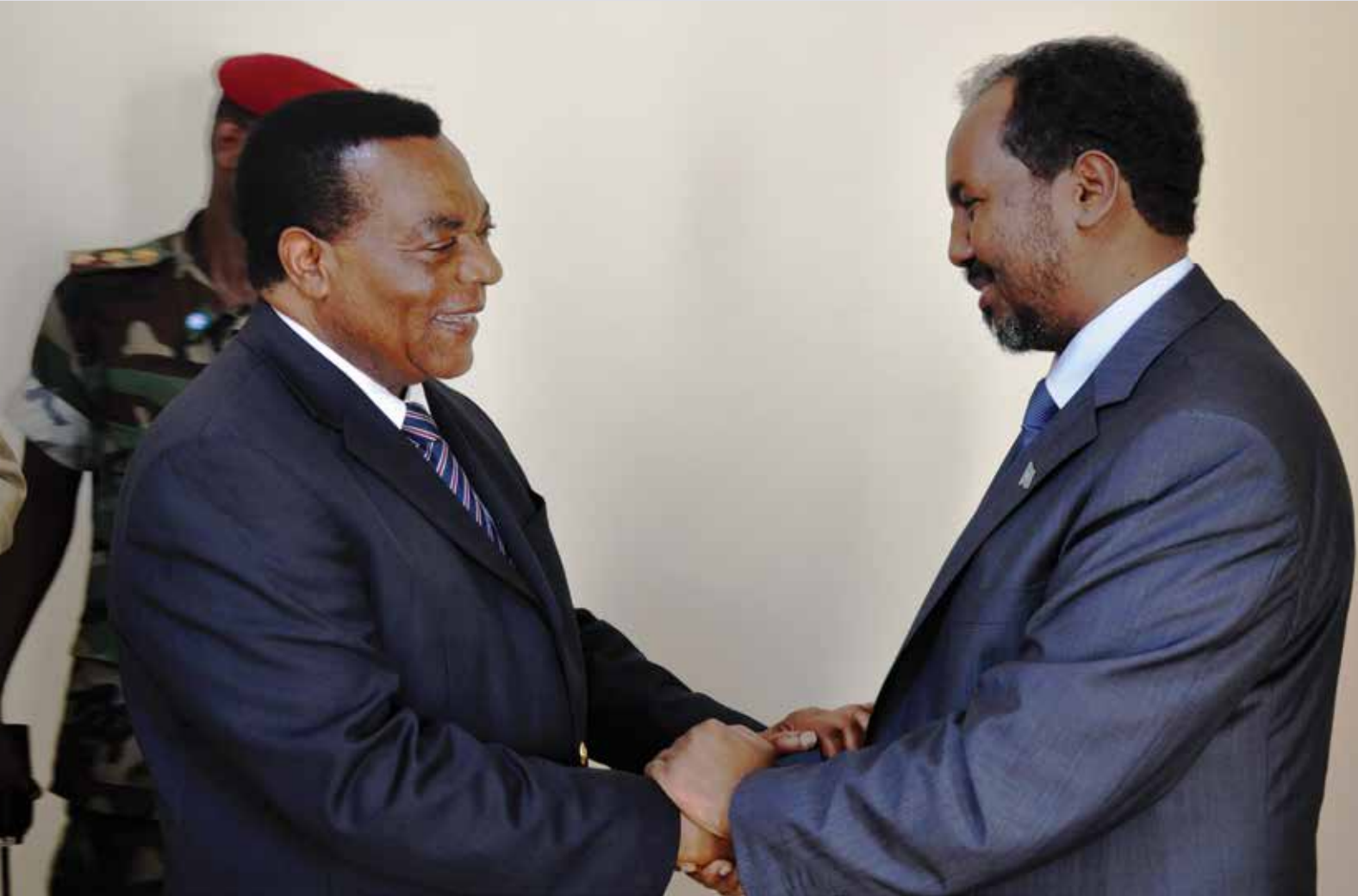




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Advancing Peace & Reconciliation for Somali People



SOMALIA

FROM TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION



Open letter to Somali Parliamentarians

SRSO Augustine P Mahiga issued this letter to Somali Parliamentarians several days prior to the Somali presidential elections



Special Representative to the Secretary-General Augustine P. Mahiga

Mogadishu, 6 September 2012

My brothers and sisters, As-Salaamu Alaikum. I write to you as we approach a truly momentous day for all Somalis. After two decades of civil war, a collapsed state and innumerable indignities to the proud Somali people, we are hours away from the election of a new President—the event that will completely end the transitional period and move us towards a phase of political and socio-economic transformation.

It has not been easy getting us to this point. In addition to the privations you have all endured during these past difficult years,

the political process and the security situation has not been easy. There have been moments when all seemed lost and we have sometimes been on the brink of despair. Nevertheless, somehow, the courage, tenacity and determination of the Somali people has overcome these formidable obstacles and brought us to where we are now. From the gathering of the Elders, the National Constituent Assembly, the inauguration of Parliament and to the selection of the Speaker, the process has been inclusive, transparent and participatory. This approach also contributed to rescuing the situation. The process as a whole and its outcome, has been

lauded by the majority of Somalis at home and abroad as well as by the whole International community.

The bar has been set very high. This must continue as you, the most qualified and representative Parliament in Somali history, prepare to elect a President who will form a new government which we trust will live up to the standards you have already set. In these two weeks, you have already demonstrated leadership and ownership of the process on behalf of the Somali people. All Somalis, the Region and the rest of the International Community are watching during these remaining few days with hope and great anticipation. We should live up to these expectations by electing a President who will give us a government which is as good and credible as your collective leadership in this new Parliament.

My brothers and sisters, it is all up to you. You are the highest sovereign authority in the land. You are the custodians of the future which is now in your hands. In the coming two days you will hear from all the Presidential candidates as they present publicly their visions. Listen to them and make your choice accordingly.

We have all heard the rumours of corruption and attempted bribery. The media is full of allegations that all of us engaged in this process have taken money or other inducements to vote for a particular candidate or to try and sway the election one way or another. Wrong or right the truth will come out one day but, meanwhile, let us move on. The vote in which you will all participate is entirely secret. No one, but you and God the Almighty watching you, will know what name you place in the ballot box. You will remain anonymous and immune from retaliation. I implore you to think of the good of your country and vote with a clear conscience. You should not feel bound by any obligation other than the interests of your country and the Somali people. Choose the candidate who will be honest and effective in leading the country with a vision appropriate for the next four years of transformation and peace-building in Somalia. Your honour and chance is in the secret ballot, do not let this chance slip away on the 10th of September 2012. ■

Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga
*Special Representative of the
United Nations Secretary-General*

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UNPOS

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The new Somali President Hassan Sheikh assuming Office after the inauguration, setting up his team and working on Government priorities. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office

An historic political process

*Fexton Matupa, Political Affairs Officer
UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)*

It was an historic moment to see Somali parliamentarians elect a President for the first time in more than 20 years. This was significant in that it was also the first time in two decades that the election of the President was held inside Somalia.

The process was carried out in a free and fair manner and was seen as a victory for the forces of change. The statesmanship with which the outgoing President, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, conceded defeat is another positive step for Somalia in that it set the stage for a peaceful changing of the guard. The inauguration of the new President on 16 September 2012 further cemented the peaceful change-over. This is a lesson that we hope will be emulated in future Somali politics – putting their nation ahead of other narrow considerations and accepting defeat with grace. All of these developments have given the people of Somalia renewed hope and optimism, something that has eluded them for over two decades.

The wheels were set in motion for the Somali owned process when the Principals/Signatories of the Roadmap on Ending the Transition in Somalia met in Nairobi on 22 June 2012 and agreed on protocols to end the transition and approved the revised draft of the Provisional Constitution.

This accelerated a chain of events that culminated in the election, on 10 Septem-

ber 2012, of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. This election has not only ended the eight-year long Transition but has also ushered in a new era for Somalia.

The outcome of the roadmap process led to the establishment of three institutions which proved critical to ending the transition: the group of 135 traditional elders; which, in turn, selected 825 members of a National Constituent Assembly (NCA), which adopted, on 1 August, a Provisional Constitution.

The Traditional Elders were key in nominating 275 members of the new Federal Parliament for vetting by the Technical Selection Committee (TSC). The successful completion of these processes, in the face of many challenges encountered, paved the way for the election of a new Speaker of Parliament and thereafter, the President of the Republic.

Looking back, one might ask why this iteration of the Somali Peace Process is different than many earlier attempts to extricate Somalia out of seemingly endless transitional rule. Moreover, what does this transition mean for Somalia and the region?

To begin with, some critical lessons were learned from past efforts. The first was the need to have the Somali transitional authorities buy fully into each and every step of the process. Coherence among the Signatories

It was an historic moment to see Somali parliamentarians elect their President freely for the first time in more than 20 years. This was significant in that it was also the first time in two decades that the election of the President was held inside Somalia.

of the Roadmap was also a major factor. Although this could not be taken for granted and often proved tenuous, the international focus helped to keep the local stakeholders together. The constitution-making process almost collapsed in mid-2010, glaringly bringing this issue to the forefront.

But ultimately coherence among the international and regional partners played a critical role in enabling the international community to speak with one voice in support of the process.

A joint framework was established between The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the UN and the African Union (AU) to promote close collaboration on issues affecting the Somali peace process.

Somalis also grew weary of what seemed to be an endless transition and the politics of status quo. The voices grew louder and more vocal, with an increasingly enlightened and assertive civil society agitating for change. A coalition of these forces helped the transitional authorities to stay focused on the way forward in the process.

In the face of bribery and intimidation Somalis voted for change, using the secret ballot to their advantage and ensuring that Somalia continues on the path away from conflict, anarchy and extremism and towards durable peace and prosperity. ■

See photos of the Parliamentary elections for Speaker:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unpos/sets/72157631300167952/>

See photos of the Inauguration of New Somali Federal Parliament:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unpos/sets/72157631290303028/>

A ground breaking constitution

OMAR ADEN QADI, *Media & Civic Education Officer, UN Joint Constitution Unit*

The approval of the Provisional Federal Constitution marked the start of a new era in Somalia



The Provisional Constitution was overwhelmingly approved on 1st August 2012

After a multitude of National Conferences to promote a rebirth of Somalia, the country took a major step forward by approving a new Provisional Constitution which provides the basis for peaceful co-existence among Somalis.

The inclusive Provisional Constitution paves the way for an environment which is more conducive to reconciliation, social harmony and trust building between the different regions and the different social groups of Somalia.

The Constitution was drafted by the Independent Federal Constitution Commission, with support from the Parliamentary Constitutional Committee and additional inputs from the Committee of Experts, the Technical Revision Committee and the Technical Facilitation Committee.

This collaborative process ensured that the document reflected perspectives from a broad cross section of society and moves away from a system which traditionally divided Somali people along clan lines.

The text for the document was overwhelmingly approved by the National Constituent Assembly (NCA). The NCA was made up in total of 825 delegates drawn from all Somali clans. 621 delegates voted

in favour, with 13 votes against and 11 abstentions.

One of the main features of the new constitution is the strong human rights and civil rights components.

For the first time in the history of the country, a new independent and powerful Human Rights Commission will assume the responsibility of ensuring that neither the government nor any other entity violates people's rights.

Another major feature of the constitutional process is the adoption of a federal system of Government. During the extensive public consultations conducted during the constitutional process which spanned six years, many Somalis expressed the view that federalism was the best way of making their future governments and state institutions accountable, inclusive, democratic and transparent. According to the Provisional Constitution, at least two regions of the former 18 regions of the country can merge to form a federal unit or Federal Member State

Completion and adoption of the Provisional Constitution will need to be complemented by an implementation strategy. In addition, major improvements in other

areas, especially in security, institution building and infrastructure are required, so that Somalia can build on the transformation process bringing stability, good governance and improved human rights in a nation which has suffered so much in the past.

With a new President and Parliament in place, a review process of the Provisional Constitution will be initiated by the Federal Parliament and the new Federal Government immediately after commencing their duties and functions. Any proposed amendments will be prepared by an Independent Provisional Constitution Review and Implementation Commission.

The commission will propose amendments and seek agreement through public consultations, existing Federal Member States and within the Parliament. Any proposed amendments must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote in Parliament, but will only come into effect after the endorsement of the draft final constitution by the Somali people through a public referendum, for which a date is yet to be set. ■

For more information on Somalia's Provisional Constitution please go to the UNPOS website: <http://bit.ly/NV4RyF>

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NEW PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION:

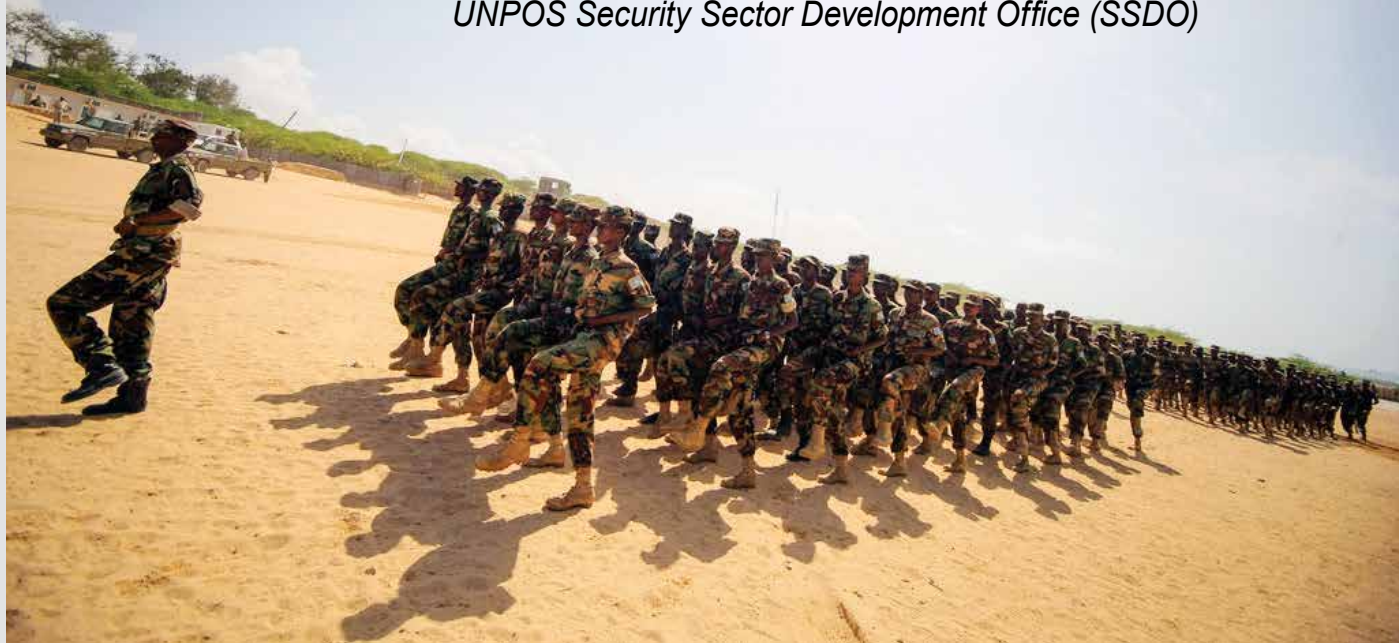
- Equal Rights for all, regardless of clan or religion
- Islam is stipulated as the only religion of the state. While no other religion can be propagated in the country freedom of religious beliefs is guaranteed
- Somali citizenship inalienable – recognising dual citizenship
- Citizens have the right to be educated up to secondary level
- The right to Life
- Prohibition of Slavery, Servitude and Forced Labour
- Protection of Liberty and Security of the Person. Prohibition of illegal detention, torture, or inhumane treatment.
- Right to fair labour relations
- Greater protections for women
- All forms of violence, including any form of violence against women prohibited
- Female Genital Mutilation is prohibited
- Women have a special right to protection from sexual abuse, segregation and discrimination in the work place. Every labour law and practice should comply with gender equality in the work place
- Guarantees women's political participation
- Commitment to good governance and transparent politics through 10 independent commissions
- The establishment of Commissions' for Human Rights, Truth and Reconciliation, Anti- Corruption Commission, Judiciary, Public Service, Ombudsman
- Territorial disputes should be settled peacefully
- Somalia will have a federal system
- Somalia will have a Parliamentary system
- Somali will have an Independent Judiciary

Somalia's Security Plan

Gihan Eltahir Eltom

Advocacy and Communication Specialist

UNPOS Security Sector Development Office (SSDO)



Recently trained members of the Somali National Army (SNA) 14 August 2012 at an African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) training facility on the western fringes of the Somali capital, Mogadishu. CREDIT: Stuart Price AU/UN IST

For over two decades, since the fall of the Siad Barre regime, Somalia has been plagued with unrest and violence leaving the country devastated and its new institutions in a state of collapse.

As Somalia moves from a period of transition to one of transformation, there is a mood of hope and optimism in the country. This will now need to be matched by improved security and access to justice. In August 2012, the Somali National Security and Stabilization Plan (NSSP) 2012 -2014 was passed by presidential decree, a move hailed as “an historic step”.

FACT BOX

The NSSP focuses on the following areas:

- Strengthening high level security and justice policy as well as strategy development and coordination mechanisms.
- Rebuilding an affordable, accountable and professional military, security, justice and Corrections agencies and institutions.
- Ensuring effective partnership and coordination between state and non-state security and justice agencies and institutions.
- Increasing the inclusion and participation of Parliamentary and Civil Society Organizations in Somalia.
- Enhancing and sustaining international support for the stabilization of Somalia.

The preparation and drafting of the NSSP was inclusive and Somali-owned, involving a series of extensive and coordinated consultations in Navaisha, Puntland, Galkayo, Nairobi and Mogadishu. Many stakeholders were involved in the process, including the Somali and regional authorities, the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa (ASWJ) pro-government militia group, representatives of civil society including women's groups, and the international community.

The adoption and implementation of the NSSP is vital in helping to create a safer Somalia as the plan clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of civil and military institutions, such as the ministries of Defence, Justice and Interior as well as the police, military, national security, corrections and immigration.

The most immediate priority is to support the incoming government in the drafting of appropriate legislation, plans and strategies, to establish the relevant security, justice and rule of law commissions in accordance with the Provisional Constitution, and to review the annual work plan and priority actions for 2013.

The plan also advocates for the training of relevant Parliamentary oversight committees, the judiciary, civil society and women's organisations, as well as the formation of professional and capable security and justice governance arrangements for Somalia to cover the next four years.

The ultimate aim of the NSSP is to support a secure, enabled, federated Somalia. A nation where citizens feel secure, have access to justice; where the rule of law upholds the human rights of its people.

The plan also calls for the creation of a number of oversight bodies including, the National Security Council, the relevant Independent Commissions, and other entities such as the Regional and District Security Committees. ■

Shaping Somalia's Political Landscape:

Profile of Halima Ismail Ibrahim Co-Chair Technical Selection Committee

Salma Zulfiqar, UNPOS/Albany Associates Communications Consultant



Halima Ibrahim. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office

At the age of 15 Halima Ismail Ibrahim was already advocating for women's rights at her high school in Afgoye, 30 km from Mogadishu.

With or without a functioning state, as a passionate and committed human rights activist and the Co-Chair of the Technical Selection Committee (TSC), Halima has been working for the poor, promoting human rights and advocating for youth empowerment for decades.

"I was teaching agriculture and working in the field carrying out research when I realised that women's rights were being ignored. I saw women working very hard cultivating the land, working at home, bringing up children but had no rights when it came to land ownership so I raised this with the legislators," she said.

Halima cited an example of widows who have no right to their land after the death of their husband and are often left penniless. To help these women and others the activist formed a women's farmers cooperative in the 1980's, placing pressure on the then government to agree to issue them land.

After war broke out in 1990, the situation of human rights in Somalia degenerated even further. Halima and nine other

women decided to form an NGO called the IIDA women's development organisation to promote and protect women's rights and to keep their cause alive.

Halima's tireless efforts to improve the lives of Somali women recently earned her a place of leadership on the TSC, the body responsible for vetting candidates nominated by traditional elders to stand as legislators in the new federal parliament.

"I really feel proud to have been part of the TSC and it is amazing to see representatives from all clans in Somalia in the committee. We put our differences aside to be objective when vetting the candidates standing for seats in Parliament," Halima explained.

Comprised of 27 people, with an additional two non-voting members from the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), each of them representing a different clan in the country and 7 international observers, the TSC has been instrumental in helping to shape the political landscape in Somalia. The committee's main function was to ratify or exclude candidates who had a history of violence or intimidation. The committee rejected some 70 proposed candidates who failed to meet

the criteria.

"We spoke to the elders and asked them to be objective. We told them, 'you are here to save Somalia, you are here to help create the best Parliament we have ever had, you are here to lead the way for a new era in Somalia,'" she added, stating that the inclusion of the elders throughout the selection process had helped to create the most qualified parliament in Somalia today.

Halima said she fought hard to ensure that a 30% quota of seats were reserved for women in Parliament. However, only 15 % of seats have been taken by women so far.

"Somalia used to be a country which was up and coming, there was free schooling for everybody in the 70's and women had opportunities. I hope we can return to this era".

Women in Somalia can be categorised in two ways, while they are respected at home as a mother and are revered as the boss of the house, outside of the home they are voiceless as many remain uneducated and powerless," Halima explained.

"We convinced the elders to nominate good female candidates and now we have some very strong educated women in the parliament. We have some young and enthusiastic women who want to make changes in their country. We need to support these young women to help promote their causes."

Now that the President has been elected Halima says she will continue to push for human rights and justice: "The first thing is to work on the law of the land and make sure that it is implemented properly so that people can feel safe and so they are protected".

While shying away from standing for MP herself, Halima says she will continue to work closely with parliament and advocate for changes in legislation to better protect the Somali people. "We have shown the world that Somalis can own the process and can change something for the better in their country". ■

Watch video clip of Halima:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unpos/sets/72157631535657391/>

Lawyers: The new ambassadors for human rights in Somalia?

Human Rights Unit/UNPOS

“There are no people more important than lawyers to defend and advocate for human rights,” reflects Hassan, the Director of a Legal Aid Clinic in Somaliland, while discussing his thoughts on the impact lawyers can have on the defense and promotion of human rights for the protection of the people of Somalia.

Hassan was one of 24 lawyers from across all regions of Somalia brought together for the first time in 20 years for training on human rights in the administration of justice. The training was facilitated by the UNPOS Human Rights Unit (HRU) in collaboration with UNDP in Hargeisa last May.

With constitutional safeguards for human rights reaffirmed under the Provisional Constitution, advocacy for human rights by legal practitioners under a constitutional framework will be critical to driving the emergence of a human rights legal culture in Somalia.

Because of the collapse of government institutions during the conflict, customary practices were heavily relied upon to mediate disputes. A prevailing lack of confidence in formal legal channels is one of the many challenges faced by the Somali justice institutions. UNPOS Human Rights Unit’s support to justice sector development consists of enabling key implementing actors such as judges, prosecutors and lawyers to assume their roles more effectively in the promotion of human rights in the administration of justice.

Moving forward, the rolling out of a country-wide training project to support the capacity building of legal professionals in Somalia will continue from November 2012 onwards. It is hoped that this will spark transformational change which encourages local leadership for the promotion and implementation of international human rights standards in Somalia. “Human rights have to be at the center of the peace process,” stated UNPOS Deputy Representative, Peter de Clercq, “Human rights abuses are at the root of the Somali conflict”.

The UNPOS Human Rights Unit training aims to encourage legal practitioners to identify the many commonalities that already exist between international human rights law, Islamic law and the domestic legal framework in Somalia. In order to promote greater compliance and advocacy from those involved in the administration of justice, international human rights standards must first be accepted as consistent with the prevailing legal culture.

Sustaining these advances through the next generation of legal practitioners, UNPOS/HRU is further providing support to Somali academia. After a meeting in Djibouti earlier this year, representatives of four Somali Universities, the University of Mogadishu, Puntland State University, East Africa University and the University of Hargeisa, committed to producing a draft curriculum on human rights in the administration of justice. In May, the University delegations proceeded to harmonizing these respective draft curricula into an integrated teaching tool for the training of judges, prosecutors and lawyers under the aegis of the UNPOS/HRU in a follow-up workshop held in Hargeisa, Somaliland.



Hassan believes that the UNPOS/HRU training on human rights brought him to realize that “we can work together in the name of Somalia rather than political regions.”

Indeed, both the human rights training and human rights curriculum workshop brought together representatives of legal professions strongly divided along regional lines. It gave them an opportunity to reflect and discuss a way forward for the development of the justice system in Somalia, in compliance with international human right standards and in respect of legal traditions. ■

From Twitter to Teahouses

Laetitia Pactat, Digital Advisor - AU/UN Information Support Team



UNPOSsomalila wall photo

@UNPOSsomalila @UN @UN_DPA Ambassador Mahiga should be congratulated for making this possible, he worked tirelessly for a better change

tweeted by Harbi Kullane @Xarbi in Mogadishu, an example of interaction on the UNPOS Twitter account

The excitement of the political process taking place in Somalia was evident in conversations being held by Somalis on different digital platforms and the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) found itself at the heart of online discussion, debate, controversy and rumour. Somalis are proactive disseminators of news inside and outside of their country and in order to engage with this vibrant and dynamic digital chat, UNPOS identified the need to have a direct link with these constituencies.

In July 2012, UNPOS established a revamped presence on three digital platforms to better engage in global Somali dialogue: Twitter (@UNPOSsomalila), Tumblr (unposomalila.tumblr.com) and Flickr (flickr.com/photos/unpos).

Twitter is now the leading global social media platform and @UNPOSsomalila was established to highlight the Mission's work and public information products. Today @UNPOSsomalila tweets provide an alert system informing followers in Somalia and all over the world of the latest political developments. Press statements, media alerts, meeting locations, timings as well as important information during crises are all tweeted from the account. The primary audience for @UNPOSsomalila was local media, but it quickly became clear that a wide range of Somalis and other

audiences from Hargeisa and Mogadishu to Minneapolis, Toronto, Oslo and Melbourne were following the account and directly engaging with the Mission.

The power of this engagement and the scope of the account's reach was amplified during Somalia's presidential elections. The @UNPOSsomalila Twitter account worked in close collaboration with Radio Bar-Kulan, a public service radio station, to tweet events unfolding during the live-stream coverage to a global audience. The Mission's following began growing at an unprecedented rate during the announcement of results. The @UNPOSsomalila account increased by more than 120 followers in a matter of hours and audiences grew further with more than 1,000 followers by September 2012.

More meaningful than the increase in followers during the live coverage of the presidential elections, was the opportunity to demonstrate and communicate the sense of change through this digital tool. The UNPOS Twitter account added online transparency to a political process which was representative and Somali-owned and led, showing the world that change has come to Somalia. ■

Follow on Twitter: @UNPOSsomalila

Women count for peace

Ismini Palla, Public Information Officer, Mogadishu



Some 30 women gathered for two days in Mogadishu, coming from all over Somalia to participate in the 'Open Day on Women and Peace and Security'

Somalia is ranked as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman according to Ilwad Mahamuud Ali from the Elman Peace and Human Rights Center. "Women are extremely marginalised and neglected and they are not part of the decision-making process" she remarked.

Ms Mahamuud Ali was among some 30 women representatives of grassroots and umbrella organisations from Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, who gathered for two days in Mogadishu to participate in the annual UN Open Day: "Partnerships for Peace" facilitated by UNPOS' Gender Affairs Unit with support from the UN Country Team, in particular UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and OCHA.

The Open Day, held globally since 2010, provides a platform for discussion between women affected by conflict and senior UN leaders on key issues of concern.

This year Somali women representing a wide range of professions addressed issues of access to basic services, such as livelihoods, education and health, promotion and respect of women's rights, prevention and protection against violence, women in politics and women's role in peace-building.

"Extremists have been opposing women's development and empowerment, while there are cultural barriers that impede women's livelihoods, rights and education," said veteran activist Hawa Ali Jama, who heads the 'We Are Women Activists' (WAWA), an umbrella Network from Puntland.

Ms Ali Jama, however, does acknowledge great progress made in recent years, especially with regards to security. "Now we can speak publicly, before we could not express ourselves."

The Open Day also provides an opportunity to deepen understanding and local ownership of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in promotion of peace and security.

At the Open Day women presented their recommendations to

the UN, international community, Somali leaders, religious leaders and to women themselves, in order to set priority actions and help accelerate the implementation of 1325.

"Your presence here means that you are active and that you are representing other women and this is what we have been asking for: representation of women by women," said

Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia, Augustine P. Mahiga while addressing the conference. "I am always impressed with the depth of knowledge and awareness that Somali women have about women issues and UNSCR 1325," SRSG Mahiga added.

During his address to the conference, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, called for an enhanced role of women in peace-building process. "The experiences of men and women in conflict are different; it is because of this that women should be given opportunities to take part in conflict resolutions," said Mr. Bowden. "To rebuild a better Somalia, develop a strategy for effective development, women have to be involved," he added.

Bringing about a change for women in Somalia following the election of a new president should be at the forefront of priorities for the New Federal Parliament, according to Hawa Ali Jama. "We expect security, increased women's participation, improved livelihoods for women and improved education for girls" she said.

Although women were promised 30% representation in the new Federal Parliament, the selection process brought their quota down to 15%. "We should focus now on the rest of the government, the ministries, vice ministers, general managers. We need to increase female representation there and compensate for not achieving the 30% quota of women in the parliament," said Amina Sharif Hassan, Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights, a Canadian/Somali NGO.

SRSG Mahiga described the inclusion of 36 female MPs as "groundbreaking progress" and said the achievement should not be measured in numbers but in changing the mindset of society.

Over the years conflict has driven women and their families out of their homes in search of safer shelter, food and water. Displaced women often become victims of violence, with no access to land, wealth, education and health services. Out of 1.5 million internally displaced people, 600,000 have reached reproductive age but sadly Somalia has the highest birth mortality rate in the world.

Zeinab Elmi from Galkayo Medical Centre says adequate care for reproductive health remains a problem: "I would like to see in the next few years women and children having free health access and hospitals basically equipped and with more human resources".

The UN has also reported on an alarming increase in violence against women in camps for internally displaced people, an issue that Ms Mahamuud Ali, from the Elman Peace and Human Rights Center, says has not been properly addressed. Participants at the conference called for more empowerment of women with better and increased access to education as one of the key recommendations of the two-day conference.

"As a young woman myself working with victims of gender-based violence, I really hope that in future girls get access to education and have a space where leadership is cultivated in them," she said.

The Open Day culminated in prioritising actions to be implemented and assessed at 2013 Open Day to accelerate, with the support of UN agencies, the implementation of UN SCR 1325. ■

UNPOS flickr: <http://bit.ly/Qcf9ZO>

Humanitarian workers make a difference in Somalia, despite challenges

Roberta Russo, Public Information Officer, OCHA



CREDIT: OCHA Public Information Office

Humanitarian aid work over the last year was key in making slight recent improvements in the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

According to the latest data released in August by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), the number of people in crisis in Somalia has reduced by 16 per cent, from 2.51 million in early 2012 to 2.12 million.

Together with humanitarian aid, other factors contributed to the improvement in the situation: improved food stocks following the exceptional harvest in January, increased milk availability and higher livestock prices in most pastoral areas of Somalia.

But the situation will slightly deteriorate again in the second half of 2012. The forthcoming harvest that will follow the April-June rains is expected to be significantly below average and the cereal harvest in southern Somalia is predicted to be the third-lowest since 1995.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains critical. "The progress we have made since last year can easily slip backwards if high levels of assistance are not sustained," said the outgoing UN Humanitarian Coor-

dinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden.

Despite the insecurity and conflict still present in the southern part of the country, humanitarian workers continue to bring relief to millions of Somalis. In July 2012 alone, over 1.6 million people received food assistance while 1.7 million have access to clean water.

Humanitarian deliveries continue despite the fact that Somalia is one of the most dangerous environments for aid workers in the world. "The dangers are very real," said Bowden on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day, on 19 August. In the past year, 20 aid workers were killed and eight others kidnapped in Somalia, four of whom remain in captivity. "Attacks on humanitarians are totally unacceptable. Whether aid workers are international staff far from their homes and families or national staff working in the community in which they were raised, their only agenda is to help the most vulnerable. All parties to the conflict must respect humanitarian work and allow full humanitarian access to people in need."

On 27 August, a staff member of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) was killed in Marka, southern Somalia. The 32-year-old Yassin Mohamed Hassan

was part of a team overseeing irrigation facilitation structures to support farmers living in the area. Following Yassin's death, the UN in Somalia released a statement stressing that "attacks on aid workers compromise the UN's ability to maintain large-scale humanitarian operations and impact on the lives of vulnerable Somalis." The statement also pointed out that civilians remain the principal victims of ongoing conflict and that all parties should minimize the impact of conflict on civilians.

In addition to insecurity, humanitarian agencies also have to face challenges related to a lack of funding hindering the implementation of life-saving projects for vulnerable communities. NGOs and UN agencies in Somalia need US \$ 576 million to address the enormous needs over the second half of 2012. The revised appeal for all of 2012 is \$1.16 billion. "Humanitarian actors need funds to provide the most vulnerable Somalis with urgently needed assistance, such as food, clean water, sanitation facilities and medical care. These funds are also needed to build sustainable livelihoods for people who have few or no resources after years of drought and conflict, thereby increasing their resilience to future crises," Bowden said. ■



AMISOM forces in new areas

Patrick Gathara, Press and Information Officer, AU/UN Information Support Team

Sitting in the shade of a large acacia tree, with long-dormant beehives peeking out of its branches, Brigadier Paul Lokech cuts an imposing figure. Around him, hundreds of soldiers are busy erecting fortifications for his field headquarters less than 5km outside the Somali agricultural town of Afgooye, on the banks of the Shabelle River.

Though his youthful features belie his age and experience, the 55 year old commands the nearly 8,000 Ugandan troops of the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia.

In June, his forces accompanied by those from Burundi had taken control of the Afgooye corridor, a 30km stretch of road between Mogadishu, and Afgooye to the south-west, in what was AMISOM's first major engagement outside the Somali capital. The aptly named "Operation Free Shabelle" sought to dislodge the Al Qaeda-affiliated terror group, Al-Shabaab, from towns near Mogadishu which they had been using as bases to plot attacks on the city's population.

It also marked a turning point for the

AU mission, which deployed to Somalia in 2007 with a mandate to help establish the conditions for the restoration of peace and stability throughout Southern Somalia. However, for much of its first 5 years in the country, it has concentrated its efforts on freeing Mogadishu from the brutal grip of Al-Shabaab, an extremist group that has rejected the peace process and seeks to impose an alien and extreme version of Islam on its traditionally moderate population. Last August, AMISOM forces finally succeeded in helping the Somali National Army (SNA) expel the insurgents from their fixed bases within the city, ushering in the longest sustained period of relative peace the capital has enjoyed since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991.

Following a brief period of consolidation, the AU forces have now turned their attention to supporting the efforts of the SNA in the rest of the country. Buoyed by their success in Mogadishu and with their numbers boosted from 12,000 to 17,731 by the UN Security Council, AMISOM forces are spreading out into the Somali countryside,

pushing Al-Shabaab out of major population centres and disrupting their communications and supply routes.

Afgooye was taken without a shot after Al-Shabaab militants fled to avoid encirclement. Further up the corridor, Burundian troops encountered some resistance at Elasha Biyaha, 15km out of Mogadishu, but this quickly evaporated as Al-Shabaab fighters and their commanders retreated south towards the port of Marka, 90 kms from Mogadishu. They soon had to move on though, as the relentless AMISOM expansion was soon to reach Marka itself, which had been under extremist rule for three years.

To the north, AMISOM troops pushed out of the northern outskirts of Mogadishu, quickly securing Al Fitr, a small centre where they recovered hastily abandoned Al-Shabaab uniforms and documents, before advancing on the town of Balaad. Meanwhile, in the south, Kenyan forces which entered the country last October in pursuit of Al-Shabaab and have since been integrated into AMISOM, captured the



CREDIT: Stuart Price, AU/UN IST

strategic town of Afmadow, a gateway into the last remaining major extremist stronghold, the port city of Kismayo.

The capture of Afgooye was particularly significant, as the town sits on roads linking the capital to the key town of Baidoa in the west as well as the port of Marka in the south. Similarly, Balaad is important as it controls access from Beletweyne in the northern region of Hiraaan. Currently, both Baidoa and Beletweyne are in the hands of Ethiopian troops, who are allied with AMISOM, are not part of the mission.

AMISOM has already sent troops into these two towns and securing supply routes will be critical to not only preventing Al-Shabaab from reinforcing their fighters in these regions but also enabling the deployment of more AMISOM troops there with the aim of eventually allowing the Ethiopians to withdraw.

The AMISOM expansion has ensured that the process of ending the transitional period, including the adoption of provisional constitution by a National Constituent Assembly, the inauguration of a new

Parliament and election of the President, has taken place without any major security incident. It has also allowed the Somali Federal Government an opportunity to exert its authority into the areas formerly under the control of the extremists.

Within a few days of the fall of Afgooye, for example, the outgoing government had deployed 300 police to the area to help with security for the populace. As security along the Afgooye corridor has improved, trucks laden with farm produce have also begun arriving in Mogadishu, bringing fresh fruits and vegetables from the fertile fields on the banks of the Shabelle to the capital's busy markets. In Afgooye town, farmers celebrated the demise of the extremists, who had been taking up to half of their harvest in illegal "taxes" as well as charging them for the use of the river's waters. Tractors are already ploughing more fields in the area as farmers anticipate greater demand from the capital.

"Afgooye is a breadbasket for much of Somalia and Al-Shabaab's extortion of farmers was a major factor in the 2011

famine," said outgoing Deputy AMISOM Force Commander, Brigadier General Audace Nduwumunsi. "AMISOM's operation has brought Afgooye and the Afgooye corridor under control, allowing the people who live there the opportunity to rebuild their lives and livelihoods".

A few months after the capture of Afgooye, Al-Shabaab had been pushed out of Marka and a host of other towns in south-central Somalia including Elma'an port, Bibi Town, Harbole Town among other strategic towns. Somali government forces with the support of troops from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) moved into the Kismayo seaport and airport on 1st October in a move to secure the former stronghold of Al-Shabaab.

The loss of Kismayo's seaport in particular delivers a major blow to Al-Shabaab who once extorted much of their revenue from traders and businesses utilising the facility. Both operations were met with little resistance. ■

*Scenes from Kismayo on Flickr:
<http://bit.ly/PWY65b>*





Newly elected Parliamentarians in prayer following the inauguration ceremony in Mogadishu, Somalia CREDIT: Stuart Price AU/UN IST



Newly elected President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud during his first days in office CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office



Traditional Elders convene to select the National Constituent Assembly. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office



Dr Augustine P. Mahiga meets with the Technical Selection Committee in Mogadishu. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office





Members of the Technical Selection Committee review nominations by the Traditional Elders for the new Federal Parliament. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office



Newly elected Speaker of Parliament, Professor Mohamed Osman Jawari making his nomination for the new President in a secret ballot. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office



Journalists wait for the results during the elections for the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Somalia. CREDIT: UNPOS Public Information Office



The new Somali Federal Parliament elects the Speaker, First Deputy and Second Deputy Speaker. Around 230 participated in the voting, which was held at the Police Training Academy in Mogadishu



Members of the Somali National Army and the government-allied Ras Kimbani militia display the Somali national flag from the former control tower of Kismayo Airport while they celebrate after Kenyan AMISOM troops moved into and through Kismayo, the hitherto last major urban stronghold of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated extremist group Al Shabaab, on their way to the airport without a shot being fired following a two-month operation to liberate towns and villages across southern Somalia and Kismayo itself.

