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Transcript

The Road Ahead: Somalia's Future and International Engagement

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Abdiweli Mohamed Ali:

I would like to thank Chatham House for convening this important gathering. I would also like to extend my appreciation on behalf of Somalia and its citizens to the UK for hosting the London Conference on Somalia.

Let me start with yesterday's conference which was attended by 55 global influential leaders and all Somali leaders from across Somali regions.

So often in the past, conferences on Somalia have happened, commitments made and good intentions have not been seen through. As Einstein once said, 'insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result'. My government, with international partners, must deliver a different positive result, for the sake of a more stable Somalia, for the sake of a more stable world.

The conference covered the Somali political process, security and justice, stability and recovery, terrorism, piracy, international coordination and humanitarian issues. What encouraged me most about the conference was the unprecedented will of both of the international community and the Somali representatives towards change, towards a new approach to engagement in Somalia.

Why this new approach? There are a few reasons: our recent military successes and liberation of populations from al Shabaab control in Mogadishu, Beledweyn, Dhobley and Baidoa; our recent partial emergence from a humanitarian situation which has affected 4 million Somali citizens; the imminent end of the transitional process in August 2012; a recognition that the international community has a fragmented approach to Somalia, and lastly, it could be that the world has fully accepted the cost of inaction, recognizing that Somalia's problems are not limited to Somalia, but affect the whole region and the global community.

So what were the outcomes of the conference?

I believe the conference facilitated a shift in the profiling of Somalia from 'failed state', 'terrorism hub', 'piracy centre' and 'famine country' to a country attempting to 'turn the corner' to 'tackle al Qaeda', to 'make progress on transitional governance' and to build foundations for a prosperous future for Somali citizens.

As a result of the conference, in the near future I expect there will be a noticeable change in enhanced international coordination for key sectors, improved financial management of Somalia's public assets, increased African Union (AU) troop presence and enhanced support of the road map.

I also expect to see sanctions on spoilers to the transitional process.

Longer term, I expect there will be more sustainable funding for peacekeeping troops, more principled funding for local stability initiatives, more coordinated and substantive funding towards Somalia's productive sectors, counter-piracy, security, justice, and counter-terrorism and more countries deploying diplomats and staff into Somalia.

The conference has created substantial expectations for Somali stakeholders and I want to emphasize that there is no 'quick fix' or magic pill. The next stage is a long journey for Somalia, but I do believe we have embarked on this journey, and my government is committed towards putting in place the foundations for deepening peace, for stability, and development.

Ladies and gentlemen, Somalia's problems are longstanding, complicated and globally shared. Solving them requires a serious, honest, coordinated and consensus-based partnership between the Transitional Institutions, the African Union, the United Nations (UN) and the broader international community.

I believe this enhanced international support to Somalia can be achieved through following a few key principles:

- The international community must get behind our efforts, our vision and our leaders, rather than imposing solutions. After all, Somalia is a sovereign nation and ultimately its destiny rests in the hands of its' own people.
- The international community needs to commit and make good on their support for the Roadmap.
- We need coherent sustainable and long term support to develop Somalia's national security and justice sector.
- We need to wean ourselves from being an aid-dependent nation and instead work towards growth and development with genuine international commitments to long-term funding for food security, for productive sectors, for infrastructure, for economic growth and stability.
- The international community needs to shift Somalia's development funds from being spent in Nairobi to being invested in Somalia.

- Both national and international actors need to also shift the status quo of financial predation on Somalia's resources.
- Somali and international actors need to come together and provide rapid investments for peace and socioeconomic dividends to those communities freed from al Shabaab occupation. Such investments will mean better coordination between the military, diplomatic and development arms of government.
- And finally, we need an international commitment that moves beyond 'containment' in order to address the underlying structural conditions that are causing our problems including addressing the needs of young people because they are the most vulnerable to being recruited by warlords, by pirates, by religious extremists. We must offer these young people an alternative narrative and an economic livelihood.

Ladies and gentlemen, we stand at a crossroads today. Somalis are asking what the future holds and whether their leaders will deliver on the promises of the Transitional Federal Charter, the Djibouti Agreement, the Kampala Accord, the Roadmap, and most recently the Garowe 1 and 2 Principles. They are weary of the state of permanent transition in existence for the past twenty years.

As you know, my government has been focused for the past six months on implementing the Roadmap to end the transition.

Let me start provide a brief update on the four components of the Roadmap.

With regards to political outreach and reconciliation, we are bringing together those that put aside their guns. We are proactively working with liberated local communities to support peace committees and local administrations, and are working with key partners to provide a peace dividend of tangible economic and social deliverables.

On constitution and reform of parliament, we held two very important constitutional conferences in Garowe in December 2011 and earlier this month. With input from our civil society representatives, the political leaders of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the regional administrations of Somalia made clear commitments to our path out of the transition.

We have agreed on a bicameral Federal Parliament, with a vastly reduced Lower House comprising 225 members and an Upper House of not more than 54 members. We have agreed on the selection criteria for the National Constituent Assembly, including 30 percent representation of women, as well as defining the scope for a more accountable and representative Parliament and Upper House. We will hold intensive public consultations over the next few months to finalise and harmonise the constitution. We will start the process of selecting our future lawmakers, ensuring a leaner, more efficient Parliament. We will convene the National Constituent Assembly in May and provisionally adopt our new constitution.

Good governance is the third pillar of the Roadmap. My government is committed to providing accountable and transparent governance and to putting in place systems that build trust, integrity and form positive compacts between the citizens and public institutions. Towards that goal, we have overseen the streamlining of the revenue collection system and have prepared and approved our 2012 budget; we have revived Somalia's Bureau for Investigation of Corruption and, most recently, we have been working on the design of a Somali-International Joint Financial Management Board that will ensure the channelling of both public financial management and international aid efficiently and effectively towards social and economic dividends to Somali citizens.

Lastly, on security, the situation in Somalia has improved considerably since we took office. Today a hundred percent of Mogadishu is TFG-controlled, and across the country, al Shabaab is on the run and losing the support of Somali populations.

Mogadishu, Beledweyn, Dhobley and Baidoa among other areas have been liberated. Securing all of Somalia is one of our key priorities, and we welcome the UN Security Council resolution to expand the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troop numbers and mandate. We will liberate all of south-central Somalia and more importantly, we will make sure these newly liberated get a chance to build local governance structures that reflect their communities and that seek peace and stability. We will not allow a vacuum that could lead to further conflict.

This is our work for the next six months.

I am hopeful that the future of Somalia will be one with a legitimate government, with its legitimacy, trust and confidence being earned and coming from the Somali people, and be for the Somali people and where the relationship between the centre and the periphery is balanced.

We have begun a path which enhances accountability by the government and the international community to Somali citizens for the management of Somalia's public resources and international aid, for the ending of the transition, for putting in place strong foundations for the next political dispensation.

On the side of Somali and international stakeholders, there must be a shared vision for a secure, stable and prosperous Somalia. A Somalia at peace with itself, its neighbours, its place in the world arena, where its citizens can go about their daily lives in safety and provide for their families with confidence and dignity. We collectively must extricate ourselves from the vicious cycle where conflict breeds the poverty that leads to more conflict. In its place we must entrench a virtuous cycle of stability and prosperity.

I believe there is a commitment by both international and Somali actors to work together, across political, ideological and security divides. A commitment towards an inclusive and accountable system of government that represents all of its people and in which all Somalis can feel they have a stake. A commitment towards a reconciled tolerant Somali society where conflicts are resolved peacefully, built on respect for traditional Somali culture, religious values and ways of life.

Thank you.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: The threat from al Shabaab is of great concern to Somalia and to neighbouring countries, particularly now that the organisation is extending its links into other countries. What measures are being taken to deal with the organisation, and what support is being provided by the West in terms of logistics, finance, and boots on the ground?

Answer: The Prime Minister explained that since al Shabaab joined with al Qaeda the government is no longer dealing with an indigenous organisation; it is facing al Qaeda. If the government had been dealing with a Somali organisation their policy would have been to seek reconciliation with them. Somalia cannot reach peace through violence, yet it is also vital to ensure that others aren't allowed to reach their political ends through violence, whatever their ideology may be. Therefore, those hardened elements of al Qaeda in Somalia must be dealt with militarily, and those who renounce violence can be engaged in dialogue. On the question of international support the Prime Minister reflected that, whilst there is always room for improvement, Somalis should also be thankful to AMISOM troops – from Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and Burundi – for their sacrifices in attaining peace in Somalia. He added that in the long term safety and security depends on Somalis themselves, and Somalia must build its own robust army, police force and coastguard as AMISOM will only be in Somalia temporarily.

Question: There is an increasing number of Somalis living in the UK and other European countries who provide finance to al Shabaab in Somalia. There is concern that alongside al Shabaab fighters in Somalia, there are also many supporters and promoters of their cause. What is the Prime Minister's message to these people?

Answer: The Prime Minister answered that al Shabaab is not only a Somali problem, it is a global problem, and that is why the international conference was held in London. His message to Somalis in the UK and Europe was that they should seek to play a positive role in their adopted countries; to become good citizens and ambassadors of the Somali people. He added that in Somalia there needs to be a greater focus on creating a counter-narrative to al Shabaab's ideology in order to win the hearts and minds of the population, and especially of the youth.

Question: Will the selection of the next government suffer from the same mistakes as the previous one? 30 per cent of seats are reserved for women, but what space is there for the youth? They were excluded previously. Will the next selection be based on merit and ability, or on tribal identity and origin?

Answer: The Prime Minister explained that the number of seats in the next parliament will be reduced in number from 550 to 225. To put this in perspective, the USA has 535 seats in Congress and the Senate to represent a population of 300 million. Somalia currently has a similar number of seats to represent a population of only 8 million. The selection of the next parliament will be based on criteria outlined in the Garowe principles. These criteria include an education to at least high school level, no history of warlordism or criminality, and a good moral compass, amongst other criteria. In short, the next parliament should be smaller, more educated and more efficient. There will also be an effort to ensure that 30 per cent of the seats are genuinely filled by women. In terms of youth representation, the minimum age threshold will be 25 years and the limit will be 75. Furthermore, when the constituent assembly provisionally adopts the new constitution this will be done through a consultation process which is as inclusive as possible, and engages with youth groups, women, traditional leaders, business representatives, members of the diaspora and others.

Question: Why has the humanitarian catastrophe in Southern and Central Somalia not been discussed more prominently at the London conference, aside from a humanitarian breakfast discussion?

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that the humanitarian situation in Somalia was discussed at the conference. The country has just faced the worst drought for last 60 years, which affected four million people. The efforts of the TFG and the international community saved many lives, but the focus must be maintained; two million Somalis are still in need of assistance, and many have still to return to their homes. A number of international NGOs and charities are involved in ensuring that the issue receives the necessary coverage and attention.

Question: What is the Prime Minister's vision for reintegrating the semi-autonomous regions of the North into a united Somalia, and what could be offered to incentivise them to return to centralised rule from Mogadishu?

Answer: The Prime Minister explained that the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Somalia are very important. However, government is a social contract which must be respected and the regions must not feel that this contract is being violated. A federal system was opted for as this is seen as the best way to protect the sovereignty of the individual, and will not mean that every clan has its own state. Under this system power will be separated horizontally (between a legislature, executive, and judiciary) and vertically (between the federal, state, and local level). This will ensure that one city, region or group does not wield disproportionate influence. It is hoped that this will enable reconciliation and the development of a peaceful Somalia.

Question: The US spent ten years fighting the Taliban before deciding to talk to them. Could time and money be saved by starting dialogue now with al Shabaab? Furthermore, the Prime Minister spoke of liberating Somalis from the al Qaeda outsiders, but when will Somalia be liberated from neighbouring states?

Answer: The Prime Minister reiterated that if al Shabaab is an indigenous Somali organisation then the government would be open to dialogue with them. He also explained that neighbouring countries have not invaded Somalia but have intervened with the government's permission. This was because they all share a common enemy; Uganda, Djibouti, Burundi and Kenya all came to help build peace and stability in Somalia.

Question: What is the Prime Minister doing to focus the attention of the international community on the issue of toxic waste dumping and illegal fishing in Somali territorial waters? Whilst there are many international conferences on illegal fishing, there have been no Somali representatives at these meetings.

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that there are two types of piracy taking place in Somali waters; piracy related to the hijacking of ships, and the piracy of illegal fishing. The latter is estimated by the IMO to amount to an annual loss to Somalia of between \$400 million and \$1 billion in marine resources. Toxic waste dumping is also a problem, but Somalia doesn't have the ability

to address this currently. Help is needed from the international community. However, an anti-piracy task force is being set up, along with a Somali marine research organisation to provide more research on what is taking place in the country's coastal waters.

Question: There is a great deal for the TFG to do before the August deadline, but the London conference has made it clear that there will be no further extensions to the transition. What will happen if the TFG does not meet the deadline?

Answer: The Prime Minister answered that the TFG is committed to ending the transition. The framework, benchmarks and deadlines are all in place and so far the TFG has met all of these. A draft constitution must now be finalised, following which a new parliament can be set up which will in turn elect a new Speaker, Prime Minister, and President. With appropriate assistance from the international community the transition will be successful.

Question: Reports have suggested that AMISOM will be increasingly involved in humanitarian and development work. How is this compatible with AMISOM's primary mission of peacekeeping and peace-making through armed force?

Answer: The Prime Minister explained Somalia is discriminated against in the delivery of aid funds due to perceptions of corruption which are not backed up by any facts. Instead, an annual \$1 billion in aid to Somalia is given to UN agencies, international NGOs and Somali NGOs. Consequently a parallel system of government has developed which increases the difficulty of building public institutions. This highlights the importance of ending the transition and developing a full and transparent system of governance. A mutual financial accountability board has been established to ensure accountability between the Somali government and NGOs. It is unclear what the aid money is currently being spent on; no new schools, hospitals or roads have been built. It seems that instead of reaching the intended recipients it is being spent in Nairobi.

Question: Young people in Somalia face high unemployment rates. What will the Prime Minister do to address this problem, and to demobilise and reintegrate young al Shabaab fighters into society?

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that the future of Somalia's youth is an important issue, and that they are the group most vulnerable to influence by al Shabaab's ideology. There is not a great deal the government can do about unemployment currently as the economy must first be rebuilt. The unemployment rate is anything from 70 per cent and as much as 90 per cent for the youth, and this is why many turn to piracy.

Question: Somaliland has a long, rich history and was long recognised as independent. Why is it now classified as a 'disputed' area?

Answer: The Prime Minister explained that he believes in the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, not secession. However, there must also be a social contract. The disputed area status arose from disagreements over the border between Somaliland and Puntland.

Question: What was the content of the recent budget passed by parliament? And what is the timescale for AMISOM to leave Somalia and for Somali people to take the lead?

Answer: The Prime Minister answered that the 2012 budget is a public document which is freely available to consult. On the subject of AMISOM, he noted that without their efforts Mogadishu, Baidoa, Beledweyne and other towns would not have been freed from al Shabaab, and that Somalis should be grateful for the sacrifice by AMISOM troops.

Question: What is the role of pastoralism in building a sustainable base for a future peaceful Somalia?

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that pastoralism is in danger due to environmental destruction. Somalia has one of the highest numbers of livestock per capita in world. Although Somalia is a semi-arid country it is exporting charcoal – this is unsustainable. Recently the UN Security Council passed a resolution banning the export of charcoal, which should help to address the problem.

Question: What is the Prime Minister's view on the problem of land grabbing and conflict between regional territories?

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that Somalis have long dealt with these issues amongst themselves. The problem arises when clan disputes are mixed with politics. The government has a role to play here by encouraging reconciliation between communities and not siding with one group or another.

Question: The transition roadmap, the Garowe principles and the process of selection of future MPs are unpopular with many ordinary Somalis.

Answer: The Prime Minister explained that the constituent assembly will be selected based upon the criteria previously mentioned. A parliament will be selected by the TFG in consultation with civil society groups and an election committee to ensure that these criteria are adhered to.

Question: What is the Prime Minister's view on the increased presence of Turkey in Somalia?

Answer: The Prime Minister replied that Somalia has changed for the better since the Turkish Prime Minister visited Mogadishu. Notably, he also brought his wife and children on the visit. Turkey is playing a positive role in Somalia, building hospitals, schools and infrastructure, and from March 6th Turkish Airlines will fly twice a week to Somalia. It has also been agreed that the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey will visit Somalia once every two months. Furthermore, Turkey has set up development offices in a number of Somali towns. Finally, within the last six months Turkey has given 2000 scholarships to Somali students.

Question: The Prime Minister has spoken about the importance of rebuilding the Somali economy, but how can this be achieved when most international aid money is sat in Nairobi, where it is unaccountable? How can we ensure that aid for Somalia actually comes to Somalia?

Answer: The Prime Minister answered that Somalis should look to themselves to rebuild their country. Across many countries the Somali diaspora is rich and successful, and this achievement needs to be repeated in Somalia itself. Success in Somalia will not come from foreign aid. Whilst

bilateral relationships can be important – for gaining finance to invest in infrastructure, for example – Somalis should not depend on foreign aid or expect outsiders to rebuild their country; it is a task they must undertake themselves.