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Mogadishu, 06 September 2012

Open letter to Somali Parliamentarians

My brothers and sisters, As-Salaamu Alaikum,

I write to you as we approach a truly momentous day for all Somalis. After two decades of civil war, a collapsed state and innumerable indignities to the proud Somali people, we are hours away from the election of a new President—the event that will completely end the transitional period and move us towards a phase of political and socio-economic transformation.

It has not been easy getting us to this point. In addition to the privations you have all endured during these past difficult years, the political process and the security situation has not been easy. There have been moments when all seemed lost and we have sometimes been on the brink of despair. Nevertheless, somehow, the courage, tenacity and determination of the Somali people has overcome these formidable obstacles and brought us to where we are now. From the gathering of the Elders, the National Constituent Assembly, the inauguration of Parliament and to the selection of the Speaker, the process has been inclusive, transparent and participatory. This approach also contributed to rescuing the situation. The process as a whole and its outcome has been lauded by the majority of Somalis at home and abroad as well as by the whole International Community.

The bar has been set very high. This must continue as you, the most qualified and representative Parliament in Somali history, prepare to elect a President who will form a new government which we trust will live up to the standards you have already set. In these two weeks, you have already demonstrated leadership and ownership of the process on behalf of the Somali people. All the Somalis, the Region and the rest of the International Community are watching during these remaining few days with hope and great anticipation. We should live up to these expectations by electing a President who will give us a government which is as good and credible as your collective leadership in this new Parliament.

My brothers and sisters, it is all up to you. You are the highest sovereign authority in the land. You are the custodians of the future which is now in your hands. In the coming two days you will hear from all the Presidential candidates as they present publicly their visions. Listen to them and make your choice accordingly.

We have all heard the rumours of corruption and attempted bribery. The media is full of allegations that all of us engaged in this process have taken money or other inducements to vote for a particular candidate or to try and sway the election one way or another. Wrong or right, the truth will come out one day, but meanwhile, let us move on. The vote in which you will all participate is entirely secret. No one, but you and God the All Mighty watching you, will know what name you place in the ballot box. You will remain anonymous and immune from retaliation. I implore you to think of the good of your country and vote with a clear conscience. You should not feel bound by any obligation other than the interests of your country and the Somali people. Choose the candidate who will be honest and effective in leading the country with a vision appropriate for the next four years of transformation and peace-building in Somalia. Your honour and chance is in the secret ballot, do not let this chance slip away on the 10th of September 2012.

Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Somalia