



HIGHLIGHTS

- UN envoy highlights political tensions and need for dialogue
- Somalia receives first batch of COVID-19 vaccines
- On International Day, the UN calls for Somali women's enhanced political participation
- New UN Deputy Special Representative for Somalia arrives in Mogadishu
- Somalia's 2021 Humanitarian Response plan seeks \$1.09 billion
- Top UN officials pay tribute to Somalis' courage and resilience
- UN officials note wide-ranging support to Somaliland
- UN focuses on humanitarian needs in South West State

UN ENVOY HIGHLIGHTS POLITICAL TENSIONS AND NEED FOR DIALOGUE

In February, the political stresses gripping Somalia and the need for dialogue and compromise to resolve them featured strongly in the briefing of the United Nations envoy to the country at a meeting of the world body's Security Council.

"Today's meeting of the Council is timely in view of the significant developments in Somalia in recent weeks, and even days," the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, told the Council's virtual meeting from the Somali capital of Mogadishu.

"Growing political tensions threaten Somalia's state-building progress and even security, unless they are resolved through dialogue and compromise in the interest of the country," he added. "Unfortunately, instead we are seeing increased brinkmanship, pressure tactics, and tests of strength that can only heighten risks."

The UN envoy went on to brief Council members about the failure by Somali

leaders to move forward with the implementation of an electoral model agreed on by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) President and Federal Member State (FMS) leaders on 17 September 2020. The model had been formally endorsed by both houses of Somalia's parliament and supported by major political actors.

Those tensions over the model's implementation were compounded by questions raised by some political figures over the legitimacy of the president's mandate following expiry of his constitutional term on 8 February. The federal government has cited an October parliamentary resolution permitting the president to remain, but this has been contested.

Tensions boiled over last week. Several violent incidents were reported in Mogadishu on the morning of February 19, during protests called for by the opposition Council of Presidential Candidates. The incidents reportedly included armed exchanges between government security personnel and security teams employed by the opposition, as well government forces firing on protesters in order to disperse them.

"Public communication from key leaders has become increasingly polemical and confrontational, revealing the frustration, mistrust, and sense of grievance felt by

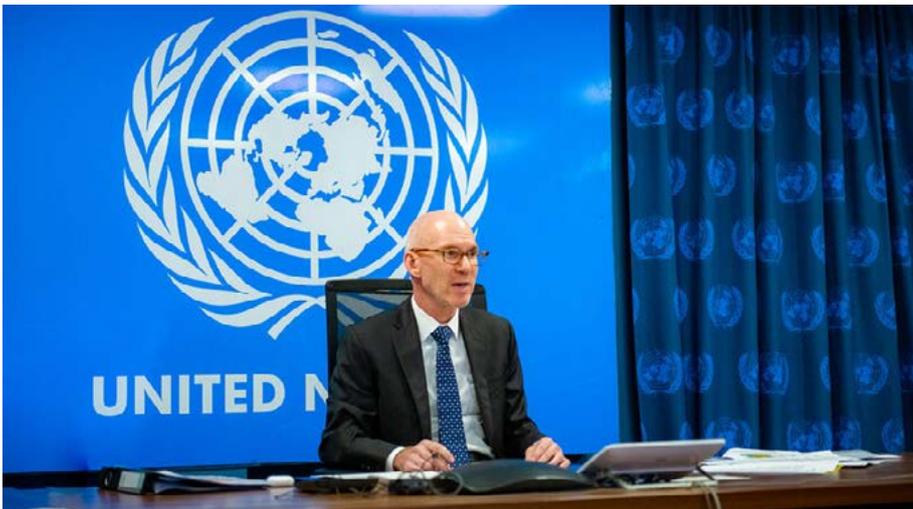
many," Mr. Swan noted. "Hence, this is a tense moment in Somalia, as both rhetoric and actions are escalating."

Recent efforts

The UN envoy went on to recap recent efforts to move forward with implementation of the 17 September electoral model.

These efforts included FGS and FMS leaders meeting in Dhusamareb, the capital of the northern FMS of Galmudug from 2-6 February. Progress was made but there was no final agreement on contentious issues – with these including the composition of the electoral management bodies, the modalities for selecting representatives from Somaliland in federal institutions, and the management of elections in the Gedo region in the FMS of Jubaland.

Subsequently, the Federal Government convened a technical committee of senior FGS and FMS ministers, which met in the city of Baidoa in South West State, from 15-16 February. The committee announced that it had arrived at technical solutions for the contentious issues, it reaffirmed commitment to the 30 per cent women's quota in the electoral process, and it noted the need for a revised, but short, new electoral calendar.



On the basis of the committee's work, the Federal Government called for a summit of FGS and FMS leaders in Mogadishu from 18-19 February. However, events of recent days disrupted these plans, and the leaders of Jubaland and Puntland have declined to join the FGS and other FMS leaders for a summit.

"Along with other partners, we continue efforts to understand and address the concerns of these two leaders so that they may join the process to advance the 17 September agreement," Mr. Swan said.

International partners

In his remarks, the UN Special Representative noted how he has worked with other regional and international partners to engage FGS and FMS leaders, key political figures, and civil society representatives to urge a way forward based on dialogue and compromise in the national interest.

The past weeks have seen international partners communicate that there should be no partial elections, no parallel processes, and no unilateral actions by Somali leaders – essentially, no approaches that could lead to greater division and risk of confrontation.

"Let me be clear: I remain convinced that the consensus-based 17 September model offers the best available option to proceed quickly to an electoral process for selection of members of parliament, senators and the president," Mr. Swan said. "This would minimize further delays in Somalia's four-year transition cycle, ensure that the chosen national leaders have a clear mandate and are widely accepted, and allow the country to turn its attention from the current political competition to other vital national priorities in the interest of the people."

"To move forward on this path, it is imperative that Somali leaders use all available channels for dialogue and consultation, including contacts with a wide range of political stakeholders and

influential civil society figures so that their important voices are heard," he continued. "To build trust in the process, it will also be necessary to ensure that the management and oversight of the agreed electoral process are as impartial and independent as possible, and subject to regular monitoring."

The UN Special Representative also highlighted how core political freedoms – including those of speech, assembly, organization, and access to media – must be ensured, while communication among the main actors, and especially the FGS and FMS leaders, must continue on a regular basis to minimize future misunderstandings and resolve problems before they escalate.

"The United Nations and other international partners stand ready to walk with Somalis on this path forward, through providing good offices or a forum for dialogue, offering technical assistance to the process, and monitoring implementation of commitments, should the Somali parties find these contributions useful," Mr. Swan said.

Other priorities

In his briefing, the UN envoy noted how the longer national political attention continued to focus on the current electoral impasse, the greater the negative impact on other priorities, such as advancing security and economic reforms, finalising the constitution, and pursuing the development agenda.

On the security front, Mr. Swan flagged that Al-Shabaab remains the primary threat to Somalia's security. The terrorist group has increased its operational tempo since August 2020, and the beginning of 2021 has seen a new peak in the number of attacks targeting government officials and key figures in Somali society.

Away from the battlefield, preparatory work has been completed to advance the transition of prime responsibility for the

country's security to its own forces in 2021, as requested by the Security Council.

On the humanitarian front, the UN Special Representative stated that the situation remained dire. The number of people in need of assistance is expected to increase from 5.2 million last year to an estimated 5.9 million in 2021, as a result of increasing food insecurity, climatic disasters, the worst desert locust infestation in decades.

"While we are deeply grateful for the generous donor contributions in 2020, the humanitarian needs will continue to be high and we again appeal for donor support to the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021, for which \$1.09 billion is requested," Mr. Swan said. "The UN family also continues to work with Somali authorities and partners on longer-term solutions to these recurrent humanitarian shocks."

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the country's humanitarian situation.

"Unfortunately, in recent weeks we have seen a renewed spike in COVID cases in Somalia, which will only exacerbate the already difficult humanitarian situation," Mr. Swan said.

Somalia is eligible for the COVAX vaccine programme, and the United Nations, in close collaboration with the Somali authorities, is working to ensure that the first batch of vaccines is effectively distributed to front line workers and vulnerable groups across the country.

The UN envoy concluded his remarks with a renewed call on Somalia's political leaders to pull back from confrontation and avoid risky winner-take-all tactics.

"Instead, this is a time to pursue dialogue and compromise to reach an inclusive and credible political agreement to hold elections as soon as possible based on the 17 September model," he said.

*The full remarks of the UN Special Representative [can be read here](#).





SOMALIA RECEIVES FIRST BATCH OF COVID-19 VACCINES UNDER THE COVAX INITIATIVE

Somalia has joined the growing list of countries to receive the COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX initiative, which aims to ensure fair and equitable access of all nations to the pandemic-beating solution.

A consignment of 300,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine arrived earlier today at Aden Abdulle International Airport in Mogadishu, and was received in the presence of high-level officials of the Federal Ministry of Health and the United Nations in Somalia.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, hailed the Somali authorities for their sustained efforts to combat COVID-19 and pledged the world body's continuing support to roll out a nationwide vaccination campaign to contain the spread of the pandemic.

"We commend the Somali Federal Government and Federal Member States for efforts over the past year to combat the pandemic through education, through preventive measures, through improved health services," Mr. Swan said.

This first batch of vaccines targets, as recommended by the COVID-19 National

Task Force, the country's frontline workers, the elderly and people with chronic health conditions, in an effort to reduce deaths and diseases caused by COVID-19.

Somalia's Federal Minister of Health, Dr. Fawziya Abikar Nur, noted that vaccination is an effective intervention to halt the spread of COVID-19, and pledged that the doses would reach the intended beneficiaries.

"After tireless efforts, we have managed to receive the first batch of the vaccine and we are expecting to receive more," Dr. Fawziya said. "I would like to thank all the UN family for the tremendous work with the Federal Ministry of Health and the Federal Member State Ministries of Health."

One year on: Hope in fighting COVID-1

The first vaccines arrive precisely a year after Somalia detected its first COVID-19 case, in March 2020. To date, the country has recorded 8,946 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 349 deaths.

Overall, Somalia has secured enough vaccines from the COVAX initiative to vaccinate at least 20 per cent of its population, in phases. The Federal Government of Somalia is currently assessing ways to provide vaccines for more people.

The Ministry of Health will build on its extensive, long experience in conducting mass vaccination drives, educate the public in order to gain their support and raise awareness about the value and effectiveness of the vaccine, and

utilize existing cold chain supply systems to distribute the vaccines.

Social mobilizers will be deployed to communities to encourage use of the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is recognized that the vaccines have helped reduce the spread of the coronavirus, it is also important to reinforce the preventive measures.

"We encourage people to take the vaccine," Mr. Swan said. "We encourage people to continue with all possible preventive measures – hand washing, mask wearing, social distancing. COVID is still a serious threat. We need to stay vigilant. The vaccine will help, but it is not the only solution."

The COVAX initiative is supported by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), the World Health Organization, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).





SOMALIA'S 2021 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN SEEKS \$1.09 BILLION

The Government of Somalia and its international partners seek \$1.09 billion to provide life-saving assistance to four million vulnerable people affected by a worsening humanitarian situation around the country.

“We are launching the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan today, in what is a critical time for Somalia,” the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Adam Abdelmoula, said at the launch of the country’s Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, on Monday.

“In addition to the protracted humanitarian and protection crises that we have seen over the years, needs continue to escalate exponentially in more locations across the country,” he added. “I urge donors to contribute early to this plan so that we can quickly provide life-saving assistance to millions of the most vulnerable people across Somalia.”

The \$1.09 billion represents a slight increase from the \$1.01 billion sought for the 2020 HRP, while the number of people targeted for assistance this year is four million. The total number of people in need this year is expected to increase to 5.9 million.

Last year, the HRP sought to assist three million people with humanitarian aid, and reached 2.3 million of them. Donors

provided 82 per cent of the resources that were needed.

The 2021 appeal aims to provide life-saving assistance across Somalia, covering a wide range of emergency interventions including education, food security and livelihoods, health, logistics, non-food items and emergency shelter, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene.

Complementary to Somalia’s Recovery and Resilience Framework for 2019-2021, the HRP also seeks to put in place measures and structures to increase the long-term resilience of Somalis to help them withstand the factors which lead to requiring humanitarian aid – a point highlighted the senior representative of the Federal Government of Somalia at the launch.

“This 2021 response plan clearly emphasizes the Government’s position that the humanitarian needs in Somalia cannot be addressed by the delivery of life-saving assistance alone and it highlights that there are opportunities for development actors to contribute to the strengthening resilience of the Somalis,” said the Director-General of Somalia’s Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Ahmed Abukar Ahmed.

Worsening situation

The humanitarian situation in Somalia is expected to deteriorate in 2021. This is due to continuing factors from previous years, which were characterized by a so-called ‘triple threat’ of COVID-19, a desert locust infestation and erratic weather and climate shocks, with the latter including droughts and extensive flooding. This is in

addition to the impact of conflict in parts of the country.

“Food insecurity is expected to worsen, driven by the effects of localized floods, below-average rainfall and a worsening desert locust infestation, with an estimated 2.7 million people expected to face crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity by mid-2021,” said Mr. Abdelmoula, who also serves as the UN Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia.

“Erratic weather patterns are expected to continue in 2021, including the anticipated La Niña early in the year, with a likelihood of drought conditions developing,” he continued. “Already, pre-drought conditions have been reported in several states.”

The 2021 HRP prioritizes assistance to the most severely vulnerable people, including one million children under the age of five who are at risk of acute malnutrition and severe malnourishment.

The assistance includes the provision of life saving food assistance for 3.1 million internally displaced peoples and persons in crisis and emergency phases of food insecurity, while also increasing their access to basic services and livelihood support.



Speaking at the launch via video conference on behalf of humanitarian donors, the Netherlands' Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Horn of Africa, Marieke Denissen, stressed the need to protect vulnerable and at-risk communities.

"We remain concerned about the protection violations that persist in Somalia, forcing people to flee, exposing them to multiple risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, and for those already displaced, we see cases of eviction resulting in even larger vulnerability," she said.

Along with other humanitarian platforms, the HRP is also designed to help facilitate an 'enabling environment' for the delivery of humanitarian work.

The 2021 HRP notes that with a range of practical difficulties such as insurgency, poor infrastructure and widespread insecurity hindering the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver their proposed programmes, previous HRP's have only partially met this goal.

In 2020, humanitarian response operations in Somalia were heavily affected by insecurity. There were 255 reported incidents in which 15 humanitarian workers were killed, negatively impacting the delivery of assistance to those most in need. In addition, the insecurity hindered the delivery of assistance rendering main supply routes impassable and forcing partners to rely heavily on air transport to reach vulnerable communities.



NEW UN DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR SOMALIA ARRIVES IN MOGADISHU

The new Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG), Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, arrived in Mogadishu to assume her duties with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

"I am honored by the opportunity to join the United Nations in Somalia, especially at this important time as the country prepares for the upcoming electoral process," said Ms. Gbeho. "I am looking forward to engaging with the Somali people and their leaders, and all regional and international partners of Somalia, in working toward sustainable progress in the country."

SRSR James Swan commented, "I am delighted to have Ms. Gbeho join our United Nations team, where she will play a leading role in UNSOM's work in the political, electoral, human rights, rule of law, and security areas."

Ms. Gbeho brings more than 25 years of experience in strategic planning, coordination and management in political, development and humanitarian affairs at United Nations Headquarters and in field operations in Angola, Cambodia, Iraq, Namibia, Somalia and Southern Sudan. Prior to UNSOM, Ms. Gbeho served as Deputy Joint Special Representative of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).



ON INTERNATIONAL DAY, THE UN CALLS FOR SOMALI WOMEN'S ENHANCED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the United Nations in Somalia commends Somali women for their immense contributions to peace and development.

UN also calls for decisive action by Somali leaders to ensure gender equality and full participation of women in all spheres of life.

"Throughout the years, Somali women have played an extraordinary role in reconciliation, peacebuilding, and development," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan. "In my conversations with Somalis, they often tell me that women are the backbone of the Somali society. It is time for this to be recognized and translated into concrete actions and opportunities for Somali women to participate in political decision-making and enhance their leadership abilities."

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is 'Women in leadership:

Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world'. As Somalia experiences a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations in Somalia acknowledges the tremendous efforts of Somali women who joined the national response efforts to keep families and communities safe.

"While applauding women's resilience, we should also remember that in Somalia and elsewhere in the world, the pandemic affects women and girls disproportionately, as they face increased economic uncertainty, violence, and insecurity. More needs to be done in terms of prevention but also to ensure there are adequate services available for victims and survivors," said Mr. Swan.

Ahead of Somalia's upcoming elections, the United Nations in Somalia urges all Somali stakeholders to honour the commitment made to implement the agreed 30 per cent women's quota when electing the representation for the Upper House and 11th Parliament.

International Women's Day has been observed around the world since 1975, to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality.

TOP UN OFFICIALS PAY TRIBUTE TO

SOMALIS' COURAGE AND RESILIENCE



As Somalia crosses its 30th anniversary since the outbreak of its civil war, senior United Nations officials today paid tribute to the courage and resilience of Somali citizens who have persevered through some of the “toughest conditions in any country on the planet over the past three decades.”

“While enormous challenges remain and the road ahead, at times, looks long and hilly, it is important to acknowledge the progress that has been made,” said the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan.

“If we look at a range of measures – governance, the functioning of national and Federal Member State institutions, private sector investment, public financial management, delivery of services, to name a few – Somalia begins 2021 in a better place than 2011, and a better place than 2001, and a better place than the end of January 1991,” he added, referring to the collapse of the government of President Siad Barre in January 1991.

The UN envoy was addressing the media at a virtual press conference in Mogadishu, at which he and other senior UN officials spoke about the range of the world body’s support over the past year but also for 2021.

With Mr. Swan – who also heads the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) – was the UN Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Adam Abdelmoula, who also serves as Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator for the country, and, from Nairobi, the Head of the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), Assistant Secretary-General Lisa Filipetto.

In addition to UNSOS and UNSOM, there are more than 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes working with Somalis in a wide range of areas. These include long-term development and immediate humanitarian needs, as well as UNSOM’s ‘good offices,’ which refer to its mediating role in resolving differences and disputes.

“I also want to stress that, ultimately, the work of the United Nations is an expression of objectives communicated by the broader international community,” Mr. Swan said.

“Most of the programmatic work is funded through generous contributions by donor countries that have expressed eagerness to contribute to progress in Somalia and use UN entities as a vehicle for channeling that support to Somalis,” he added. “So, really, while we speak of the United Nations, in this case it genuinely does represent a broader commitment of the international community, through our Organization, to help the Somali people.”

Somali elections

While the UN family’s work in the Horn of Africa country was highlighted throughout the media briefing, Somalia’s current electoral situation also figured prominently.

Over recent months, UNSOM has been involved in efforts to advance the country’s national elections.

Along with other international partners, the UN Mission has been urging Somalia’s political leaders to pursue compromise and dialogue to progress with the implementation of an electoral agreement that had been reached on 17 September last year – and which is currently at an impasse.

“In collective meetings with other international partners, and in bilateral meetings, we have stressed the importance of reaching a common understanding on next steps prior to February 8, in order to avoid any uncertainty,” Mr. Swan said,



adding that on various occasions the international partners have expressed their opposition to parallel or alternative processes, and made clear that there must be no violence.

“We continue to urge Somali leaders [to show] goodwill, to redouble their efforts to resolve the outstanding issues of implementation of the electoral process and resolve those issues through dialogue and to reach agreement on the way forward for the good of the country” Mr. Swan said.

‘Triple shock’

In his remarks at the virtual press conference, Mr. Abdelmoula spoke of the wide range of support provided by the world body in Somalia’s development and humanitarian spheres, noting both challenges and progress.

He said Somalia had begun 2021 with a number of challenges similar to those which afflicted it in 2020. These are the so-called ‘triple shock’ of climate change, which includes floods and droughts; a desert locust outbreak; and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Nations provided aid, including nutrition supplies and food assistance, to 120,000 people affected when Cyclone Gati made landfall in Puntland’s Bari region in November last year. The storm was one of the strongest cyclones to affect Somalia in decades.

The desert locust infestation affecting Somalia – which “has lived up to its biblical connotations,” according to Mr. Abdelmoula – has affected almost 700,000 people and close to 300,000 hectares of land. The UN official said the UN had, so far, provided support to some 25,900 farming households and sprayed more than 110,000 hectares of land with biopesticides.

On COVID-19, the UN has supported Somalia’s fragile health system with its response. This has involved buttressing the government’s health machinery with testing laboratories, specialized isolation centres, training of more than 5,000 frontline health workers and the distribution of thousands

of sets of personal protective equipment.

“All of these steps have also had a longer-term impact,” Mr. Abdelmoula said. “They have helped build and reinforce the health system – both improving the health of Somalis and helping train health ministry and medical personnel for the longer-term.”

The UN Deputy Special Representative also highlighted how COVID-19 had an effect beyond Somalis’ health and well-being, with the country’s education sector also hard-hit. The United Nations has provided education-in-emergency assistance to close to 540,000 children.

“These are just some of examples of where we have been able to make a small difference. But this is not about patting ourselves on the back or resting on any laurels,” Mr. Abdelmoula said. “The factors that went into the ‘triple shock’ have not gone away – in fact, they will exacerbate humanitarian needs this year. With our partners, we will need to step up these efforts in reaching the most vulnerable people affected.”

On the economic front, the ‘triple shock’ has disrupted the trajectory of Somalia towards economic recovery, but there are signs of hope.

“Somalia continues to make steady progress under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries – or HIPC – Initiative. Somalia’s debt stood at \$5.3 billion at the end of 2018. This debt will be reduced to \$557 million if Somalia achieves the Completion Point expected in 2023,” Mr. Abdelmoula said.

Logistic support

In her remarks to the media, Ms. Filipetto outlined how UNSOS had been established 11 years ago by the UN Security Council to provide logistic support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

Since then, it had received additional responsibilities, including providing support to the Somali security forces, UNSOM and, more generally, to the UN family and international community

“Our prime role,” she said, “is to support Somalia’s efforts to achieve peace, stability and development for its people, with a particular focus on our



contribution to the security space.”

UNSOS currently supports 11,000 Somali National Army (SNA) troops in the field with logistical support that includes food, fuel, water, defensive construction equipment, tents and communications, as well as medical evacuation from the battlefield. The number of troops may rise by 3,000 this year, including 1,000 police officers

It provides similar support to close to 20,000 AMISOM military and police personnel, and also handles logistic and administrative support to UNSOM, and, on occasion, supports development and humanitarian partners and the international community

“If you see a UN plane flying, that’s an UNSOS effort. We maintain and manage all our fleet. The fleet conveys cargo and people around the country,” Ms. Filipetto said.

UNSOS has also constructed sector hubs and other bases for AMISOM around Somalia, as well as UN facilities and offices. It is currently upgrading airstrips in the cities of Baidoa and Belet Weyne, in light of its own use of them but also in the hope that in upgrading those airstrips, commercial operators can also use them to the benefit of Somalis.

The UN official ended her remarks by noting UNSOS’ strong partnerships with Somalia’s Federal Government and Federal Member States, AMISOM and the African Union, and UN operations in the country.

“It’s very much a collaborative effort to heavy-lift all the logistics that’s required for nearly 30,000 troops in the battlefield,” Ms. Filipetto said. “We see ourselves as part of transition; eventually, we hope that there won’t be need for our services, when Somali security forces take over the lead for security they’ll manage this themselves.

For the full transcript of the Press Conference, please click [here](#)





UN OFFICIALS NOTE WIDE-RANGING SUPPORT TO SOMALILAND

The long-running and wide-ranging relationship between the United Nations and Somaliland came to the fore during a recent visit of senior officials from the world body to its capital, Hargeisa.

“We arrived yesterday and had the opportunity to meet with senior government officials and members of civil society, and the National Electoral Committee, before meeting with President [Muse] Bihi [Abdi] and members of his cabinet this morning,” the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, said in a media statement today.

“We are very pleased to be able to discuss the work of the United Nations in Somaliland in helping to address practical issues affecting the people of Somaliland,” he added. “Our partnership dates back to

1991, and we have remained committed since then through the most difficult times and the better times.”

The UN envoy was in Hargeisa with officials from other parts of the UN family with operations in Somaliland – the Country Director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), Cesar Arroyo; the Representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Johann Siffointe; and the Country Programme Manager for UN Women, Sadiq Syed.

Currently, more than 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes operate throughout Somaliland.

“UN support is wide-ranging. It includes humanitarian and development help, and my colleagues and I were able to see some of that support first-hand with a visit to a World Food Programme-operated nutrition and medical centre,” Mr. Swan said.

“At that centre,” he continued, “we observed other UN agencies that are providing integrated food, nutrition and health support to babies, young children and their mothers.

The UN envoy was referring to a visit on Tuesday to the Mohamed Moge nutrition

centre in Hargeisa, one of 47 fixed centres in Somaliland where WFP – together with cooperating partner Health Poverty Action and the Somaliland Ministry of Health Development – has a targeted supplementary feeding programme as well as mother and child health and nutrition programme.

In addition, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) provides support to severely malnourished children under the age of five in an outpatient therapeutic programme. A total of 1,354 beneficiaries are currently supported at the Mohamed Moge location.

Wide-ranging support

The UN Special Representative also noted WFP’s commitment to supporting long-term food security in Somaliland. It invests in safety nets, food systems enhancements and livelihoods programmes that complement and build on its humanitarian relief portfolio, including through the provision of food relief, nutrition and school feeding which supports hundreds of thousands of food-insecure people.

WFP’s impact on the local economy was also highlighted. The food relief agency uses the international port in Berbera,



with the facility forming part of a critical corridor serving its operations, not just locally but also around the wider region of the Horn of Africa.

“More than a quarter of a million metric tons of humanitarian assistance cargo passed through Berbera last year,” Mr. Swan said. “Between 2019-2020, the World Food Programme injected more than \$50 million into the economy of Somaliland in the form of port fees, warehouse costs and transport charges.”

UNHCR is mandated to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and other displaced people. In Somaliland last year, its activities encompassed education, healthcare, livelihoods and shelter, among other sectors.

“Specifically, UNHCR has provided support in rehabilitating and equipping schools, rehabilitating and equipping health centres, including Hargeisa and Berbera hospitals, and offering business grants and vocational training,” Mr. Swan said.

Gender equality also figures in the UN family’s support to Somaliland. UN Women is working closely with the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family and civil society to advocate in this area.

“UN Women has been supporting both the ministry and civil society groups in promoting women’s political participation as well as organizing community dialogues on gender issues, with a focus on addressing negative social norms,” Mr. Swan said. “UN Women is also partnering with the Somaliland Women Lawyers Association to carry out advocacy on women’s access to justice.”

In his remarks, the UN Special Representative flagged Somaliland’s vulnerability to recurrent climatic shocks, noting the

potential of an acute drought due to the poor Deyr rainy season last year.

In this respect, he spoke about the UNICEF’s work with Somaliland authorities to build resilience among communities in drought-prone areas. Both have been working with the private sector to construct and install permanent water supply systems so that women and children still have access to clean water in times of drought.

“To date, 18 permanent water systems have been built and rehabilitated across Somaliland, reaching over 200,000 people,” Mr. Swan said. “And these are in addition to the UN-Habitat programme, supported by the European Union, to construct the new pipeline from the Geed Deeble well field to Hargeisa.”

The 23 kilometre water supply pipeline from Geed Deeble to Hargeisa is expected to increase the amount of water available

for the capital from nine million to 14.5 million litres per day. The project is implemented by UN-Habitat, in partnership with the Hargeisa Water Agency and the Somaliland Ministry of Water Resources, with the overall objective of improving access to safe and affordable water and the livelihoods of vulnerable households in urban and peri-urban areas.

Upcoming elections

The UN Special Representative and President Bihi also spoke of the Somaliland’s forthcoming parliamentary and local elections, which were recently scheduled for 31 May, following confirmation by the Guurti, or the House of Elders, as the upper house of Somaliland’s parliament is known.

“All of Somaliland’s partners look forward to these elections,” Mr. Swan said. “We look forward to the National Electoral Commission’s work facilitating successful elections at the end of May.”

Earlier on Wednesday, the UN envoy had visited the headquarters of Somaliland’s National Electoral Commission (NEC), where he had discussions with some of its commissioners.

In his media statement, he said that all indications from the NEC are that the technical work in preparation for the elections is well-advanced and that voter registration has been a major exercise, but has been carried out in a comprehensive manner reaching out across the regions.

“We urge an inclusive and transparent process,” he added.

While in Hargeisa, the UN envoy and other members of the delegation also met with the Chair of Somaliland’s Human Rights Commission, as well as representatives of local civil society groups and international partners present in the city.





UN FOCUSES ON HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN SOUTH WEST STATE

With her ten children, Fatuma Isaq Mohamed's life is a daily struggle.

This is not our land and we don't know how long we will be here," she says, while sitting outside a makeshift house of orange plastic and sticks, flanked by some of her children, at the Haatafo camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Baidoa, the interim capital of Somalia's South West State.

"Our problems and needs in this camp

are many," the 45-year-old adds. "We desperately need food and water. To survive, I occasionally do manual jobs around the camp to give me an income. However, it is irregular and not sufficient for our upkeep."

Like many others in the Haatafo camp, Fatuma fled from fighting and violence in Diinsoor, her hometown, located in South West State's Bay region some four years ago.

Since then, she and her children have lived a life of uncertainty, without basic protections.

Conflict and violence have prompted many to flee to camps like Haatafo. But

such camps are also the residence of thousands of other people who have been displaced by drought and floods which have deprived them of both their home and their livelihoods.

Since 2000, Somalia has had 19 severe floods and 17 bouts of drought – 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.

These factors have meant that Somalia has one of the highest numbers of IDPs in the



world. In 2019, the country had 2.6 million, with most of them requiring humanitarian assistance.

In South West State alone, there are some 350 camps for the internally displaced, making it one of the worst-affected of the country's Federal Member States when it comes to displacement.

Finding solutions

The UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Adam Abdelmoula, was recently in Haatafo camp to meet with some of its residents and hear directly from them about their situation.

The challenges he heard about were wide-ranging – poor housing, lack of food and water, shortage of medicines, limited education and job opportunities and, for many families, instability.

In his interactions, Mr. Abdelmoula, who also serves as the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, assured the IDPs of the UN's commitment to help improve their lives.

The United Nations family is teaming up with the Federal Government of Somalia to implement a new three-year project which exclusively targets IDPs. Titled Saameynta, or 'impact,' the joint project seeks to scale up durable solutions to displaced persons in Baidoa, as well as Bosasso in Puntland and Belet Weyne in Hirshabelle.

"The idea is that this project will target 100,000 internally displaced people to be settled properly and provided with social services and job opportunities," Mr. Abdelmoula told a group of IDP community leaders during his visit.

In their exchange with the UN official, the community leaders echoed the concerns of the residents the UN official had met with – the lack of health facilities, insufficient food and limited education options – as the main challenges for IDPs in Baidoa. Women community leaders also identified the absence of obstetric services and insecurity within the camps as their biggest issues.

Humanitarian situation

Mr. Abdelmoula and his delegation later met with the South West State's Speaker of Parliament, Ali Said Fiqi, and some government cabinet members, and discussed the overall humanitarian situation, as well as security and development issues.

"We discussed IDPs living in Baidoa and how their lives could be improved. We had a very fruitful meeting in which we agreed on how best to address the humanitarian situation in the South West State of Somalia," Mr. Fiqi, who was also acting President of South West State at the time, said at a press conference after the meeting.

At the press conference, the UN deputy envoy said it was important to see and hear first-hand from South West State's IDPs and the local authorities leading efforts to help them in order to discuss the rollout of Saameynta.

"This was a unique privilege to visit Baidoa and to also visit the internally displaced communities around the city and to have an exchange with the Speaker about how we could work together to find durable solutions to some of the chronic humanitarian challenges that the South West State is facing," Mr. Abdelmoula said.

In addition to hailing the efforts of the South West State authorities to address the perennial challenges facing displaced people, he emphasized the importance of breaking away from a dependency on temporary fixes and looking to the entire humanitarian-development-peace nexus to find longer-term solutions.

The nexus refers to the approach that humanitarian relief, development programmes and peacebuilding are not serial processes – rather, that they are all needed at the same time when aid is planned and financed.

In their discussions, Mr. Fiqi and Mr. Abdelmoula also covered the humanitarian situation in Hudur, a town north of Baidoa, which is facing an acute shortage of food, humanitarian supplies and commercial goods as a result of an economic blockade imposed by Al-Shabaab.

The terrorist group has cut off the main supply route to the town and is denying passage of any goods. The UN deputy envoy said the international humanitarian community would do whatever was possible to assist with humanitarian aid to Hudur, as well as consider longer-term options.

The Saameynta project is expected to be launched in early 2021.

