



## Transcript

# A New Effort to Help Somalia

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**William Hague:**

I am very grateful to Robin Niblett and to Chatham House for hosting this event. Chatham House's Africa programme is highly regarded internationally, especially for their work with diaspora communities, so this is a very appropriate place to hold today's consultation. And I am extremely grateful to all of you for coming today, and to anyone who is watching us via live stream over the internet.

In just over two weeks' time London will host a major international conference on Somalia, attended by heads of government and senior representatives from more than 50 countries and organisations, including the President and Prime Minister of Somalia itself.

We want to consult you about this, as members of the Somali community here in Britain. I am joined by our Minister for Africa Henry Bellingham, who will take your questions later. Together, we want to explain to you what the London Conference aims to do; we want to hear your views; and we hope to inspire you to use your connections in Somalia to amplify the message that we care about Somalia and that now is the time for them to make their voices heard. The result of our discussions will be published on our Foreign Office website and will feed into the conference.

The London Conference on Somalia is an initiative launched by our Prime Minister David Cameron. The Prime Minister is convinced, as I am, that we need a better international strategy to address Somalia's problems and to help its people; and that conditions in Somalia mean that the time is right for a determined new effort to help the country get on its feet.

A more stable Somalia is vital to our national security here in Britain; it is essential for the stability of the Horn of Africa; and it is long overdue for the people of Somalia who have endured twenty years of desperate suffering.

Somalis suffer the most from the devastating effects of conflict and insecurity. But this also matters greatly to Britain. Our engagement with Somalia is not a luxury, it is a necessity. A lawless Somalia is a base for international terrorist attacks. Planned attacks linked to networks in Somalia have been thwarted as far afield as Sweden and Australia. Lawlessness in Somalia is also a threat to international shipping. 23,000 ships transit through the Gulf of Aden each year, a vital artery of the global economy. Nearly one trillion dollars of trade to and from Europe alone travelled through the Gulf last year.

We must try to change the dynamic in Somalia from one of inexorable decline to an upwards trajectory of gradually increasing stability and security –

including human security. This is a deliberately modest objective because the scale of the challenge is phenomenal. But we must be under no illusions about how long it will take to achieve it. Our approach must be and is realistic and sober. We cannot turn Somalia around with one conference. But we can bring countries together to give additional meaningful support and strengthen the mechanisms that implement it. We can send a signal to the people of Somalia that we will help them. And we can remind all those who wilfully import and perpetuate violence and terrorism there that they should not underestimate our resolve.

Speaking to you today is part of our preparations for the conference. I made a fascinating visit to Somalia last week – the first by a British Foreign Secretary in twenty years. I took with me Britain's first Ambassador to Somalia in twenty years. The Secretary of State for International Development has visited twice in the last year, and Henry Bellingham visited a few months ago. We have been in intensive discussions with our partners since we announced the conference, and tomorrow I will lead a debate in the House of Commons to seek the support of Parliament for the approach we are taking.

So meeting you is important to us, and we value what you have to say. We have excellent diplomats and experts on Somalia, but no one can possibly care as deeply about Somalia or know as much about it as you do. We want to benefit from your experience and to keep the views and needs of Somalis at the forefront of our minds as we host the London conference – and to do so more than has been the case in the past.

You all have an incredibly important role to play in the future of Somalia. The greatest asset of any country is its people, and I was struck when I visited Somalia by the heroic individuals I met who are battling away to make a difference under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Some of them feel a particularly strong connection to Britain - whether it was the Mayor of Mogadishu, a former resident and community activist in Camden and employee of Islington Council whose family lives here in London, or the members of Somali civil society that I met.

Of course there are many thousands of people who do not feel able to live in Somalia at present or who have fled it under extremely difficult circumstances. We are very grateful for the contribution that many talented and highly educated Somalis make to our society here – but recognise that many of them will also care deeply about seeing a stable and peaceful Somalia. We have the deepest sympathy for the fears, anxieties, hopes and dreams they must have about their homeland and family members there, and

the Diaspora's great potential to play a part in the Somalia of the future. Somalis worldwide worldwide provide more than \$1 billion in remittances back to Somalia each year – more than the international community provides in aid. This is largely made up of people sharing their hard-won earnings with their families, or helping to pay teachers' salaries, to build schools and clinics, to dig wells, or to provide other much-needed assistance.

So we know that Somalis around the world are a critical part of the solution to the country's problems and I thank you for the part that I am sure many of you already play in that.

I want to set out why we are holding the London Conference on Somalia; and what we hope it will achieve as well as the necessary limitations on it.

First let me say that we do not take on this task lightly or without humility. We are fully aware of what Somalia is today: a failed state that has been torn by war, famine, displacement, warlordism and militias; half of whose territory is controlled by Al Shabaab, a group that has publicly declared sympathy for Al Qaida's aims and methods. We know that the international community has not always got it right in the past, and that we can easily make mistakes, even where our intentions are good.

We know that Somalia is a country where one million people have died through conflict over twenty years, where 43% of people live on less than \$1 a day, and where more people are dependent on emergency food aid than the entire populations of Edinburgh, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Liverpool combined.

It is so unstable that three quarters of a million of its people are refugees in neighbouring countries, and where the average life expectancy, 48 years, is roughly equivalent to the life expectancy of Britons in the nineteenth century.

In Mogadishu I scarcely saw a single building that was not scarred by bullet holes, alongside the many utterly destroyed by fighting. It is a country where in some areas piracy has become a way of earning a living.

So the fact that we have not succeeded in turning Somalia round is not for a lack of effort by the international community – including initiatives by the previous British government which we supported – but because the problems are so vast and complex. We must always be clear-sighted and realistic in setting our expectations for what we can achieve. We want to see a Somalia that is stable, where the basic needs of its population are met, and that is able to begin to build its economy and its future. We can help get Somalia on its feet – we cannot do the running for it. We can dictate its future nor can we

provide the solution to its internal problems – those are things that only Somalis can decide, although there are many ways that we can and will give them our assistance.

But even against this sober background we can see a glimmer of hope for Somalia today, and three compelling reasons why the time is right for a major push on Somalia.

The first is that Mogadishu has been liberated by AMISOM forces under the skilful and courageous leadership of the Ugandan troops that back up the backbone of the African Union contingent in Somalia, along with brave troops from Burundi and Djibouti. Today, almost all of Mogadishu is controlled by AMISOM and the Transitional Federal Government, making it possible to make progress on Somali governance.

The second is that these operations and successful counter-terrorism work is putting pressure on Al Shabaab. We need to seize the opportunity to intensify this pressure, and not allow Al Shabaab to regroup. Their guerrilla tactics inflict huge suffering on ordinary Somalis, and they harbour foreign extremists who use Somali territory to plan attacks outside the country - including the Kampala bombings of July 2010 – and to impose a violent ideology which is alien to the vast majority of Somalis.

Related to this, the international community has made real progress in diminishing the pirate activity that fuels Somalia's conflict, so that there have been no success hijacks since in the Gulf of Aden since November 2010. The number of vessels and crews currently held by pirate groups is at its lowest since 2009.

The third reason for optimism is that there is an opportunity to create a broader, more representative political arrangement when the

Transitional Federal Government's mandate expires this summer. This gives an opening to launch a broader political process that embraces all Somalis, and that places emphasis on supporting regional governance as well as better and more representative government from the centre.

This sense of a moment of opportunity was shared by the Somali leaders and citizens that I met, who welcomed Britain's engagement. We must make the most of the opportunities to support a more inclusive and representative political process, to help people return to Mogadishu and rebuild their lives there, to strengthen AMISOM, to introduce more effective arrangements to tackle piracy and terrorism, and to work better to support those pockets of stability emerging across the country.

This is what the Somalia conference will aim to do.

It will be different from previous conferences because it will put the needs of Somalis front and centre, not just our own security, and it will attempt to address the root causes of the conflict rather than just the symptoms.

We have invited government and multilateral organisations that are active and influential on Somalia, representatives from Somalia including the Transitional Federal Institutions, the Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug, representatives of Aluh Sunnah wal Jamaah, and Somaliland,

We have secured senior attendance from the region, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, as well as from the US, Turkey, UAE, Nigeria, Sweden, the UN, African Union and the European Union. I am delighted to say that Secretary Clinton and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon are attending.

As you would expect we are still discussing with our partners the precise detail of the outcomes of the conference.

We hope that the conference will agree practical measures in seven areas.

On the political track, the current transitional institutions in Mogadishu run out in August. After seven years of minimal progress, they must not be extended. The Somalia political process must become broader and more representative. This might involve a constitutional assembly drawn from all of Somalia's communities, not just Mogadishu.

On security, African Union forces have pushed Al Shabaab out of Mogadishu to create political space and Kenyan action has also put Al Shabaab on the back foot. But African forces have no regular funding for UNSC-mandated actions. So the Conference should agree a sustainable funding package for Africans willing to put lives on the line.

The success stories in Somalia are in the regions. Puntland and Galmudug have established local peace deals, and set up administrations. The Conference should agree a coordinated international package of support to Somalia's regions that complements work on peace and stability at the national level.

Piracy off the Somali coast is an affront to the rule of international law. We must break the piracy business cycle. So the Conference should push for transfers of convicted pirates from regional states like the Seychelles to Somalia; maintain tough arrangements to catch, try and imprison pirates and continue to develop regional maritime capacity within Somalia.

We must make it harder for terrorists to operate in and out of Somalia. The Conference should agree the areas we need to develop to disrupt terrorism across the region, including stopping the movement of terrorists to and from Somalia, disrupting the flow of their finances, and delivering effective intelligence gathering, investigation, criminal prosecution and detention against them.

On the humanitarian front, the Conference provides an opportunity to highlight the need for donors to continue to respond generously and on the basis of needs; invest more in livelihoods and basic social services and to work towards greater consensus on more durable solutions for refugees.

Finally, we want London to be the start not the end of a process. So we want the Conference to agree how we handle Somalia issues in future: a revitalised International Contact Group; UN and African leadership; and more countries deploying diplomats and staff into Somalia, not just basing ourselves in Kenya.

These are all practical but meaningful steps which we believe will have an impact on the ground.

We hope to emerge from London with a stronger common understanding of the way forward and a renewed political commitment for the long haul.

I am told that there is a Somali proverb that says 'alone I can travel fast, but together we can travel far'. This seems to me to be an apt and encouraging sentiment to guide our conference.

As I said at the outset, Britain's engagement with Somalia is not a flash in the pan but will endure.

We have appointed a new Ambassador as I have said, and will re-open an Embassy in Mogadishu as soon as we can.

We will continue to be an active member of international groupings on Somalia, including the International Contact Group on Somalia and the Contact Group on piracy off the coast of Somalia, and we will maintain our strong bilateral engagement.

Through our Department for International Development Britain is providing £250 million in development support over the next four years, working on longer term programmes to address the underlying causes of poverty and conflict and helping Somalis to take control of their lives and rebuild their communities and livelihoods. This means working with local and regional governments in areas like Puntland, that Andrew Mitchell visited last month,

where we will help build democratic institutions that can respond to the needs of their citizens; help the police and justice systems work so that people can feel more secure, and increasing access to health care, education and jobs – which we recognise to be absolutely critical to Somalis.

We want to help ensure that last year's tragic humanitarian crisis – which claimed between 50,000 – 100,000 lives, half of them children - is never repeated. Britain has been one of the most generous donors to the relief effort. We have provided £128 million to the relief effort across the Horn, including £58 million for Somalia alone in addition to our main development programme, and on top of the £72 million raised by the Disasters Emergency Committee from concerned British citizens. British Aid has reached over one million vulnerable people, saved the lives of thousands and contributed to lifting 500,000 people out of famine.

We are proud of the role we play and the example we set to others – for example the UK contributes 14% of all European Union spending in an on Somalia, including on development and humanitarian aid. We are part of all three international naval operations in the waters around Somalia – including providing the Operational Commander and Operation HQ in Northwood near London, for the EU naval mission Operation Atlanta.

I hope that you will welcome all this work and our renewed commitment to a stable and peaceful Somalia, and that we can work together to help make this a reality.

There can be fewer countries in the world where an investment in peace and security is more desperately needed, or where international effort can more worthily be devoted.

By dedicating effort to Somalia today, we are not only helping the people of that long-suffering country but investing in our own long term security and prosperity – bringing benefits to Britain and to Somalia. That is our hope, and that is what we are working very hard to help bring about.