

**Statement by Special Representative of the Secretary-General
James Swan to the Security Council on the Situation in Somalia**

New York, 17 November 2021

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Somalia. I am pleased to do so again together with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira. I am also grateful to brief you alongside Ms. Asha Siyad, co-founder of the Somali Women's Leadership Initiative, and a member of the Goodwill Ambassadors who have tirelessly advocated in support of the 30 per cent representation of women in the elections.

Progress has been made in the electoral process, albeit slow and uneven progress. I welcome the recent completion of the elections for all the 54 seats in the Upper House of the Federal Parliament. It is encouraging that 14 women will soon take office as Senators, representing 26 per cent of the Upper House. This is an increase from previous elections in 2016, though still short of the 30 per cent target. It is also encouraging that elections for the House of the People have commenced, with 2 of the 275 seats having been completed, and elections for an additional eleven seats announced to begin this week.

In addition to the electoral preparations at the national level, the holding of peaceful direct local elections in three districts in Puntland in October demonstrated the feasibility of holding one-person-one-vote elections - and underscored the desire among Somali people for political participation on the basis of universal suffrage.

While acknowledging this progress, it has now been more than one year since Somalia's political leaders signed the 17 September Electoral Agreement, and nearly six months since their commitments were reaffirmed through the 27 May Agreement.

The elections for the vast majority of seats in the Federal Parliament are still to commence, electoral security preparations need to be accelerated, and a list published of the 30 per cent of the House of the People seats that will be reserved for women. We continue to stress that women's full inclusion and representation in political life, and in all sectors of life, is key for Somalia's sustainable peace and development. This message was underscored by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa on their recent visits to Somalia.

The United Nations continues to engage with and support the key stakeholders to advance the election process.

This includes diplomatic engagement, including joint visits with partners to the Federal Member State capitals and polling sites and joint partner statements, as well as technical support to the Federal Electoral Implementation Team, State Electoral Implementation Teams and the Office of the Prime Minister, as well as coordination and channelling of donor contributions for the elections.

I urge all stakeholders to move swiftly to conclude the House of the People elections in the Federal Member States, to ensure that the full Parliament is elected before the end of this year. I also call for the full respect of fundamental rights during the campaign and electoral periods, including peaceful assembly, and the freedom of movement, association, and expression.

I am also pleased to note, Mr. President, in regard to political developments in Somalia, that tensions between the President and the Prime Minister that emerged in August and September over two issues, namely the appointment of senior security officials, and the handling of an investigation into the disappearance of an agent of the National Intelligence and Security Agency, that these tensions have now eased. Following mediation efforts by several senior Somali officials and individuals, a broadly welcomed compromise solution was announced at the end of October.

Mr President,

The security situation in Somalia, unfortunately, continues to be volatile. I pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice of Somali Security Forces and AMISOM forces that continue to face Al Shabaab on a daily basis.

Al Shabaab remains a serious threat to Somalia's security, able to maintain a high level of activities, including through continued use of improvised explosive devices, and an increase in the use of suicide bombers. In Mogadishu, the latest Vehicle-Borne improvised explosive device attack occurred on 25 September, targeting a checkpoint at Villa Somalia, resulting in several fatalities, including of a senior government advisor. I condemn in the strongest terms Al Shabaab's attacks, and express deep condolences to their victims.

So far in 2021, UNSOM has documented 964 civilians killed or injured as a result of armed conflict. Al-Shabaab remains the largest perpetrator, responsible for almost two thirds of civilian casualties.

Regrettably, political tensions also continue to drive conflict in Somalia. The period from 23 to 26 October saw intense fighting in the town of Guriel between Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama and Galmudug security forces supported by federal armed forces. This armed confrontation resulted in significant casualties, mass displacement of the civilian

population, and severe damage to public facilities and private homes. Along with partners, the United Nations engaged all parties on these issues, with strong calls for a cessation of hostilities and pursuit of dialogue to address political differences.

Implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan for progressive transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali Security Forces is advancing, but remains behind schedule. Regarding the implementation of resolution 2568 of March 2021 with respect to post-2021 security arrangements, the Secretary-General will keep the Council informed of developments, and I therefore will not go into details of this matter. Suffice to say, further discussions will be required among key security stakeholders to reach agreement on the strategic objectives, size and composition of a future African Union mission designed to support the security transition in Somalia in the most effective way. In this regard, I welcome the recent African Union Peace and Security Council visit to Somalia, which provided an important opportunity for the discussions among many stakeholders.

Mr President,

The ongoing delays in the electoral process continue to stall progress in other critical areas and hamper the achievement of national priorities beyond the elections, including reforming the constitution and justice sector, and advancing the development agenda and financial reforms,

including achieving the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative Completion Point in 2022.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains dire, compounded by conflict, displacement and disease outbreaks. Somalia is also on the frontline of recurrent climatic shocks, exacerbating the humanitarian emergency. Humanitarian partners estimate that 7.7 million Somalis will require humanitarian assistance in 2022. Some 1.2 million children under the age of five are likely to be acutely malnourished in 2022 without immediate treatment.

Some 2.9 million people are estimated to be internally displaced throughout the country, one of the highest numbers of IDPs in the world. In this context, I am gravely concerned that the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan is currently only 51 percent funded. I thank donors for their generous contributions to date, but a critical scale-up in humanitarian action is urgently required.

Mr President,

Let me conclude by stressing that, although progress is being made, the efforts of Somalia's political leaders will need to be redoubled in the coming weeks to bring the elections for the Federal Parliament to a successful conclusion, so that presidential elections can then be held as soon as possible.

The completion of these elections is more important than ever, so that all efforts can return to the key governance, security, and development priorities in Somalia.

Thank you.