

31 December 2012

Dear Friends,

We have come to the end of an historic year for Somalia, for the region and for the rest of the international community. On 10 September 2012 a new Somali Parliament, sitting in Mogadishu, elected a President—the first such democratic exercise in over twenty years. Holding such an election in the Somali capital would have been unthinkable just months before, and it sent an unambiguous signal to Somalis, to the region and to the international community that the winds of change were blowing. In Mogadishu, the sound of gunfire and explosions has been replaced with the noise of construction and the hum of commerce. Flights into the city are booked solid months in advance. New restaurants and hotels open every day and the city's building boom produces frequent concrete shortages. Fresh produce from the countryside and fish from the ocean spill from the city's bustling markets and scores of Somalis from the diaspora return to Mogadishu each day. Similar stories are being played out in other cities recently recovered from the insurgents. Hope and progress have returned to Somalia.

After several failed attempts to end of the Transition in Somalia, we succeeded this past year because the process was inclusive, transparent, legitimate, participatory and Somalia-owned. This underpinned the integrity of the change process, which was enabled on the security front by the determined efforts of the Somali National Forces and the AU Peacekeeping Mission (AMISOM). Throughout this remarkable year, the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and other international partners worked together to overcome challenges as they arose. Above all, it was the desire of the Somali people for peace and change that moved the process forward. Patience and persistence pays.

In August 2012 we celebrated the first anniversary since Al-Shabaab was forced out of Mogadishu. This followed a watershed moment in Somalia's political history when the Signatories to the Roadmap and leaders of all major clans selected a Council of traditional elders who in turn selected delegates from a broad cross-section of Somali Society; to a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) that adopted a Provisional Constitution. The provisional constitution will eventually be ratified through a referendum and it will serve as the supreme law of the country and constitutionally guarantee the rights and freedoms of the Somali people while maintaining a system of checks and balances between the different branches of government.

The Council of Elders also proposed names representing all of Somalia's clans to comprise a new Federal Parliament. After a painstaking vetting exercise by a Technical Selection Committee the hard work paid off and on 20 August the most competent and qualified Parliament in Somalia's history was selected and seated. A new speaker of Parliament was chosen on 28 August, paving the way for the election by Parliament of a President. On 10 September the new Parliament overwhelmingly and transparently voted for change, replacing the incumbent, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed with Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, in a

globally acclaimed moment that was witnessed on live radio, TV and Internet broadcast, by Somalis all over the world as it unfolded.

And progress continued. On 17 October the President selected Abdi Farah Shirdon as Somalia's new Prime Minister. After extensive consultations, Prime Minister Shirdon submitted names to comprise a streamlined Council of Ministers, representing both all clans and a cross section of political interests. The slate was overwhelmingly ratified by Parliament on 13 November, officially ending the eight-year long Transition and ushering in a new era for Somalia.

The end of transition provided an opportunity for unprecedented female participation in Somali politics and dramatically advanced the cause of gender equality in Somalia. In February Principals of the Roadmap endorsed a requirement that women hold a minimum 30 per cent of the positions in the National Constituency Assembly and the New Federal Parliament. Of the 825 members of the NCA, 24% were women. The New Federal Parliament and the New Cabinet have 14 and 20 per cent respectively and for the first time, a woman has been appointed to the position of Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs. This bold and progressive decision has opened the gates for women's empowerment in the years to come and sets the stage for more gender parity in leadership roles.

In the security and justice sector, UNPOS continued to coordinate international donor support through the auspices of the Joint Security Committee (JSC) with its subordinate technical working groups, covering the military, police, justice and corrections, as well as Maritime Security and Counter-Piracy. Human rights violations, including wide spread targeted killings of journalists and endemic sexual violence remain a concern, however, important and tangible steps were taken to recognize the importance of human rights and justice in the context of the political transition. These fundamental values were eloquently underscored by President Hassan Sheikh in his inaugural statement. UNPOS supported the development of the justice system through training of judges and lawyers, technical cooperation on policies and legislation and to promote human rights in the military justice system.

Throughout this momentous year, UNPOS walked side by side with the people of Somalia. The country now has a new committed government and we will continue to work with its partners to consolidate international assistance and coordinate activities in order to assist the government to deliver on its priorities of: Full stabilization – supremacy of the law and good governance; Economic recovery – livelihoods and economic infrastructure; Peacebuilding – social reconciliation through building bridges of trust; Service delivery – health, education and environment; International relations – building collaborative relations and polishing the national image and; Unity and Integrity of the country – striving together for a better future.

However, the road to stabilization will not be easy. Somalia remains a state in need of support from international community, which will need to re-invest comprehensively and generously if it is to capitalize on its massive investment of time and resources. At the beginning of the year, my office and half of its staff relocated to Somalia and continued to work alongside key Somali partners in a variety of sectors. UNPOS closely cooperated with key regional interlocutors to ensure a unified and coordinated approach on important political issues. A joint framework was established between The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the UN and the African Union (AU) ensuring close collaboration on

issues affecting the Somali peace process. This harmonized international and regional response to challenges within Somalia played a critical role in enabling the international community to speak with one voice in support of the process. The center of gravity has shifted to Mogadishu, and UNPOS completing a major strategic review to ensure full alignment of its policies and programs with the goals and aims of the new government. The mission is also increasing staff presence there by 100% in the coming weeks and I urge other members of the international community to come to Mogadishu. For the first time in a generation, a safe, secure and prosperous Somalia at peace with itself and its neighbors seems more like a reasonable aspiration than a distant dream. We will work with our Somali brothers and sisters to harness this unique opportunity to transform Somalia. I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year—a new year that dawns brightly and full of promise and hope.

Warm regards,

Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga

Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Somalia

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