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Charity Registration Number: 208223

Transcript

Building a Stable Somalia

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Chair: Henry Bellingham MP

4 February 2013

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Henry Bellingham:

A very good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Your Excellency, you are a very, very welcome visitor to London and a very, very welcome visitor to Chatham House.

I would just like to pay my respects to His Excellency Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his ministerial team, because as someone who is absolutely passionate about Somalia, I do believe the progress we've seen in the last few months has been nothing short of remarkable. We all know there is a long way to go but as someone who was following your fortunes incredibly closely as an opposition MP and then in government and played a part in the UK–Somalia conference last year, I don't think anyone in their wildest dreams would have predicted that events would have moved on in such a favourable way. And I notice even today that you made a really impressive announcement: a call to the diaspora with the International Fund for Agricultural Development and new programmes to leverage that \$1 billion plus in the way of remittances to put into agricultural and fisheries programmes to improve food security. So what you're looking at are a number of initiatives across many, many fronts to build your country, to above all give the people of your country hope for the future.

I've been very inspired by you, Your Excellency. We look forward to hearing what you have to say, and once again, you're very, very welcome.

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud:

Thank you, Mr Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very pleased and honoured to be here today standing in front of you talking about Somalia and the recent developments in Somalia, and making clarifications on the issues of interest to many of you. Chatham House – this is the second time I am coming. Of course, last time I was not a speaker, I was sitting where you're sitting today, but this time, I'm very glad to be back here and thank you for attending this session. It is a privilege to be here today at Chatham House to talk to such a distinguished audience and to share with you our thinking on building a stable Somalia.

As many of you know, we have recently achieved some notable success in Somalia. The transition has ended peacefully and elections were held inside Somalia, in Mogadishu particularly, for the first time in the last two decades. Newfound confidence is attracting many Somalis to come back and invest in their country, and international partners are engaging with the Somali government with more prospects and confidence than ever before. Thanks to

the hard work, patience and perseverance of the Somali people and their international partners, Somalia is now more stable than before and despite some incidents and stubborn resistance from our opponents, peace and security is improving by the day. Partnership has been the key ingredient that led to these successes in Somalia – partnership between Somalia and neighbours which contributed positively in stabilizing Somalia, partnerships too between Somalia and the rest of the world that together produced the desired results we have in place today.

On this occasion I would like to pay special thanks to the British prime minister David Cameron for his personal leadership in bringing world leaders together in London and uniting their voice on Somalia. But to deepen this hard-earned stability and to move Somalia beyond conflict, this partnership must stay strong and must overcome together the many challenges in front of us. Although we must celebrate the success we have achieved together, we must never lose sight of the road ahead for Somalia, as it's still long and still hard.

Reconstituting the Somali state starts by asking ourselves the key question – why the Somali state failed in the first place. In our recent history, we built a state where power, most of the opportunities and resources were concentrated into the institutions of the state. In addition to stiffening innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Somali people, it has also led into conflict and competition on the state itself. That caused the collapse of the Somali state as well as destruction, death and devastation for two decades. But the biggest casualty for us was the destruction of the trust among the Somali people. The resultant vacuum was at times filled by tribally organized forces and at other times by extremist religious groups. Both did not bring acceptable solutions and the cost for the Somali state continued.

The challenge for us now is to reconstitute a Somali state and institutions that the Somali people can trust. Trust-building starts with completion of the political process that led to recent success in Somalia. The test for our success in Somalia is holding free and fair elections throughout Somalia in 2016, when our mandate ends. Despite the challenges – and there are many of them still in place – I am committed to make sure these elections do take place. We will work closely with the parliament, political activists and local entities to review the constitution and to negotiate a final deal of political agreement and constitutional arrangements that Somalis approve in a referendum. But in order to have an ebullient environment for our political process, we must ensure the security and safety of ordinary Somalis and those who want to help Somalia.

Key in this is building a provisional Somali national army that can safeguard the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the country. A Somali national army must also defeat insurgency and terrorism and play a role in the stability of our region. Our African partners have been a great help in stabilizing Somalia, but we must plan together for a Somali security infrastructure that can take responsibility for securing the country.

That task must be supported by Somali public finance that can sustain the resources needed for the stability of the country. I am determined to make Somalia stand on its own feet and generate its own revenue through accountable public finance institutions. I agree that sound public finance management is the heartbeat of a credible state. Good public finance management involves a circular process in which the key element is trust. Without fair and efficient revenue generation, the state will have no reliable resource base. If state revenues are squandered or stolen, the delivery of government service will falter and the people will withdraw their trust, eventually refusing to pay their taxes.

But we need help and we are discussing with our international partners some financial support mechanism that we can all support. While that takes time, we are also very keen to make sure that the momentum in Somalia is not lost. Somalis must see straightaway some dividends of ending the transition. I hope our international partners will support and contribute to the Somali financial facility we have established which meets the expectation of the international community.

Somalia has been in a coma for 20 years; we have responded to the transitional medication and now we are in post-transition. But we are still in intensive care. So much investment has gone into ending the transition – financial, military, political reconciliation, etc. We made a huge gain and we must see it through. There is a momentum now and the window of opportunity is very tight indeed. We should not lose it both nationally and internationally. We are at the middle of a steep hill. There is no option of stopping in the middle. We either must see it through or we will fall. Failure, ladies and gentlemen, is not an option for Somalia today. Thank you very much.