



UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA
UNPOS

Nairobi, 14 October 2011

As-Salaamu Alaikum,

Dear Friends,

My warmest greetings to you all, wherever you are. It has been two months since my last letter and there have been some extraordinary achievements since then.

A massive drought continues to rage through East Africa. In Somalia, the situation has deteriorated into famine in six regions so far. Tens of thousands are dead, countless more are at risk. As always, the toll has been heartbreakingly high amongst the most vulnerable, the young, women and the old. Whole populations are now on the move and while the aid community is doing everything it can, humanitarian access remains a major problem in areas where assistance is most needed. Whatever one's ideological beliefs, it is inexcusable to stand by, or be the reason for brothers and sisters to die of starvation. I would again recognize the efforts of the Somali Diaspora to provide badly needed assistance to the country. For its part, the international community must redouble its efforts to feed the hungry for several months to come, to prevent the spread of disease and stop the famine spreading further.

At the same time, amidst this unimaginable suffering, Somalia finds itself at a rare moment of opportunity. There is reason for hope and optimism on a number of fronts. The peace process has just taken a great step forward. The long-awaited Consultative Meeting on Ending the Transition in Somalia convened successfully in Mogadishu from 4 to 6 September. The meeting concluded with all parties present signing a Roadmap which clearly sets out a series of tasks which have to be completed by the end of the extended Transitional period on 20 August 2012. These tasks include completing and adopting an interim Constitution which will involve widespread consultation inside and outside the country. The Roadmap includes strict deadlines with implementation mechanisms and the international community will closely monitor the progress. Follow-up meetings which will involve a wide cross-section of civil society are being held in Somalia in the coming weeks.

Following the successful conclusion of the meeting, a mini Summit of Heads of State and Ministers was held in the margins of the General Assembly in New York. The 20th Meeting of the International Contact Group convened in Copenhagen at the end of September. Put simply, the World is now watching and Somalia is again receiving the attention it needs and deserves from the international community in order to advance the peace process. This is a golden opportunity and we cannot let this chance slip away.

Holding the Consultative Meeting in Mogadishu was itself a notable achievement, testimony to the much improved security situation in the capital. Just a few months ago, the Islamist insurgency group, Al-Shabaab, held much of Mogadishu and threatened the rest. Yet in early September, we were able to hold a meeting with all stakeholders at the Somali Parliament building in the heart of downtown Mogadishu. However, we should have no illusions - the insurgents are still a threat in Somalia and the situation remains unstable. This was shown by



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the horrific suicide bombing on 4 October in Mogadishu that killed so many innocent civilians including a number of Somalia's brightest students and potential future leaders hoping to receive scholarships to study abroad. I should pay tribute to the work of the Transitional Federal Government forces, and the African Union peacekeeping forces in Mogadishu whose tremendous sacrifices have made this sea change in the security situation in Mogadishu possible. As I told the UN Security Council a few weeks ago, the Roadmap is a milestone in the peace process, but there is still a long road ahead to travel. We must avoid putting obstacles in our way and expose those who act as spoilers to progress.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet a number of Diaspora groups in North America and Europe. I was struck by the capability and motivation I saw everywhere I went. It is clear to me that the skill and enthusiasm of this important community will be a key component of long-term recovery and stability in Somalia. I call on the members of the Diaspora to make yourselves available to the nation's fragile institutions - come home and serve if you can. Your country needs you now.

I firmly believe that it is time for all Somalis, regardless of clan or politics or alliances or any other divisions, to come together for the good of the your country. Somalia's long national struggle is not over, but this is the best chance for peace in years. We must accept and work for change to which the Somali people need and deserve, the instrument for change which we now have is the Roadmap. I reiterate the UN Security Council's call for all insurgents still fighting to lay down their arms and join the peace process. We in the United Nations and indeed the entire international community will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you. Ultimately it is the Somali people - in the country, in the region and in the Diaspora - who must step up and play their part in bringing about change and lasting peace. The Peace Process will only work when the Somali people own it and push it forward. The goal is a peaceful, prosperous Somalia that is a source of pride to all Somalis and their international supporters. Our singular objective is to support you.

Warm regards,
Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga