

As delivered

Statement by SRSB Augustine P. Mahiga

Opening Session of the High-Level Political Consultative Meeting:

Nairobi, 12 April 2011

Honorable Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, Speaker of the Transitional Federal Parliament

Your Excellency Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud (Farole), President of Puntland State of Somalia

Your Excellency Mohamed Ahmed Alin, President of Gulmudug

Honorable Omar Sheikh Abdulkadir, Chairman of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ)

Honorable Members of Parliament

Mr. Mark Bowden, Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, UNCT

International partners on the Somalia peace process

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to this important meeting on Somalia. This meeting comes barely five months before the end of the transition period, in August 2011, of the peace process for Somalia.

At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude to those delegations which have originated from the various parts of Somalia for their interest in engaging on issues that pertain to the fate of their great Nation.

This meeting is just the beginning of a process of consultations which are aimed at ensuring a smooth end to the transition and the preparation of a political dispensation which comes after that. In that regard, this is your meeting, you the people of Somalia. The international community fully recognizes that it is you, the owners of the land,

who hold the fate of your country in your hands.

My role, on behalf of the United Nations and the international community, is to facilitate dialogue among yourselves. Let me emphasize that dialogue is the lifeblood of any peace process. Where we are today in Somalia, dialogue is much needed. This is the spirit of the Djibouti Agreement.

Ideally, we should be meeting in Somalia itself, be it in Mogadishu or any part of the country. However, for a start, we are meeting here outside Somalia simply to launch the consultation process. This is a process of dialogue among you, which you must nurture for the good of your country's peace, national unity and stability. We, the international partners, are here today only to observe, but we shall not remain passive. We are here to accompany you and to assist you in achieving your goals as you implement your priority tasks.

I know we are many stakeholders in this peace process. We are all united in our shared objective to fight extremists' insurgency and foreign fighters. I specifically invited the TFG, parliament and key participants from the region because the drivers of this peace process as we lead towards ending this transition. It is most unfortunate that the executive branch of the government has not agreed to come to this meeting. I believe they have a good story to share with us on the recent achievements and on the way forward. I truly hope that they can still join us before the end of this meeting.

The process of ending the transition has its inherent challenges and opportunities. The opportunities can only be unearthed, and the challenges addressed, if the necessary primary national stakeholders themselves are committed to do so. This dialogue you are engaging in today, tomorrow and beyond is intended to empower you and the institutions which have been entrusted with the serious responsibility of overseeing the process of bringing the transition to a close.

The agenda you have received carefully identifies the key issues which have been proposed for your deliberations. We arrived at these issues after carrying out a series of detailed consultations with you, as the owners of the process. I am, in this regard, grateful for the useful feedback which most of you provided towards finalizing the

preparations for this meeting.

This dialogue process is in your hands. If you can reach agreement on some of the issues, that is well and good. As a starting point, however, you should be happy with the mere sharing of information and reaching a preliminary understanding on these issues. In the next series of meetings, you can build on the understanding. I must note, however, that I have already received useful feedback from leaders of delegations on the need for concrete outcomes from this meeting. I welcome these sentiments.

For me, the mere fact that you have shown the commitment to come here and talk among each other is an important step in the right direction. I realize that we should have started this process even much earlier.

Allow me to point out that, as you move ahead, it is important to consider the need for benchmarks and timelines against which you may have to measure progress. Again, this does not have to be agreed upon here.

I finally would like to pay tribute to the gallant soldiers of the Transitional Federal Government and their Somali allies, especially the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, as well as the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) who back them, for the successes they have achieved in the fight against the insurgents. We look forward to hearing first-hand reports from the delegation of the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, which is with us today. We all acknowledge, though, that the military success alone will not bring a solution to the crisis which Somalia is facing. There is need for a political solution to accompany it if we are to address the crisis in a comprehensive manner. This meeting is part of the search for that political solution.

The presence in this room of the partners, both regional and international stakeholders, is a show of solidarity and commitment to continued support for the cause of Somalia. We are fully behind you. Thank you.