



United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

Letter to the members of the Somali Jaaliyadda (No. 13)

Nairobi, 3 April 2009

As-salaamu Alaikum

During the past month there have been several, mostly positive, developments both inside and outside Somalia. As always I would like to take a few minutes to give you a brief update of where I believe we are at the moment.

I have just returned from the League of Arab States Summit in Doha, Qatar, where Somali was high on the agenda. I attended several important bilateral meetings between Arab leaders and the UN Secretary General. Overall the Arab leaders were supportive of the new Somali Government and expressed their wish to see it succeed. In his meeting with the UN Secretary General, President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed emphasized that his Government would manage any resources granted to Somalia in a responsible and transparent manner. He was right to make this point, as a number of Arab countries, concerned by the misuse of funds donated to Somali leaders, have decided to provide resources only when there is total peace in Somalia. The amount discussed was \$3 million a month for 12 months. The Government said it was grateful and would wait until the appropriate time.

Somalia's business community made a welcome contribution to a crucial conference on "Job Opportunities and Youth Employment" held in Djibouti on 21 – 22 March. The forum focused on ways to provide vocational training facilities and employment for the disenfranchised youth who are living without hope and find themselves drawn into crime and violence. The meeting helped to strengthen the ties between the Government, private sector and youth. A follow up committee will draw up an educational and employment strategy, propose projects and mobilize resources. I believe that job creation is one of the most important areas we need to tackle urgently to ensure a peaceful future for Somalia.

Last month I visited Washington as the keynote speaker at a Conference entitled "Challenges for Renewed Engagement in Somalia" hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in collaboration with the US Institute for Peace in Washington. This also provided the opportunity for talks with a wide range of people including Senator Russ Feingold, Chair of the Senate

Subcommittee on African Affairs, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Phil Carter, Ken Menkhaus of Davidson College, Abdi Samatar of the University of Minnesota and Jabrile Abdulle of the Center for Research and Dialogue and members of the Diaspora. There was widespread appreciation of the Djibouti process from participants and a lively discussion on the way ahead.

During my talks at State Department and at the National Security Council in Washington it became clear that the US administration is very concerned about the rise in extremist ideology among young Somali-Americans. As you know, one of the suicide bombers in Hargeisa was a young American of Somali origin from Minnesota. This is said to be the first case of an American suicide bomber. Other young Somali-Americans are thought to be in Somalia fighting alongside or supporting extremist factions. The Americans and other Western countries are extremely concerned about this development as these individuals could engage in terrorist activities back home. The U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee met last month to discuss Somali extremist groups recruiting in the U.S. Apart from the violence, these young extremists are also doing untold damage to the reputation of ordinary, law abiding Somalis in the Diaspora who could find themselves under increased suspicion and prejudice through no fault of their own. In Africa, such suspicion led countries such as Botswana to expel Somalis on the ground that they are carrying out terrorist activities. Communities need to find ways to ensure their vulnerable young men do not fall prey to such radicalization and its subsequent consequences.

On 20 March I addressed the UN Security Council, stressing the need for immediate and appropriate support for the new Somali administration for the two or three months. This was echoed by the new Foreign Minister, Mohammed Abdullahi Omaar, who spoke of concentrating on limited, achievable objectives. Many Ambassadors agreed that the Government needs help now. I discussed this issue with the UN Secretary General, Ambassadors, the Foreign and Defence Ministers of Burundi, the AU Peace and Security Commissioner and other top level UN officials.

To raise resources to improve security, the UN is convening, along with the European Commission, a high level International Donor Conference in Brussels on 22-23 April. This will be chaired by the UN Secretary General – the first time a UN Secretary General has chaired a conference on Somalia for many years. It will be attended by the Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Javier Solana, the European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Secretary Generals of the League of Arab States, Amre Mussa and the Organization of Islamic Conference, Professor Ekmelledin Ihsanoglu, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Jean Ping, as well as leading officials from Europe, Africa, the Gulf and the US. The aim of this important conference is to mobilize urgent support for security in Somalia through funding to the Somali Joint Forces and AMISOM.

I am shocked and saddened by the continuing violence in many places in Somalia especially, as I have emphasized before, that the Ethiopian forces have

gone. This was previously claimed as the main reason for the violence. The attacks on the Interior Minister last month and a Parliamentarian this week are clearly aimed at disrupting peace but will not succeed. It is encouraging that the President, Government and Parliament are working inside Mogadishu and have already passed important measures. For the return of dignity to your country, they deserve support and the silencing of the guns.

There is undoubtedly a new momentum towards peace in Somalia. As always it requires full backing from everyone – Somalis and international partners alike. The support of the Diaspora is needed now more than ever. There are enormous challenges ahead but I am confident that by uniting your energy and determination, you will be able to overcome them and take back your country. Do not follow the example of the people mentioned in the Holy Koran: Those are they whose hearts, ears, and eyes God has sealed up, and they take no heed. (Surah 16 verse 108). Compromise, inclusion and forgiveness are essential for the return of peace and respect.

Yours Faithfully,

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah