



UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA
UNPOS

Mogadishu, 26 January 2012

As-Salaamu Alaikum,

Dear friends,

I am thrilled to be writing to you all from my new office here in Mogadishu. As you may have heard, on Tuesday I moved to Somalia from Nairobi along with a number of my core staff from the UN Political Office for Somalia. In fact I now believe we should be called the UN Political Office *in* Somalia. It is only one and a half months since the Secretary-General announced that UNPOS would move and it is largely thanks to the hard work of our colleagues from the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) that we made it here in record time. We thank them for their unflagging support.

This is a historic step. The last UN Special Representative for Somalia, James Victor Gbeho left Mogadishu in 1995 at the conclusion of the second UN Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM II). While some of the UN agencies have kept staff in Somalia throughout, I regret that it has taken so long for UNPOS to come back here permanently. It is now up to us to make up for lost time. I am most grateful for the warm welcome I was accorded by the Government and people of Mogadishu. I was most touched

Being on the ground will allow us to be closer to all the stakeholders - the Transitional Federal Institutions and other administrations, civil society, NGOs, business people, journalists and ordinary Somalis. Daily interaction will help us understand each other and to work together in a more imaginative and constructive manner at this crucial period in the peace process.

UNPOS' deployment to Mogadishu comes in addition to our existing presence in other parts of Somalia. We already have staff based in Hargeisa and in Garowe. As the security situation improves and once additional facilities become available we shall expand our presence. I wish to pay tribute to those already based in Mogadishu. There are six UN agencies with a permanent presence here already along with NGOs, the African Union has a large presence and IGAD, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Libya, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda and Yemen are all represented. I hope our presence will pave the way for other members of the international community to relocate to Somalia.

Ultimately our move forward would have been impossible without the heroic actions of the peacekeepers of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) who, working alongside the Somali Armed Forces, have succeeded in pushing Al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu. I wish to pay tribute to these brave young Africans, in particular those who have paid the ultimate price in the cause of peace in Somalia.



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Today the UN flag is again flying in Mogadishu. And we have a lot of work to do. We are in the middle of implementing the priority tasks in the Roadmap and working towards the key political goal of ending the transition in August this year. We also are faced with a parliamentary crisis and a continuing terrorist threat from insurgents. There is a lot of ground to be covered in the next seven months.

As I have mentioned before, finalizing the draft Constitution before the May deadline must be a top priority now. The outreach and consultations are continuing. There was widespread support for the Garowe I meeting last month which produced some concrete proposals in the “Garowe Principles”. These now need to be implemented and we are planning a Garowe II meeting to take this process forward. We are endeavouring to bring the “Garowe Principles” and the Garowe process to the “market place” to promote more public interests and to generate public debate on them.

One of the key problems remains the ongoing impasse within the Parliament. I have impressed upon the leaders that the region and the international community demands that it is resolved quickly. As I have constantly reminded all parties, spoilers of the peace process will not be tolerated and non-compliance will result in decisive action. At the same time we must not forget the humanitarian situation even if it has fallen out of the headlines. There are still thousands of people at risk who require urgent, sustained help. The generosity of many has helped to improve the situation but many are still suffering and we must continue to answer the call to help our neighbours. Access and security is still a challenge in areas still occupied and vacated by Al-Shabaab.

The international community is fully engaged on Somalia and united behind the Roadmap. Earlier this month I convened a meeting of the International Coordination and Monitoring Group which looked favourably at the progress made so far on the Roadmap and made some useful suggestions. I am heading to the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa where Somalia will be a key issue and we will consolidate the ideas and support at the upcoming International Contact Group meeting in Djibouti and the London Conference in February. The eyes of the world are watching.

Warm regards,
Amb. Augustine P. Mahiga