



Serving the people of Somalia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Inclusivity and unity highlighted in UN message to parliament
- Somalia COVID-19 preparedness and response plan launched with UN support
- Somalia's international partners stress need for building political consensus
- UN envoy urges respect for freedom of the press in somalia
- Floods, locusts and COVID-19: UN agencies warn somalia's gains at risk from 'triple threat'
- UN welcomes federal government of somalia's recent anticorruption steps

INCLUSIVITY AND UNITY HIGHLIGHTED IN UN MESSAGE TO PARLIAMENT

Somalia's Parliament opened for its seventh session in early June, and the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, was invited to address its opening.

Below are the Special Representative's remarks:

"Mr. President, Honourable Speakers, Honourable Members of the Somali Federal Parliament, I am pleased to send this message of support at the opening of the Seventh Session of the Federal Parliament.

I congratulate the Honorable Members on your determination to convene this session and ensure continuity in Parliament's work, despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On behalf of the United Nations family, I wish to express our solidarity with the Somali people and Government as you confront this global challenge.

Be assured that the United Nations remains committed to supporting your work as you begin this important session.

The eyes of the Somali people, as well as those of Somalia's international partners, are on Parliament as you begin your work to advance pressing national priorities.

These include work related to the upcoming national elections, amendments to the Political Parties Law and consideration of the report of the joint ad hoc committee on the Electoral Law, as well as the

presentation by the National Independent Electoral Commission.

Honourable Members, Somalia is at a critical juncture, and the work of the Federal Parliament will determine Somalia's path to democracy and stability for many years to come.

We urge you to conduct your work in the spirit of inclusivity, drawing in voices from across the political and social spectrum, and giving prominence to the views of women, minority groups and those who have historically lacked representation.

Unity of purpose among Somalis is indispensable as the country traverses this arduous and delicate period.

I wish to express my appreciation for your work and encourage you to bring all stakeholders together, to foster

reconciliation, build consensus on national priorities and contribute to addressing the challenges facing the country.

As you embark on your deliberations, please continue to count on the support of the United Nations.

My very best wishes for a successful session."





SOMALIA COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS

AND RESPONSE PLAN LAUNCHED WITH UN SUPPORT

In late April, the United Nations and partners launched the Somalia COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) to address the immediate humanitarian impact and socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

“The impact of COVID-19 is bound to be devastating,” said Mr. Adam Abdelmoula, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia. “The priority now is to avert large-scale community transmission by scaling up risk communications, testing, contact tracing and management of cases.”

From one case confirmed on 16 March, COVID-19 cases in Somalia have spiked to almost 2,700 in mid-June, including close

to 90 deaths. During this emergency, the pandemic has impacted on the economy and livelihoods; imports have declined, commodity prices have increased, remittances have declined and school closures in March left about 1 million children without access to education.

The CPRP provides a six-to-nine-month framework for humanitarian and development agencies to adapt their programmes to the changing context and scale up interventions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The focus is on the ‘nexus’ between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. Implementation will be aligned to support the Federal Government of Somalia COVID-19 preparedness and response plans.

“We are working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia, state authorities and all our partners, to address this unprecedented crisis,” said Mr. Abdelmoula. “I urge donors to urgently support this plan and front-load their contributions to enable aid agencies rapidly scale up the response to COVID-19.”

The CPRP plan seeks US\$501 million. It gives priority to the most vulnerable Somalis including 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) who live in more than 2,000 overcrowded settlements with limited access to healthcare, water and

sanitation services, and livelihoods. The plan considers the elderly – approximately 2.7 per cent of the population – and the urban poor as people who could be worst affected by COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic comes as Somalia grapples with a protracted humanitarian crisis, brought on by years of conflict, climate-related emergencies and widespread poverty. This year, disease outbreaks, anticipated flooding and a locust infestation will aggravate the crisis further.



SOMALIA'S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS STRESS NEED FOR BUILDING POLITICAL CONSENSUS

Following the address to the House of the People by the Chairperson of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC), Halima Ismail, in June, Somalia's international partners thanked her for her presentation, in which she outlined technical options for holding 'one person, one vote' elections as close as possible to the constitutionally mandated timeframe.

They also emphasized the continued need for Somalis to engage in inclusive dialogue to forge the widest possible agreement on this important topic, and underscore the importance of a complete and comprehensive dialogue among the leaders of the Federal Government and Federal Member States.

The partners also welcomed the announcement by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' that he will convene a meeting with all Federal Member State leaders from 5 to 8 July, and they urged that this meeting be the next step in a broad consultation of key stakeholders.

"We note the Parliament has also been meeting to discuss issues related to the electoral code," the international partners added. "We urge that political agreement be fostered ahead of final decisions. We call on all of Somalia's leaders to work to reach agreement urgently on the path to holding national elections and other pressing national priorities."

[The partners were: African

Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Belgium, Denmark, Ethiopia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, and United Nations.]

Somalia/Somaliland

Also in June, the United Nations in Somalia and a range of Somalia's international partners welcomed the dialogue which took place in Djibouti between President 'Farmajo' and President Muse Bihi Abdi, hosted by President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, and attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali.

In a joint statement, they commend the regional support and engagement that led to the talks. They also welcomed the meeting as an important step in strengthening communication and fostering understanding, and encouraged the technical committee named by the principals to deliver tangible benefits for their people. This was in addition to welcoming the commitment of the two leaders to continue the dialogue.

[The partners were: African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Ethiopia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, United Nations.]



UN ENVOY URGES RESPECT FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN SOMALIA

Celebrated annually on 3 May, World Press Freedom Day aims to celebrate and defend the fundamental principles of press freedom, lining up with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Somalia is a signatory, which establishes that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right.

The theme of this year's Day was 'Journalism without Fear or Favour,' with the following sub-themes: safety of women and men journalists and media workers, independent and professional journalism free from political and commercial influence, and gender equality in all aspects of the media.

On the Day, in a statement, the UN envoy to Somalia called for Somali journalists to be able to perform their work freely.

"The media have a vital role to play in Somali society, from coverage of its political space to giving a voice to the vulnerable and marginalized. They need to be able to carry out their important work free from violence, harassment, detention, persecution, intimidation and censorship," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan.

"This would be the case at any time, but especially in this period as Somalia prepares for its national 'one person, one vote' elections. This is an historic occasion that requires a dynamic, free and safe media sector able to report without fear or favour," he added. "As the country responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for the media to provide accurate and timely news coverage is also crucial for helping raise awareness which can save lives."



FLOODS, LOCUSTS AND COVID-19: UN AGENCIES WARN SOMALIA'S GAINS AT RISK FROM 'TRIPLE THREAT'

The political and security gains made by Somalia over recent years could be at risk of reversal if swift action is not taken by the international community to help local authorities avert a major humanitarian crisis due to the combined effect of devastating floods, desert locusts and the widespread impact of COVID-19.

“Somalia’s coping mechanisms are significantly less than those of the neighbouring countries. Therefore, the impact [of floods, locusts and COVID-19] is not simply humanitarian but has the potential to reverse some of the political and security gains that the international community has invested in over the past decade,” said Justin Brady of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Somalia in June.

“We need to continue to work together and expand the coordination with the private sector, civil society and have more

engagement with the diaspora,” added Mr. Brady, OCHA’s Head of Office in the Horn of Africa country.

Close to 500,000 people have been displaced by recent floods in Somalia’s central regions, while the country is also dealing with a severe locust infestation which threatens food security and nutrition for many. At the same time, Somalia has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic’s spread.

Mr. Brady said the UN’s warning takes into account Somalia’s inherent structural weaknesses, which make the country far more vulnerable than the other countries in the region, and calls for an “all hands on deck approach to avert the worst.”

Displaced by floods

Since November last year, the UN has been working closely with local authorities and partners to determine and meet the most urgent needs of Somalis affected by floods, including dispatching emergency supplies and providing life-saving services through partners on the ground. The assistance continues to this day.

“The UN has been deploying shelter and non-food items as well as looking at the potential for infectious diseases such as acute watery diarrhea, cholera and malnutrition that often emerge during the time of floods,” Mr. Brady said.

While some half a million people have been displaced, overall, more than a million

people have been affected by flash and riverine floods in Somalia. One of the hardest hit areas is Belet Weyne, which first experienced severe flooding late last year, when the Shabelle River burst its banks due to heavy rains.

“We have about 240,000 people who were displaced from their homes,” said

“We need to continue to work together...”

Abdikarim Hussein Abdi, the Programme Manager for Development Action Network, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) responding to the needs of affected communities. “The floods submerged people’s markets and businesses, thereby leaving many people without any source of income. Commodity prices have skyrocketed, harvests have been destroyed and the little food coming to the market is too expensive.”

Speaking at a camp for internally displaced persons at Ceel Jaale, in Belet Weyne, Hawa Gedi, a mother of four, asked for more help for the many families whose livelihoods were destroyed.

“I was displaced from Bula Qodah by floods and settled here at Ceel Jaale,” Hawa said.

“We are grateful to the humanitarian agencies for providing us with water and other basic needs, but we need more support. We need food. We have nothing to eat.”

Since 1990, Somalia has experienced 30 climate-related hazards, 12 droughts and 18 floods – three times more the number of climate-related hazards experienced between 1970 and 1990. In 2017, a severe drought left Somalia on the verge of famine. In 2019, a delayed and erratic Gu’ rainy season resulted in the poorest harvest since the 2011 famine and flooding.

COVID-19 response

Like so many other countries, Somalia has been responding to COVID-19 within its borders. It registered its first COVID-19 case in March 2020 and has since seen a surge in the number of cases, with cases reported from all Federal Member States.

The pandemic has led to major socio-economic disruptions across Somalia, including a reduction in remittances from the diaspora, itself a mainstay for many Somalis, and a reduction in casual labour opportunities due to COVID-19 restrictions, making it difficult for many to cope.

“Coronavirus has affected our business. Three or four people cannot enter the shop at once, so we now serve customers

“**Coronavirus has affected our business...**”

one-by-one. Added to that, there is no port in Baidoa so we rely on supplies from Mogadishu and Dubai but flights were suspended so many of our businesses are at a standstill,” said Malyun Mohammed, a beauty shop-owner in Baidoa, in the South West State.

The World Health Organization (WHO), working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and a consortium of bilateral partners, set up three testing centres in Hargeisa in Somaliland, Garowe in Puntland and in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, with plans to increase the number of testing centres.

Additionally, WHO is supporting patient and case management in all isolation centres, providing salaries to newly recruited health care workers and strengthening community mobilisation and engagement, especially in the area of case detection and tracing.



Locust threat

“We have a situation of the two problems of floods and COVID-19 converging and reinforcing the impact on the population, and then we have the locusts. We expect to see a portion of the crops this year lost to the locust infestation, which will compound the food security and nutrition situation for many Somalis,” Mr. Brady said.

Working in concert with the Federal Government of Somalia, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with the support of other agencies, acquired equipment to help eradicate the locusts in infested areas in locations such as Hargeisa, Galmudug and Puntland. The infestation is Somalia’s worst outbreak in 25 years.

The FAO Country Representative in Somalia, Etienne Peterschmitt, believes that the impact of the current desert locust outbreak in Somalia could, by September 2020, increase the number of Somalis facing food insecurity or severe hunger by half a million.

FAO has strengthened the capacity for ground control with the purchase of 18 Land Cruiser vehicles, complementing

another 15 vehicles hired for surveillance and control in north and central Somalia. Twelve vehicle-mounted sprayers and ten backpack sprayers have also been delivered in Hargeisa and Mogadishu, in addition to ten vehicle-mounted sprayers brought from Morocco and Mali to support control efforts in Somalia.

Three helicopters are being mobilized to Somalia to carry out aerial control operations. A new consignment of 2,000 kilograms of biopesticides has also been delivered, and more staff hired. As a result of the concerted efforts between the Federal Government and FAO, by mid-April, some 31,000 hectares had already been covered out of the 360,000 hectares estimated to be affected across the country.

Funding gap

Both OCHA and WHO have described the floods, locusts and COVID-19 as an unprecedented “triple threat,” which needed adequate funding to fight against.

Somalia was already struggling with floods and an invasion of desert locusts in the northern parts of the country when



COVID-19 struck, further aggravating the situation by putting pressure on the country's fragile health system, thereby causing a major public health crisis.

"Unless we are able to rapidly scale up our response operations, unless we get adequate funding from our donors, we will not be able to respond to this need of the government and that window is closing very rapidly," said the WHO Country Representative for Somalia, Dr. Mamunur Rahman Malik.

According to WHO, the funding gaps are in the areas of case management, surveillance and laboratory diagnostics and coordination. Without this, the response to COVID-19 is hampered.

"What we are seeing in Somalia is cases remain undiagnosed, undetected, the self-isolation and quarantine measures are not working as efficiently as we expect them to work," Dr. Malik said.

In March 2020, the Federal Government launched the National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19, seeking \$57 million for the next six months.

On its part, WHO and other agencies require \$25.7 million to support the Federal Government in critical response areas. However, only 20 per cent of this has been provided, leaving a huge funding gap.

FAO and the Federal Government require \$57 million to bring the locust infestation under control. Some \$24.2 million had been made available by donors by 1 May.

In responding to the floods, locusts and COVID-19, the UN and its partners are working to ensure that emergency and development assistance complement each other, in line with the Federal Government's National Development Plan to achieve long-term recovery and resilience.



UN WELCOMES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA'S RECENT ANTI-CORRUPTION STEPS



In June, the United Nations in Somalia welcomed measures announced by the Federal Government of Somalia to tackle corruption.

The Somali Government's cabinet had endorsed the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) intended to fight corruption; strengthen the integrity of institutions; build a merit-based, professional civil service; ensure the transparency of public finance management; and promote a culture of accountability.

The FGS also announced its intent to join and sign the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the world's only legally-binding universal anti-corruption instrument, and a key instrument to sustain, manage and track countries' fight against corruption. In addition, the FGS ratified the African Union Convention on

Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUPCC), which was signed in 2006 but had not been ratified up until now.

"We welcome the Somali Government's commitment to fight corruption, enable fair access to resources and opportunities, and build trust in public institutions," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, in a statement.

"These are important steps and the United Nations in Somalia encourages all branches of the Federal Government and Federal Member States to take further measures to protect and expand the transparency, integrity and accountability of the management of public finances and resources," he added. "We look forward to active implementation of these commitments including advancing the legal and institutional framework to counter corruption, along with robust enforcement and punitive measures."

In the statement, the United Nations in Somalia said it remains committed to support the implementation of the NACS, as well as the process leading up to the ratification of the UNCAC, and commends the Federal Government for these steps to tackle corruption.