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Africa Meeting Summary

Somalia's Transformation into a Regional and International Actor

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Chair: Mark Hendrick MP

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INTRODUCTION

The following document provides a summary of a meeting held at Chatham House on 14 May 2013. The meeting looked at Somalia's transformation into a regional and international actor.

Somalia is undergoing a period of significant transformation. The country's transitional period officially concluded when a permanent government was established in September 2012. This new administration, under the leadership of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has gained the international recognition necessary to open doors to increased flows of aid and cooperation. Despite this new chapter in its history, Somalia faces multiple challenges, not least defining its relationship with Somaliland and semi-autonomous regions including Puntland; with its regional neighbours, some of whom retain military presence within Somalia; and with the wider international community.

Her Excellency Fawzia Adam discussed the Somali government's plans to revive and revise the country's regional and international relationships, and outlined Somalia's key foreign policy objectives for its future engagement with the international community.

The meeting consisted of a presentation followed by a discussion, both of which were held on the record. The following summary is intended to serve as an *aide-mémoire* for those who took part and to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.

HE FAWZIA ADAM

The minister spoke about Somalia's transformation into a regional and international actor, discussing the role of the new government and the prospects and challenges facing the country.

Somalia is re-emerging from decades of war and is once again being recognized as a legitimate international player. Within eight months there has been drastic change in the country. The political transformation has ended; there is a new parliament with representatives from all regions and a new president.

The government is more in control of its territory. Al-Shabaab is losing morale as its control over certain areas is waning.

Piracy has been reduced: only 36 cases of piracy were recorded in 2012 – a sharp decrease from the 176 cases recorded in 2011. Only five ships were seized by pirates in 2011, down by 80 per cent in the last few years.

After more than 20 years of war, Mogadishu is an area of relative calm. However, the Somali government remains vigilant and developing security measures remains a major priority.

The government continues to be guided by the Six Pillar Policy in the drive to reform the justice sector, increase capabilities in the army, develop the police and rebuild the public finance system. However, there is still a lack of developed government institutions.

The Somali government has developed specific foreign policy goals for the next six months. The formal recognition of the United Nations has led the way to increased involvement between Somalia and international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Key objectives in foreign policy include the partial lifting of the arms embargo and the opening of more Somali embassies around the world. The main goal is in consolidating peace in Somalia and within the neighbouring region.

Somalia is looking to increase its international presence. Engaging with the diaspora community is critical in the task of rebuilding the country. Somalia is once again co-hosting and participating in international conferences and is actively contributing to dialogue on a number of regional and international issues.

The minister stated that Somalia is moving forward. The recent Somalia Conference in London was followed by a successful Somalia Trade and Investment Event the next day; there is growing investor confidence and

promising signs have been seen as the business community looks towards Somalia.

The country is rich in natural resources, and there is a lot of potential for investment in this area. Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa, and enjoys a rich maritime industry. The agriculture sector is strong, and Somalia has the largest livestock markets in the Horn of Africa region. Gas, coal and mineral reserves of iron and titanium are present in the country. For long-term economic and social sustainability, the private sector must be allowed to flourish and attract foreign direct investment. This task will not be easy, but the problems are not insurmountable and the minister added that Somalia hopes to learn from other successful post-conflict countries.

There are certain needs for the Somali government to address. The government must establish legal and regulatory frameworks in order to facilitate openness and transparency in business, which will help to lower transaction costs and address ownership issues.

Sustainable monetary policies need to be implemented, and the government needs to work with the international community to confront Somalia's considerable debt overhangs. Somalia hopes to clear IMF debt arrears, although this will take many years.

The agricultural economy must be restored so as to eventually link Somalia to the international community. There are immediate opportunities for investment in the agriculture sector as livestock levels are expected to recover and eventually increase.

There are critical gaps in infrastructure, which are being tackled by an extensive public works programme providing employment opportunities.

The minister stated that the government cannot confront these challenges alone; support is needed from international donors and the private sector. The government is building links with the private sector and implementing policy recommendations for the benefit of investors in order to address these critical needs.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question

In your position as finance minister, how are you dealing with Kenya's activity in the Jubaland region? Is Kenya helping Somalia or assisting the creation of another semi-autonomous state?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that she has been flying back and forth from Jubaland since her appointment. She noted that Somalia is grateful to Kenya for a number of reasons. Kenya has been hosting more than 600,000 Somalis in one refugee camp, and another 500,000 in other camps and in the cities.

Kenya and Somalia have a common enemy: Al-Shabaab. Kenya is concerned about its security, as there have been prominent terrorist attacks during the last 18 months, particularly in Nairobi. Kenya is also part of the AMISON forces supporting Somalia. There have been certain issues with Kenyan forces taking unilateral decisions with no government backing.

However, since the new government in Somalia things have been changing. A joint communiqué building on bilateral relations was signed by the two countries in December 2012, addressing issues such as sovereignty. The minister said that she remains confident that issues around Kismayo will be resolved and that the Somali government was very happy with President Kenyatta's recent meetings with President Mohamud.

Question

Ethiopia has made it clear it wants to withdraw its forces from Somalia. What is the status of Somalia's relationship with Ethiopia?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that Somalia has an excellent relationship with Ethiopia and that it is grateful for Ethiopia's support. The Ethiopian forces are in Somalia at Somalia's own request. The Ethiopian forces moved out of Hudur because they had no international support. There was an agreement that AMISOM forces would take over within two months, but that process took a year. Somali troops are due to take over from the AMISOM forces.

Question

How does the Somali government plan to support the diaspora, particularly diaspora businesses that wish to invest in Somali?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister noted that the government's policy is that any business activity is welcome in Somalia. The government is open to any advice and support the diaspora can offer the government, especially from diaspora-led businesses.

Question

What policies has the government put in place in terms of gender representation in parliament and across society?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister explained that the government is working through gender issues, seeking to incorporate gender equality in the Somali constitution. She mentioned her background in activism and experience working with the UN Economic Commission for Africa on issues affecting African women. She added that the government has been courageous in appointing a woman in her position as deputy prime minister, and that it will inspire a lot of young women to strive for higher positions. The Somali government is committed to working on gender issues.

Question

Since the Somali government has achieved international recognition, there has been a renewed effort to return refugees and failed asylum seekers to Somalia. What is the government's position on this?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister said that Kenya is one of the countries pressuring Somalia to take back its refugees. Somalia will be holding a press conference to coordinate this. Because of security concerns, it is difficult to return all the refugees living outside Somalia immediately: the Somali government cannot provide for their needs yet, and the Somali people do not need a situation where angry young Somalis are joining Al-Shabaab or other groups. There

are 1.5 million internally displaced persons inside Somalia who also need to be returned to their homes.

Question

There has been a lack of effective leadership in Somalia. What is the government doing to ensure there is collaboration within the government, and not a return to tribal factions or nepotism?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that good governance is one of the six priorities for the government. In a conflict situation there need to be effective security forces. At present the cabinet is very small, and very busy. There is no capacity for conflict. She added that the new government is very different from previous regimes and the task is not to be negative but to focus on planning for the future, and for this to happen political actors need to respect each other.

Question

There has been overwhelming support for the government from Somali civil society. What can civil society in the diaspora do to support the new government?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister replied that young professionals should come to Somalia for a period of time, perhaps for six months, to offer advice in sectors such as telecommunications and ICT. All sectors in Somalia are in need of young, educated people from the diaspora to become involved. She also stated that the Somali government wants to encourage the business community to return and that the business opportunities in Somalia are massive. Somalia will be a very different place in just a few years.

Question

What do you assess is greatest threat to the stability of your government and what are you doing to counter this?

What is your government's view on improving taxation in Somalia so as to reduce the reliance on diaspora remittances?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister noted that the government is working with the Central Bank of Somalia to improve revenue collection.

She stated that the biggest threat to Somali remains Al-Shabaab. However, the Somali government is winning this war and regaining territory. Now it faces the task of rebuilding Somalia's security forces. This looks set to move faster owing to the support offered after the Somalia Conference in London.

Question

What is the government doing to increase access to government for minorities in Somalia?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that the government has been working very hard on the issue of rights for minorities, in government and in other areas.

Question

What is the government's policy towards those with disabilities, especially those with injuries caused by the war?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister said that the Minister of Public Works and Housing has been discussing this issue with the cabinet. She added that the government is only six months old, so it still needs to work on social affairs.

Question

As a Somalilander, what is your view on the future for successful talks between Somaliland and Somalia?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that there have been three recent meetings on relations between Somaliland and Somalia, with the last talks resulting in the Ankara

Accords. She also remarked that she remains hopeful for the success of talks between Somaliland and Somalia.

Question

The Six Pillar Policy doesn't mention the Somali diaspora. What is your position to counter Somali youth who become radicalized in the diaspora?

HE Fawzia Adam

As the foreign minister of Somalia, the minister noted that she cannot do anything about citizens of other countries. If young Somalis who are British citizens become radicalized in Britain, then the community there needs to do something about it and inform the government. The Somali government can work to share information and intelligence with its partners on this issue. If extremists come to Somalia, then the government can do something about it.

Question

What are the government's priorities in institution-building in parliament in order to strengthen the parliament's role?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that there is currently a dynamic parliamentary speaker who has been travelling around the world to learn from other parliaments, and there are lots of plans being discussed to strengthen the role of parliament.

Question

Does the Somali government have any plans to partner with Uganda to bring hydroelectricity to Somalia?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister noted that Somalia is looking to many countries including Ethiopia and China to assist with electricity production.

Question

There has been some cynicism from the British government towards Somalia's relationship with Turkey. What is your reaction to the allegation that Turkey is trying to spread its influence in Somalia?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that Turkey has helped Somalia on many social issues, as well as on infrastructure projects. For some projects in the municipalities Britain would not come to help Somalia because of Turkey's presence. However, Somalia is very grateful for the British government for its support, and asks for this support to continue.

Question

What concrete measures are being taken to further discussions on security issues between Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland?

What is Somalia's view on the position of Puntland in elections?

HE Fawzia Adam

The Somali government supports democratic choice and welcomes any leader from Puntland. The minister noted that the government met with delegates from Puntland and Somaliland during the planning for the Somalia Conference in London. No concrete proposals on security measures or other issues have been made yet, but the government is committed to bringing Somalia back together and fighting the common enemy together.

Question

The establishment of significant unilateral development between the UK and Somalia was evident at the recent conference in London. Do you prefer support for Somalia to take a unilateral, bilateral or multilateral approach?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister replied that Somalia is open to all forms of support, and more embassies are being opened round the world in order to develop such relationships.

Question

Lots of young Somali men are being held around the world on unproven piracy charges. Are you working with governments to free these men?

HE Fawzia Adam

The minister stated that the Somali government has been talking to governments around the world where Somali men have been held, including in India, China, the Seychelles and Kenya. The government has managed to return many of those accused of piracy, and hopes to get all of them back.