



**H.E. Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of Somalia's Statement at the 22nd
International Contact Group Meeting on Somalia
Rome, 2-3 July, 2012**

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

I would like to thank UNPOS for convening this important meeting and Norway and the United States of America, the two co-chairs of this important event for their commitment and hard work. I would like to thank our host, the Italian government for its warm hospitality.

Given our historical ties, we Somalis feel very close to Italy and accordingly, we would like to extend our commiserations for the result of the game last night and also pass our congratulations to Gli Azzurri for a tournament honorably played.

We find ourselves gathered here in Rome on the anniversary of the birth of the Somali Republic 52 years ago. As you all know, the Somali Republic was a union of the former British protectorate of Somaliland and the Italian trusteeship territory of Somalia. On July 1, 1960, the Somali National Assembly approved the act uniting former Italian Somaliland with British Somaliland --- freedom and union in the same day.

This was an exciting time for the Somali people. The nation was overflowing with hope and anticipation for the future. Mogadishu was teeming with visiting dignitaries – representing many of your countries – who gathered to witness the new nation being born.

Here we are, 52 years later, preparing the ground for a new beginning for Somalia. On August 20, 2012, in 50 days time, the Somali nation will be celebrating a new dawn and we hope you will once again send your representatives to celebrate with us!

There are many reasons to be optimistic about the situation in Somalia. The security gains continue to increase, with TFG and AMISOM forces pushing outwards from Mogadishu to recover more and more territories – Afgoi one month ago, Balcad just last week. In the southern part of the country, TFG and AMISOM forces also are pushing steadily towards Kismayo, and soon there will be gains made in that front.

Within Mogadishu, the day-to-day security continues to be strengthened. Thanks to God, we have not seen a repeat of the deadly attack at the theater in April and this is a result of the vigilance of all the security forces working together. This focus must remain steady and unwavering especially as we prepare for important events such as the convening of the Constituent Assembly and the selection process of the post-transition government.

I would like to condemn the recent attacks by Al-Shabaab in Garissa in Kenya. These indiscriminate killings and the targeting of houses of worship are despicable, and we pass

our condolences to the families and friends of the victims. We are also happy to hear the good news of the release of the selfless workers of the Norwegian Refugee Council. I commend the Somali and Kenyan forces for a job well done.

In the newly recovered major towns in Somalia such as Baidoa and Beletweyn, the work has already started on rebuilding the administrations and helping the communities recover. Several delegations have traveled to these cities, facilitating reconciliation talks, undertaking security assessments and reconnecting with the relieved populations. We are grateful to the USAID TIS program for their quick action in working closely with these communities to initiate quick impact recovery programs. We hope that our other international partners will soon be able to move outside Mogadishu to engage in this important work.

In the countdown to the transition, I would like to remind the audience that the needs of the newly recovered areas are urgent and pressing, and we collectively cannot allow a vacuum to develop in these areas. For the populations that suffered for so long under Al-Shabaab and are now struggling to reestablish their societies, the clock does not start on August 21. It is therefore not fair to keep them waiting until the new central administration is selected and finds their feet and turns to them. We have prepared a policy and strategy and a stand-alone secretariat and we will hand it over to the next administration for the urgent and continued implementation of these policies.

Let me turn to the ending of the transition. When we last met at the ICG meeting in Djibouti, I had proposed that the three principles guiding our actions should be legitimacy, accountability and commitment. I would like to briefly revisit these three today, with specific focus on the last few months and the weeks ahead as we push towards completing the Roadmap and ending the transition.

Legitimacy has been a key concern for us as we gathered 135 elders to help us with the important process of selecting our national constituent assembly delegates as well as the members of the next parliament. Unfortunately, the security situation does not permit us to hold elections so we have had to rely on the next best option, our traditional elders.

It is because we are so concerned about legitimacy that the convening of the elders has taken so long. Even though 95% of the traditional elders have not been disputed, there has been a small percentage of cases where some questions and issues arose. We do not want the process tainted by any allegations and so we have moved slowly and deliberately, resolving these issues with care. In the last two weeks, we have finalized the list of the Elders Arbitration Committee – this is a group of 25 elders who will assist us in resolving the few remaining clan disputes and producing the definitive list of 135 legitimate traditional elders.

The elders will submit both sets of names to a Technical Selection Committee – this is a body that will ensure the nominated delegates and nominated parliamentarians will fulfill the criteria agreed in the Garowe II Principles, and laid out in the relevant protocols.

Why did we agree to these criteria? Why did we develop them? It is because we wanted to ensure that we select individuals for the NCA and for the parliament that are competent and morally upright. We also agreed that 30% of these new bodies will be made up of women.

Accountability requires that we must be held to these promises, and the Technical Selection Committee will ensure that we are indeed held accountable. If the nominated delegates or nominated parliamentarians do not fulfill the criteria, the lists will be sent back to

the elders who will be asked to come up with new names. We have also included 7 international observers on this committee who will also add value to the integrity of the process.

We met in Nairobi 10 days ago and committed to a new timeline. The names of the 27 members of the Technical Selection Committee were announced on June 25, 2012 by the Council of Ministers. They were required to be in Mogadishu by yesterday. Today, they are visiting with the elders. This week they will receive orientation and preparation for their important role. We have asked the elders to submit the names of the NCA delegates no later than July 6, 2012.

The Signatories Technical Facilitation Committee has also been officially named and announced, and has completed their first critical task: finalizing the draft constitution for provisional adoption. They will be in Mogadishu ready to support the NCA when it launches on July 12.

All of this progress in the last 10 days is evidence of our **commitment** and resolve. The signatories are committed to this process; the international community is committed; the Somali public is committed. We will have a new provisional constitution, a new parliament, and new leadership come August 20, 2012.

Ladies and Gentlemen: that is when the real work will begin.

Don't get me wrong, I believe that we will have secured a major victory once we accomplish all the work we need to do by August 20. But let us not forget that the ultimate goal of a renewed Somali state is to serve the Somali people. And their needs are urgent and crying out and starting on August 21, the new administration will have to move quickly to deliver against the very high expectations of the Somali people.

Let us make sure in September and October and November and December, we do not slide back into the old ways. Let us make sure this momentum is maintained. There is much work to do – reviving the economy, rebuilding the institutions of governance and restoring the rule of law.

When I was a young man, I grew up in a system that worked – I received an education, health care, the promise of a future, even a scholarship to pursue further education and a civil service job when I got home. The young people of Somalia today and the future generations deserve more than this, and we must keep them in mind at all times. They need hope.

Ladies and gentlemen, the first step is ending the transition and we are very close. Let us keep our shoulders to the wheel and we will make it.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the international community for your support, political, financial, moral and emotional. I have worked closely with many of you in the last year, and I know that Somalia would not be where it is today without your support. I wish to thank our African brothers – Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. You have committed the lives of your sons and daughters to help us reach our goal and words cannot express the gratitude and the debt we owe you.

Thank you all for your presence and we look forward to a positive day and a half of discussions.