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Transcript Q&A

Building a Stable Somalia

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Question 1:

Mr President, repeatedly for the last two nights you were saying that you will not be re-elected after four years. Please can you tell us one of the reasons why you're not going to be re-elected? My second question is, our community has been subjected for the last 25 years to warlords and Islamic fundamentalists who were terrorizing civilians through executions, torture, and rape and their purpose of killing was only to obtain positions from the government. Are there any positions left in your government for these guys?

Question 2:

Thank you very much Mr President. I would like to ask you two questions. The first question is, you have carried out a study, called 'The Missing Millions' and you are aware, have worked and know very well that projects [that] have started to bring back Somali professionals and technical teams have failed through MIDA (Migration for Development in Africa) and QUESTS-MIDA (Qualified Expatriate Somali Technical Support – Migration for Development in Africa), both of them. What is your plan to bring [back] the missing millions? We have a lot of politicians but we need technocrats who do the job. Politicians can talk. So what is your plan in that regard?

The second question I have is physical security cannot alone solve the problem of Somalia. The food security and the livelihood security is a critical component for Somali people to test the dividend of peace. Both of them go together. What is your plan to solve, or to work together, on the physical security or political security and at the same time the food security and the livelihood security, which go together? It's a tough question. Thank you very much.

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

Thank you. I think maybe my communication strategy or my communication way was not perfect. I never said that I will not be re-elected but I said that the trend that we had in the past during the transition was that a president elected one time has never been re-elected. So that was the trend starting in 2000 with Abdiqasim [Salad Hassan], then Abdullahi Yusuf [Ahmed], then Sharif Sheikh [Ahmed]. What I was saying was that I'm sure that I have only this term but I'm not sure if I will have the other one or not. But that doesn't mean that I will not seek a second term. I will. Thank you very much.

On the other hand, the Somali government or the political space for Somalia is open for all Somalis provided that one has come through the channels, the

space that has been provided on the basis of the tools and instruments in peace. We cannot allow someone to come – that is understood – someone to come into politics, for example, using violence as a means to reach a political end. That's not acceptable. But any Somali who denounces violence, who recognizes Somalia and Somalis as a nation and a state that exists and respects all it has is most welcome – and who wants to seek the political ends through peaceful means, not through a gun in his hand. So people, if they committed a crime in the past, that crime depends on its magnitude. It can be someone that society can forgive and go ahead or it can be someone that ends up in the courts. I'm not the one who will judge that. But every Somali citizen has the right to have a political space and be part of the political process as far as it goes with the norms that have been put in place by the Somalis.

Yes, you're right. I worked on that research, that document and I'm very glad people who call out to me on that document are still around. 'The Missing Millions' was mainly concerned with the role of the diaspora in the recovery and the reconstruction of Somalia and that need is still there. Now, when I came to office I started organizing or planning to establish an office whereby the diaspora is engaged in the recovery and the reconstruction in Somalia and as late as today I was discussing with Prime Minister David Cameron on how the United Kingdom government can support us, organize that office and establish the network, since the UK is the country that has the largest Somali diaspora. So that idea is still there, we're working on it. We are a bit late but we are working on it. We believe that the Somali diaspora is an asset for the recovery and reconstruction of Somalia. Soon you will hear the offices and the programmes that the government will present to the diaspora and to the Somali people.

Physical security and food security and livelihood security. Food security and livelihood security: sometimes different components of security – some of them are the chicken and the egg. Who comes first? But for us, we believe that physical security is now the top priority of my government. Unless we have an enabling environment where one can improve, or the government can improve, the livelihood of the ordinary citizens, we cannot do it. So having a secure environment where the citizens can move around freely, they can seek a normal life – so we are focusing now on security in general but in particular the physical security. We want Somali spaces that are free from guns, that are free from violence, that are free from – people who enjoyed impunity in the last two decades should not be still moving freely in places. My government is now focusing on security, specifically on the physical

security of the people, their properties and the land. Then next to that is improving the livelihoods, food security and all of this comes. Without having that, it has been proven in the past that it is not easy.

Question 3:

I'd like to ask Your Excellency what plans the government has to assist the IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Somalia to be able to return home and to be able to sustain themselves in the long term? Thank you.

Question 4:

Mr President, welcome to London first of all. Good to see you. Secondly, as you know lately there were a few concerns among some sections of the Somali community, particularly Somalis who hailed from the Jubas – two Jubas – and the Gedo region, concerns about some perceived misunderstanding on your behalf regarding your position on the federal issues and states and whether the states would be able to form regional authorities. I think you're on record saying that 'the Beledweyne and Bay regions can form their own state governments but with the Jubas we will decide who is going to be the regional authority'. Again, you've retracted that statement and you've clarified exactly what you meant. I don't doubt personally your integrity as a president but do you blame this on your team, especially people who sit on your communication team for not articulating your position as a president? Not being a president for one section of the community, but a president for the entire country. Would you claim that?

Secondly, what is your position for people who demonstrate against you in Minnesota and outside London now – you can see a few people are demonstrating against you – what is your position *vis-à-vis* the Jubaland issue? Thank you.

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

The issue of the IDPs or the returnees in general: we have one million refugees in the neighbouring countries of Somalia. And estimations also indicate that there are also around half a million non-registered refugees in the same neighbouring countries whereby they live with the support given by the diaspora or by doing some bit of trade in those areas so that they can maintain their livelihood. Inside Somalia we have more than half a million people who are IDPs within the country at different parts. So all together we have around two million people who are not in their home right now. So both

the issues, the refugees and the IDPs, are of great concern and a priority to my government. I have discussed the issue of refugees with the neighbouring countries when I recently visited Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. And there is a conference that is going to come around in the last part of this year, maybe August tentatively, whereby the United Nations Refugee Agency, the neighbouring countries and the Somali government will discuss the modalities on the best way that the refugees can go back home. So that's in process. Within five months we'll prove to be very much involved and interested.

Regarding the IDPs – IDPs is a phenomenon that is also difficult. There are certain circumstances that make the people IDPs: some of them are violence and conflict that took place in their home areas, some of them by natural disasters like droughts or floods that displaced them. But once they go into centres, mainly in Mogadishu or Bosaso or in other places, they quite see a different life. Once they remain there for some time it's a bit difficult to make them easily return.

One of the reasons is that in their original homeland, there are no services and incentives to make them go back compared to where they are now. IDPs in Mogadishu or in Bosaso are getting some sort of services, some sort of support from the international community, from the local Somalis. There are new programmes that supported the IDPs to return but the most important thing is they must get a guarantee that their home places are secure enough that they can stay and then provide them support like restocking their life, giving them seeds for farming. Even the international community and aid organizations are ready to provide the support of fresh stock or livestock or providing seeds or hand out of food for the next three months. But most of them, they don't have the confidence that they can have security in their old places. Again, that's another major factor that makes physical security a top priority area. Although the world is ready to support many Somali organizations and Somali people are ready to support these people to go back home, they cannot go back because at least there is a real threat in their homeland or they don't have the confidence. They don't have the state institutions that guarantee security in those places. This is the challenge. Having physical security is very important and having local governance structures that guarantee the safety and security of the people and their property. So the IDP issue is complex.

Now my government has been working in the last couple of months that we were in office to address those root causes that make people the main IDPs in the urban centres – addressing the issue of security, coordinating international efforts and local efforts for the support of these IDPs. So we're

working on that and the earlier we succeed on that the better. So that's the case. Thank you.

I have said a number of times and I would like to say again: there is no 'one time'. What I said was when I was in Beledweyne was recorded. This is a modern world in the 21st century where we are using very sophisticated technology. What I said in Beledweyne was recorded visually and aurally. It's recorded; it's there. I never said that the Beledweyne and Baidoa people would make their own administrations and for Kismayo we will make [it for them]. No, I never said that and that's not true. I have publicly said that in advance.

What I said was: the government of Somalia today – there's only one plan that the government is trying to implement and that plan is for 22 years and in the last 12 years that there was a transitional government in place. The government never went outside Mogadishu. We're mainly inside Mogadishu and sometimes in a small corner in Mogadishu even. This is the only time that there is a comprehensive plan in place where new government structures will be established in the peripheries, at the district level, at the regional level and at the federal state level. Yes, there is a political understanding that Somalia is to be federal and the constitution mandates my government to federate the country. Specifically the constitution says that two or more regions that get together freely and independently can form a federal state. The constitution never said that two or more clans can get together to form a federal state. Now by saying two or more regions that makes a precondition that a region must be there. There must be an entity called 'region' and another entity called 'region' that get together, negotiate and form a federal state. That's one issue that we don't have now in place. We have no regional administrations in place. That's one.

The second thing is: Somalia got its independence in 1960 and had a functional state up until 1990 – 30 years. One time, nine years of civilian elected government and 21 years of military government, socialist government. Both governments were highly centralized governance systems. All rules, regulations, laws that have been developed in these 30 years, they serve a highly centralized government system. We don't have one rule, one regulation, one procedure, whatever you call it, that helps or facilitates to decentralize, devolve power to governments in federalism. So the challenge that my government is facing now is on one hand federating the country, on the other hand, developing the rules and the regulation of the federation. Otherwise, hasty and immediate federation without having the legal

framework in place would only create more conflict, more fragmentation. So this is the challenge we have in place.

We don't have resource sharing, we don't have revenue sharing, we don't have many, many more things to share – the basis of what we are going to share, the revenue of particular market. What percentage of local government? What percentage of state government? What percentage of federal? We don't have all these. So if we do not put those tools and instruments in place then federalism will create more problems, instead of we selecting the federation to solve our problems [*sic*].

That is the challenge my government is facing now and we're doing it. We're working very hard. Our parliament is working very hard. It finished its first session for four months, now in recession. The next time when they come they are going to work on those issues and the government is preparing to table those laws and legislations so that the constitution clearly indicates or clearly states that the number of federal states that Somalia will have will be decided by the parliament. The boundaries of these will be decided by the parliament. Of course this will also go through the process. There is a Somali proverb that states 'if you hastily cling to a tree you hastily get down from the tree'. We wanted to use processes, put in place the right tools, the right instruments, so that the steps we take, we will never relapse into conflict or crisis. Thank you very much.

Regarding the Juba issue. Juba is among the many regions of Somalia, we have only one policy whether it's Juba or Bay or Bakool or Hiiraan, etc., all Somalia. The constitution indicates that there are 18 regions in Somalia. All these 18 regions for us have equal value, particularly those in the south and central of Somalia where my government is more focused on administration building. We don't have any concerns.

Regarding me: I am the president of Somalia and I swore in front of the Somali people that I'm their president and I will represent their interests. I'm not a president for a particular clan, I'm not a president for a particular region, I'm a president for Somalia and I'm standing for that.

Henry Bellingham:

Your Excellency, thank you very much for that. I think that was really a full response but I think it was a very important one. And it links in with the IDPs because we want these people to come back but we need them to come back into towns that are going to be well-administered. They will come back if they believe that there is hope for the future and what you've just spelled out and I

think building this up block by block is incredibly important. I think you explained that very well.

Question 4:

I wanted to say that – His Excellency Hassan Sheikh Mohamud – I want to say one thing for the international community and the rest, anyone who is in this room. Somalia is very grateful to elect a president that will never be a part of the problem of the last two decades in Somalia but choose to be a president who tries to be fixing the system of Somalia. He will never be part of the problem; he will be part of the solution, finding a way to fix our institutions. I think many of us left our country two decades ago and the reason we left was to bring our children here. He was behind and looked after our communities, children, and he was head of UNICEF. We are proud that the Somali people chose the right person at the right post and we thank you to lead our government.

The first question that I would like to ask is – I think the reason I am going up and down is we as Somalis have been very proud to have you but my question particularly is that... we have made – after you became a legitimate elected president – we have sat down with so many in the Somali community in London. Half a million, the Somali community, are living in the United Kingdom. I have sit-downs with them, each one of them, and we have decided that we can get the possibility that the Somali intellectuals could go and contribute back in Somalia...

So we have 395 people who are medical doctors, many of them, they are engineers, and they want to help and they want to take part in the construction of their government. So can you please confirm to us that when there are those of us who are willing to go back [home]... whether you can provide hospitality – I mean their accommodations? I mean they're willing to work with your government for three months for absolutely nothing. So that's my question to you.

Question 5:

After two-and-a-half years of planning, we managed to go back last year and I managed to lead 70 professionals back home to eight regions of our country. We've trained local doctors in Bosaso, we've trained IT professionals in Hargeisa; we also trained agronomists in Hiiraan, Beledweyne and in the centre of the country. What's your government's vision for the next step because we have a day to share with you in the future. What's your

government's next step for supporting such initiatives? That's a non-for-profit organization.

Secondly, we found out during our trip that the greatest problem our country is facing now is lack of clean water, and as geologists and earth scientists we realized that we need to provide clean water for our country for the next 10–20 years. And that can only be done not only by government but also by companies. What will your government do to set up or facilitate setting up water and resource companies?

Question 6:

Mr President, your government is in a fledgling state formation process and there are huge external and internal expectations. What are your key performance indicators and what is your advice to those who want quick outcomes?

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

Thank you, thank you, thank you gentlemen.

First of all I would like to – one point is that I ignored [the last] question, which I missed, about the people demonstrating outside. The same was rightly said, and it is true when I was in Minnesota. And I'm very pleased to hear it. Because in the past when we differed, one used to go back and get a hold of his AK-47 and start shooting. Now, one is going to get a board and say, 'No, I disagree with you.' I think that is most welcome. I do appreciate that we have differences. I'm not an angel, I'm not claiming that I'm always right or that my government is always right. These people have all the right to express their views when they see it, provided that they are not misguided... I'm willing, I'd be more than happy if I can sit with them, talk to them, explain to them, do my best to explain to them my concerns and the way I see it. I'm sure many of them I have never met before so if I get the opportunity to do that, I will do that. So that's that.

For the 395 technocrats who are ready to do – the government has planned a process whereby we want the state-building projects to be projects that are owned and participated in by all Somalis. We start at priority areas. There's a document called 'Beginning of New Foundations' based on the six-pillar policy that has been published by my government. On that priority – six pillar areas – are priorities of the priorities: there are three areas – security, judicial reform, public finance management reform. Now, next month the minister of justice has planned a conference in Mogadishu whereby 150 people, Somalis

mostly, from the diaspora and from inside Somalia, will be meeting and discussing the review of the judicial system of Somalia. The government will present the proposed review of the judicial system to those 150 Somali experts: legal experts, religious scholars, traditional elders, sociologists, economists and different groups. That will be the beginning of the first reform of the judicial system. So this is not the only one incident but there is a set of such delegations that will take place in Mogadishu.

The government of Somalia is not rich – we have no money. One of the things that we want to engage the diaspora in is to support financially government programmes and projects. So what we can offer is we can accommodate that number of people for the few days that they are meeting. For five days, one week of the conference – yes we can accommodate that. But for complete – someone who wants to contribute and remain in Somalia for a couple of years, today the government cannot afford that. Maybe tomorrow we can.

Someone before asked me about the MIDA, QUEST-MIDA. That is a very good project; they are bringing back people to Somalia to work but it has one inherent problem. That is, someone who has been taken from London and taken to Beledweyne, Bosaso, Galkayo or Kismayo or wherever and given a contract of one year and is being paid a certain amount of money, when that one year ends, no more money for that expert. And the Somali government cannot afford to pay that amount of money or the Somali government does not control the area where he is working. So the guy has no other option other than to come back to London and stay here. So that off-and-on process was the problem that the QUEST-MIDA projects mainly were having. So this is a time we are talking about people to voluntarily coming back, try to establish their own way of living in Somalia and the government – we are offering salaries to the government employees, to the government staff. But those salaries will never help someone who has a mortgage in Minnesota or a bank loan here in London. That will not help. This is the challenge that we're having now. But this is most welcome.

As for now, Mogadishu, if anyone of you has been there in Mogadishu, the place is completely changing. It's not changing, it's transforming. New hotels emerging, new restaurants, new supermarkets, new buildings – many of these small businesses being invested in by diaspora people. The role of the diaspora is already there but we need to engage them more.

The issue of the lack of clean water in Somalia: this is a very famous challenge. It's there. But the question is we never said and no one has ever

said there is no need for clean water. All of the problems that we have in Somalia, if we just try to list them, the list becomes endless. It will continue. It's long. The essence of doing things is: how can we prioritize those issues which are the most important? For example, if someone donates a well in Somalia – a water well somewhere – if you cannot go there and dig that well, what's the point of donating that well? We need to create a conducive environment where clean water can be provided by the government. As of now we have planned it and it's already in place. We already have beginning funds for five small projects for districts: one water well, one elementary school, one health post – call it MCH (maternal and child health), or clinic or OPD (outpatient department) or whatever it is – a police station and a district administration building. We need each and every district to have those small five projects. That indicates that clean water is among the top priority areas since it's one-fifth. So definitely, that's the position of the government and we do agree.

Regarding the key performance indicators, the beginning of transparency, the beginning of accountability, there must be benchmarks to measure whether you are transparent, whether you are accountable, whether you are performing – there must be a yardstick. My government's yardstick is there in place. One of it is just what I was saying right now that five small projects for each district is a measureable performance indicator. And we have the same in terms of security when we say that the number of security forces we want to have, the number of security institutions that we have, the number of security legislations that the government wants to table in the parliament. So we have that set of performance indicators whereby one can claim, yes, we can say, there is *force majeure*, we can delay, we can do that, but this is the first time that the Somali government has a plan in place and one can account for, one can make sure whether the government is delivering or not. Thank you.

Question 7:

Mr President I wanted to ask you a question about international issues. In London these days everybody is talking about the similarity of Somalia and Mali, and there's a similarity in their names which I hadn't even noticed before. I'm wondering what you think about this comparison between Somalia and Mali. The serious question analytically is whether you think it is the local politics, the local drivers, those kinds of issues that actually drive people to violence and extremism or whether it's the international networks that have to be regarded as the major problem?

Question 8:

Mr President, it's very interesting in Somalia, actually, the most important [thing] is security. We actually support your political [eviction] for... terrorists and warlords. There is a contradiction. Last month your interior minister had announced that the warlords should be let into government. A warlord leading the government is an illegal president. How can you repair that problem?

Question 9:

I have a few questions. One of them is why are you looking for more arms? Because Somalia – for the last 22 years there has been a civil war and people have been killing each other. Why are you looking for more arms? Why aren't you collecting the arms that are already there? That's one question.

The second one is about the woman who is in jail who was raped and who was an IDP. The journalist that reported it was also jailed. She was jailed because she said she was raped by one of the soldiers. That's it.

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

Thank you, thank you, thank you. Sadly, we all know that the issue of extremism has its own background and way of existence. These organizations or this phenomenon of extremism is underground; it's run by underground organizations. That's what makes the phenomenon difficult to understand or difficult to deal with. There are proven links between al Shabaab in Somalia at the corner of the continent and Boko Haram in the other corner of the continent in Nigeria. I have no information that indicates that al Shabaab and those in Mali have a relationship but I can imagine. These networks are very fluid, very underground and very mobile, moving here and there.

The issue of internationalization or localization of extremism: I think the two phenomena, when they join together, that's what makes these extremist groups more visible and more active. That is, the grievances of the local people and the ideology of the core international group, when they meet somewhere, that's what makes this force exist and operate. Of course, in Somalia we have more than two decades of conflict whereby the law of the jungle has been applicable: the ones stronger were always subjecting... So there are a lot of grievances: economic grievances, clan grievances and other social grievances that make attractive the evil forces of extremism, of piracy and all these things.

When you go back to the Somalia case, for example, 25 per cent of school age children go to school in Somalia as of today and as of the past; 75 per cent of the school-age children play in the ground. Now imagine a boy who was five years old when Somalia collapsed in 1990. Today, he is 27. Most probably he has kids and he cannot afford to buy some food for his kids. He has no tools for life in his hands. He is not skilled; if he had a chance to work he had no skills to work for. He doesn't know where to go; he's been in the village where he has been for the past 27 years or so. So that guy is easily vulnerable to be recruited by al Shabaab. The 75 per cent of school-age children who didn't get the opportunity to go to school, what we are seeing is the beginning of that time bomb. And that is the force of al Shabaab, the forces of piracy. In al Shabaab, we know the root causes of that.

So these are the people – and those who have been subjected to bigger forces, bigger clans, bigger groups – who were so frustrated and who need sometimes that sense of taking revenge over the perpetrators. These extremist groups – this is an element whereby they recruit people, looking after the social grievances. When the extremist ideology came to Somalia the first thing they looked for was these social grievances. And they recruit. The mix: the local grievances and the social grievances of the local people and the imported extremist ideology from somewhere when they are mad at each other – that's when we have al Shabaab or Boko Haram, whatever. That's the case – it's not purely international, it's not purely local. That's what drives the forces that work for extremism.

In the post-conflict environment, we do not agree on the history. The hero of someone is the warlord of another. We have warlords whereby the international [community] has branded them as the warlords but still in some considerations [*sic*] they are the heroes who defended their people, the heroes who defended the prestige of the clan. Having someone give that name sometimes is not an easy matter. The process of extending the governance system over Somalia has nothing to do with what is existing on the ground. If the definition of warlords is someone that has got a militia then we have a countless number of warlords in Somalia. And my government, we have no choice but to deal with them. We don't want to have to address everything with the power of the gun – use the gun, violence against violence. What we are trying is that those who claim that they represent someone, some community, some clans – our first approach is to address and open a dialogue with them, if that's attractive to them. If that does not work then time will tell us when we use violence against them.

Why are you looking for more arms, more weapons? We are not looking for more weapons and more arms. Yes, in Somalia there are a lot of weapons and in the hands of – some researchers indicate that there is an average of five guns in every Somali household – sorry, three guns in every Somali household. That means in some homes maybe we have ten guns, in some other homes we have no guns at all, but when you make it an average that's what some people suggest. We have plenty of them, but we have the experience in Somalia that every group who organizes themselves, whatever name they use – religious name, clan name, any other name – and who says that 'we make security outside of the framework of the state'... they never delivered that security, it only added more problems to the problem that existed. The case of the warlords, the case of Islamic courts, the case of any other group that got the gun.

So this is the time of talking about the state, the legitimate coercion of a legitimate state. What we want is a weapon that is controlled by certain rules and regulations. I don't think that we have discussed weapons here in London but the whole issue depends on the hands that are holding that weapon. This is a time when we're thinking that very legitimate, very responsible hands should keep the weapons. We are looking for security forces [with] professional discipline, clear command and control, managed and supervised by civilian authorities. This is what we are looking for. We are not looking for militias; we are not looking to establish guns with unknown people.

The woman's case. Many of my friends that are sitting in front of me, they know me personally, and I have a very clear track record of the past. I'm more than 55 years old so I have a record of at least 30–35 years of what I was doing in my life in Mogadishu and particularly in the last 22 years. I'm hoping that [you are] not doubting that I'm someone who is in favour of violence whatsoever and in whatever manner it comes, let alone the violence against women. [*sic*] My position on human rights and women are very clear.

But the question is here. There is a case in the court and what we have all been advocating for years is the rule of law to flourish in Somalia. What we have been advocating, what I've been advocating when I was an active civil society member was an independent judiciary system, independent from the politicians and the interference of the politicians. Today when the case was raised, particularly this unique case – you know Somalia has this situation [where] we have a long list of cases pending for the courts. [Because of] the capacity of the courts, the investigative capacity of our police force, all can understand – so there is a long list of cases waiting to go into the court. For this one, when the case was raised, all I did was to ask that this case has to

be moved fast into the court. Within reasonable time the police took the file and put it into the court.

What I know is that three times the United Nations has hired two lawyers for the victims. What I know is that three times these lawyers requested the postponement of the court just to build their case which is a very, very legitimate argument – legal and legitimate argument. So the case is in the court, we are awaiting the results. If we are satisfied with the results, we are okay. If we are not satisfied with the results, then there are other legal instruments that we can use again.

So the minimum thing that I can do is just wait and have trust in the judiciary system. I'm not in a position to interfere in a case pending in the court. What can David Cameron do in a case in a court here in London? Or Her Majesty, what can she do? I don't want to improve or to facilitate that culture of politicians interfering in the judicial system, even if our judicial system is weak or has some weakness we wait and let us have a little patience and soon we will have the results. Thank you.

Question 10:

I was watching the programme on Universal TV yesterday night and it was the first time I heard, you said the 4.5 system is not part of the constitution. And that was the good news. I have a question, and I congratulate you on the new cabinet ministers where you've looked at the five main different tribes in Somalia, but what about the parliament? Why is it still 4.5?

Question 11:

What is your government doing to strengthen relations with the neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya?

Question 12:

I would first of all like to congratulate you, Your Excellency, for being elected as the president. My question is, as we know, the education system that is flourishing now in Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia is paid for by the students. Is it possible or is there a plan that you have which will provide freely education of the 75 per cent that you have just mentioned and especially to low income groups?

Question 13:

I wanted to ask what the role of foreign private investment is in the reconstruction of Somalia. Is it too early for FDI (foreign direct investment) to take place at this stage? Is it a process that you want to be led by the diaspora? I recognized this in a recent film I did about Ahmed Jama who runs the Village Restaurant in Mogadishu – *The Master Chef of Mogadishu* – an extraordinary story of entrepreneurial spirit that has sustained the Somali people over the last 20 years of conflagration and anarchy. Is it something that you need to bolster the finances of your government that you say lacks cash? Surely, when people recognize the next big thing in the world is Africa's economic rise then you should be looking at private investment rather than aid, which has been in so many cases damaging to Somalia's history.

Henry Bellingham:

Thank you very much indeed. And if anyone hasn't seen the film *The Master Chef of Mogadishu*, I do recommend it.

Question 14:

My question is: there is a 'brain drain' in Somalia right now and there are a lot of talent resources in this country. There are so many organizations that have been doing a lot in the last 20 years to help aid and provide assistance in Somalia. What has your government been doing in terms of making links with organizations that exist here and using their resources to rebuild your country, particularly state schools, education and infrastructure for young girls?

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

Thank you very much. Mohamed, I couldn't recognize you unless you mentioned your name. By the way Mohamed I know since 1970 but now he's a different person. Mohamed you look too old than you are. Thank you. It's nice to see you Mohamed again.

Yes, people like me and Mohamed and people who are our age are people who have enjoyed the most benefit of a Somali state. The only investment my family put into me was to give me three meals a day, a uniform and a notebook – not a textbook but a notebook. The rest was provided to me by the government. And when I finish in the secondary and go into university, I was even paid by the government. At the end of the month, I was given money so that I could buy whatever. That's how we finished our university. I have a doubt whether in the near future the Somali government will be in a

place that can afford that much support. And then that was added to employment guarantee. One finished secondary – if you wanted to work, employment was ready; if you wanted to continue to university, when you finish university, the next day you are employed. So those good days we had in the past and I highly doubt that we will be there soon, but it's possible.

The issue of education: I just want to bring to you the picture on the level of education in Somalia and the role of the government right now and what you want in the future. Today, we are in a Somalia where there are schools, and I said, 25 per cent of the school-age children are going to school. Those 25 per cent are mostly those who can afford to pay \$10 at the end of the month, a \$10 fee – most of them, not all of them, most of them. There are hundreds of schools, more than 100 schools, for example, in Mogadishu. None of these schools are controlled by the government. We used to have a ministry of education that had close to 400,000 students and close to 60,000 supporting staff for those students. Almost half a million people was what the ministry of education was running in Somalia. Today we have a ministry of education that has no one in school and that has no control over one school. So that's where we are today.

For the first time – the five small projects which I mentioned, one of these five projects is a school. That's the beginning, when a state-run school, public school, will be emerging. That is the re-emerging of public schools in Somalia. We want to go back to where we've come from – free education, free education at all levels, but we don't know when we will reach that. But my government is committed to reconstitute that system of public schooling in Somalia with that level. If we succeed within 2013 we want to see a minimum of 50 public schools in place where there is no one now. The same is for health. So we're trying and we will do our best in order to.

Foreign investment is a priority area and when our parliament gets back to this business in early March, one of those bills that the government is going to table is the investment growth of Somalia. We want to put in place for the investment to know that it protects the rights of investors and gives a guarantee that this is their right. What makes us do that is we believe that the reconstruction of the country will mainly be done by private people. As of now in Mogadishu, a week ago when I was leaving, there were two major projects that already had started. One was a real estate project whereby 500 houses would be built in Mogadishu by private companies, Somali private companies. And this is an area where Somali business people are good. We've seen the real estate in Nairobi, in Juba, in Dubai and the role of the Somali business community in that. We located a piece of land where 500 houses will be built

soon. They told me – the owners of that company – that many of those houses have already been sold to the diaspora. That's one.

The other is the power plant in Mogadishu whereby a Somali company is constructing a 50 megawatt power system costing \$70 million–\$100 million. Where today the price of power in Mogadishu is \$1.20 per kilowatt, one of the most expensive energy in the world, \$1.20 per kilowatt, these guys, their business plan indicates that they will bring it down to \$0.28 per kilowatt. See the difference. If that is realized, industrialization and everything else is possible, at least in Mogadishu. They promise that within six months half of Mogadishu will have that power and within 11 months all of Mogadishu will have that power. This is purely a 100 per cent Somali company, invested in by Somalis. Many of these resources come from the diaspora.

So we very much focused on giving space to the private [sector] for the reconstruction of the country, public–private partnership wherever possible. We would prefer this because we have a lot of infrastructure, a lot of facilities that the previous governments were having. Prime land, prime properties in very important areas, infrastructure. We're looking to give a bigger space to the private sector including outsourcing many of the government services, whether this is the airport facility, port facility, the establishment of a free zone area in Mogadishu and many parts of Somali in the future. So we're relying on the private [sector] for the reconstruction of the country and we see it as an opportunity to have a very dynamic and vibrant diaspora. The example that you have taken of Ahmed is absolutely a very good one but there are a number of Ahmeds in Mogadishu today. Thank you.

Henry Bellingham:

Your Excellency, once again a very big thank you. I do apologize that I couldn't call a lot of people who wanted to ask questions. Thank you for your questions. They were very full. They were excellent questions and you gave many candid, very honest answers, Your Excellency. I've always been a glass-half-full person and when I came to look at the Somalia brief, I spent times being pessimistic. But all I can say is I'm more optimistic now than I've ever been before. I think you've got so many God-given advantages over other countries. You've got a thriving diaspora, you've got the most extraordinary natural resources and you've got something else, you've got determination among your people to make a success of the future and I think that does stand you in very good stead. Thank you again, Your Excellency.