



UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA
UNPOS

Nairobi, 3 August 2011

As-Salaamu Alaikum,

Dear friends,

My warmest greetings to you all, wherever you are, at this most important time of the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a time for renewal so it is appropriate that I write to you now to update you on the situation and to take stock, together, of where we are.

As I write this all our thoughts are with those suffering from the terrible effects of the famine. It is truly heart wrenching to see the images of the starving children and their desperate parents unable to provide any food. The appalling stories of suffering from those who remained inside Somalia and those who walked for days and weeks to the refugee camps have moved us all deeply. The UN family is doing everything it can to bring supplies into the country and the region. Last week I attended the emergency meeting on the food and humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, convened by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, where more than \$120 million was pledged. I also saw for myself an airlift of food aid from Brindisi, Italy destined for the refugee camps.

I applaud the efforts of those Somalis who are raising funds and sending urgently needed aid to their brothers and sisters. While in Rome I met a group of Somalis from the Diaspora and was touched by their selfless desire to organize and ship humanitarian assistance to the famine-hit region and to increase the remittances they send back. I appeal to all those who are able - Somalis and the international community alike - to give as much as they can during this Holy Month to feed the hungry, heal the sick and prevent the famine spreading further.

And yet, in the midst of these crises, this is a hopeful moment. On the political side there have been some significant developments over the past few months. The Kampala Accord of June this year broke the political deadlock that had paralyzed the peace process. His Excellency, President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Honourable Speaker, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden put their differences aside and, standing side by side, agreed to work together towards ending the Transition. I am extremely grateful to Uganda's President, His Excellency Yoweri Museveni, for being the guarantor of the Accord which received rapid and overwhelming approval in the Somali Parliament. This new spirit of cooperation has continued with the timely selection and endorsement of a new Cabinet, well ahead of the deadline laid out in the Kampala Accord. I congratulate all concerned.

This is a time of opportunity. The new Government has one year to demonstrate it is serious about making progress. There is a huge amount to be achieved before August next year. The most pressing concern is the adoption of the Roadmap with priority given to the finalization of the draft constitution following wide consultations. There must also be significant progress on other priority tasks including improving security, legislative and governmental reform and national reconciliation and this must include the TFIs reaching out to the regions.



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The UN will, of course, do its part. We are helping to draft the Roadmap which will chart the course forward in addressing the challenging political tasks ahead. This is a collaborative effort, headed by the Somali leadership but with input from the international community, in particular the AU, the East African Community, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Conference. These will also be involved in monitoring the progress of the Roadmap which will be discussed and endorsed at a High Level Consultative Meeting to be held in Somalia in the coming weeks.

Despite this progress, one of the contributing factors to the famine has been the ongoing fighting in the country. Some of the extremists are continuing their efforts to intimidate and cower the population by preventing the movement of people from the worst hit areas. We call for the humanitarian agencies to be given unhindered access to all areas to provide desperately needed help. Meanwhile the Transitional Federal Government, backed by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), is taking action right now to open up areas in Mogadishu to allow humanitarian aid to flow in. Sadly, even in the midst of this humanitarian crisis, the violence continues. The insecurity in many areas means that aid workers take huge risks to make their life-saving deliveries. And the opponents of peace continue to use their terrorist tactics to destabilize the country. Just this week a Somali parliamentarian, Khalif Jire Warfa, was shot dead as he left a mosque in Mogadishu in a cowardly attack which I strongly condemn.

We will continue to stand by you in the difficult days ahead. Almost thirty staff members from my office are now based in Somalia. I myself, my deputy, Christian Manahl, and my staff have made several trips to Mogadishu to discuss various issues with the leadership and a wide range of Somali interlocutors. We have also been to Garowe and Hargeisa and will continue to expand our offices throughout. I believe it is most important that we spend as much time in Somalia as possible to see the situation for ourselves and hear the views of those living there. Travelling to Mogadishu also provides a good opportunity to meet the AMISOM peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi who are doing a remarkable job in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. I salute their courage and their sacrifice.

I appeal to all Somalis, whether inside or outside Somalia, to work together to support the peace process and resolve what differences remain through dialogue and negotiation. This is a time of great crisis, but also of rare opportunity. It is a time for everyone to pull together to help those suffering and to work towards a better future for all.

During this Holiest Month in the Muslim calendar, let me take this opportunity to wish all of you Ramadan Kareem and to offer this one simple hope: let there be peace.

Yours Sincerely,

Augustine Mahiga