and ask ourselves some searching questions:

- Why has progress lagged behind in some areas in the four pillars of the Roadmap?
- Are the remaining steps leading to the end of the transitional period clear and how should they be managed?
- What can we do now to ensure that the next performance and integrity of the Parliament is better?
- How can we bring civil society firmly back into the process and ensure grass roots community participation and support including from women?
- How can we ensure that the selection of candidates to the Constituent Assembly, the new Parliament, the Speakers and the President is fair, free and clean?
- What more should we do to deter spoilers?

These are important questions that we must consider together. But I do not want us to focus exclusively on the short-term. Now is the time to start thinking about what comes next. The end of the transitional period will mark a new beginning for Somalia, and there are vital considerations to be considered:

- While ending the transition we should seek to make the next dispensation have the following characteristics: 1. expanded political inclusivity, 2. more legitimacy, 3. popular participation, 4. increased accountability

In particular:

- What should the timing and preparation of future elections look like?
- How can we collectively handle the controversial issue of federalism as the debate on the Constitution continues in the post August period?
- How can we help strengthen administrative institutions and promote better governance both at the center and in the newly recovered areas?
- What should we do to put human rights at the heart of the peace process?

I trust that our deliberations this week will afford us an opportunity to begin a discussion on these issues.

Security

On security, I must begin by paying tribute to the remarkable military successes of TFG forces, AMISOM and allied forces since our last meeting in February in recovering large areas of ground from Al Shabaab. This continues to come at a high price. But it gives us all the opportunity to bring peace, prosperity and stability to the hundreds of thousands of people who have suffered terribly over the years at the hands of the extremists. We must make the most of this opportunity and address some of the key questions such as:

- What tangible assistance can we provide to TFG, AMISOM and allied forces to ensure that progress continues and our gains are sustainable?
- How we can all support Somali Government efforts to stabilise the liberated/recovered areas, especially in terms of providing governance and basic services, establishing the rule of law and supporting reconciliation? and,
- How we can help unify, train and equip Somali forces to take responsibility for their own security and enable AMISOM to withdraw over time?

Justice

I just mentioned the rule of law. But I want to dwell for a moment on the importance of developing the justice sector. As areas of south and central Somalia come increasingly

under the control of the federal government, there is a need to provide accountable police services, increased access to justice and corrections systems which conform to international standards. Let me be frank. We have not focused sufficiently on this sector to date. And, even when we have focused on it, we have tended to concentrate on statutory systems of criminal justice at the expense of customary arrangements and other aspects such as land law, property rights, family law and restorative justice. We have an opportunity to think bigger, and I hope that this meeting will be able to develop a consensus on two sets of issues:

- What principles should inform our approach to the justice sector? and,
- What should be our priorities?

Restructuring

Which brings me to my last point – the purpose of the ICG itself – how can we maximise effective cooperation and ensure strategic coherence? There are no easy answers. But I am grateful to those of you who have already offered suggestions in the spirit of making our collective efforts even more productive.

At least, the following principles, I think, are clear. We should be looking to:

- Pursue incremental – rather than radical – reform;
- Keep things simple, and build wherever possible on existing structures; and,
- Be pragmatic, recognising that whatever we decide now can evolve over time.

Let us bear these principles in mind as we consider the substantive issues today and tomorrow morning. Then I hope that we can agree before the end of the meeting whether and, if so, how to reform our working methods.

Conclusion

So there is a great deal to discuss. I look forward to hearing your views, deciding what needs to be done and renewing our collective commitment to help Somalia as it enters its 53rd year of independence with increasing peace, stability and rapid recovery after twenty one years of a devastation.

Thank you.