



United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)

Briefing to the UN Security Council
by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia
Mr. Michael Keating

27 September 2016, New York

Mr. President,

Much has happened since the Council visited Mogadishu on 19 May. Let me begin immediately with what is no doubt for all of us the immediate concern – the electoral process – before I turn to other related developments in Somalia.

About 24 hours ago, the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team, or FIEIT, announced that Somalia's electoral process will require an additional 30 days, culminating in the election of a new president of the Federal Republic by the end of November.

The renewed delay raises a number of fears. Let me name just two of them – that the process is being politically manipulated; and that this delay may only be one of yet further 'rolling delays'.

The scope for political manipulation of the process remains high. But, having closely accompanied the work of the FIEIT and its regional counterparts, the State Indirect Electoral Implementation Teams, or SIEITs, I believe that this further delay was not orchestrated by any actor seeking immediate political benefit. Indeed, the FIEIT insisted it needs more time over the objections of powerful political actors, including presidential candidates, the international community and this very Council. The President has actually shared his concern about the delay with me, as have other related actors.

This Council repeatedly stressed that Somalia must avoid an extension of the constitutionally mandated term limits. But the Council has also emphasised the importance of a transparent, inclusive, fair and credible process that yields a Somali government and parliament enjoying enhanced legitimacy. And there is a tension between doing this as thoroughly as possible and doing it on time.

Parliamentary elections will now take place between 23 October and 10 November, and the Presidential election by 30 November.

What is most critical at this point is that the new extension does not create political space for manipulation or disruption by spoilers. Rather, the urgency and momentum must be maintained and the additional time used to ensure that the process is as transparent and credible as possible.

Much preparatory work has been completed and implementation has in fact commenced. Registration of the 14,000 delegates and hundreds of parliamentary candidates is in progress. In parallel, the nomination of candidates for the new federal Upper House is underway.

There is a further challenge. Under the constitution, the mandate of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was to have ended by 10 September. This Council, in its presidential statement of 19 August, noted the NLF's consensual decision to extend the current mandates of the federal institutions to respect the electoral calendar adopted in early August. Against the backdrop of the additional delay, it will nonetheless be critical to avoid an institutional vacuum – while at the same time stressing that this should be a de facto caretaker period, with no major decisions or declarations by any of the existing institutions.

Mr. President,

The 2016 electoral process is a novel and exciting experience for a country that last held national elections in 1969.

It is best described as a political process with electoral features, rather than just as an 'election'.

Every aspect of the electoral model has been politically negotiated, with many painful compromises involved between interest groups and clans. There has been a tendency by many actors to try and resolve long-standing and highly complex political issues through this process – including, to name just a few, the status of the Federal Capital; Somaliland; Hiraaan and Middle Shabelle; the role of political parties; corruption and illicit financial flows; the rights of minorities; and women's long fight for justice and equality.

The electoral model is imperfect. No-one is entirely happy with it, and that may be a good sign. It is literally extraordinary, a one-off, never to be repeated again. It took over a year to fashion it, in an exhaustive process that included unprecedented public consultations.

And yet, this process has electoral features that are critical to Somalia's aspiration to undertake one-person one-vote elections in 2020 – and that signify the overall progress that Somalia has made since 2012.

These features include: the election of a new Upper House on a geographical, not just clan, basis; a step away from the so-called '4.5 formula'; the conduct of the election in at least

five locations around the country, not just Mogadishu; genuine competition for seats in both houses; the establishment of an independent implementation body; and the setting of clear rules of the game.

They also include the broadening of the Electoral College from just 135 men in 2012 to more than 14,000 citizens, 30% of whom must be women and 20% of them youth. And there has been a number of hard-won provisions to realise the commitment made by the NLF to 30% seats being reserved for women.

Even though the numbers involved may seem relatively modest, this is a complicated process, requiring a high degree of dedication, organisational capacity and some bravery to implement.

The security and logistical challenges alone are considerable; allow me to pay tribute here to AMISOM and Somali security authorities for planning and protecting the process. There are likely to be attacks by Al Shabaab, and possibly violence instigated by others.

The process includes not just a secret ballot and instantaneous communication of results, but also other measures, put in place with UN technical support to bolster the credibility of the process. These include a code of conduct for all candidates, parliamentary and presidential; creation of an electoral dispute mechanism. The latter is now being established with, significantly, the inclusion of advisors provided by the international community. There are also going to be electoral monitors provided by the AU, EU, IGAD, LAS, and OIC, as well as local Somali organizations.

All of this has been organized at great speed, in the absence of national institutional capacity, and with little local experience of organising anything on this scale for many decades.

I am under no illusions about the challenges ahead and the scope for things to go awry. But if we remain vigilant and unified, this process could mark a positive, watershed moment for Somalia.

Mr. President,

The road to peace and stability in Somalia is still a long one.

The FIEIT's declaration that the voting for the regions of Hiraan and Middle Shabelle should take place in Mogadishu rather than in those two regions, could exacerbate clan differences related to the formation of the last remaining proto-federal member state. Efforts must therefore continue to advance an inclusive and ultimately, sustainable state formation process in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle. Allow me to recognize IGAD's valid efforts in this regard.

Violence remains a feature of life for too many people. Al Shabaab has continued to mount spectacular attacks against soft targets, notably in Mogadishu. The most egregious of

these were on 21 August in Galkayo and on 30 August against the YSL hotel in Mogadishu. Civilians have been the main victims.

These attacks have underscored the urgency both of efforts to degrade, defeat and dismantle Al Shabaab, and to address the conditions that make it possible for the group to survive.

AMISOM remains vital to Somalia's security. Its troops are paying a heavy price to bring security to the country. They need to be supported in their effort to take the fight to Al Shabaab-controlled areas.

Mr. President,

Somalia has also seen the repatriation of an unprecedented number of refugees from Dadaab in neighbouring Kenya. This has raised anxieties about Somalia's ability to absorb returnees, given an internally displaced population already estimated at more than 1 million, and extremely fragile host communities. Efforts are underway, involving federal and federal member state authorities as well as the UN, to pursue durable solutions in this respect.

Concerns are also increasing about the growing number of people – now close to 5 million – suffering from malnutrition and food insecurity. I regret to say that only 32 per cent of the Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded at this point.

And Somalis continue to face multiple human rights deficits. On 4 September, UNSOM with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a public report on Freedom of Expression. While significant, commendable legal and institutional measures are being put in place by the Somali leadership, including the passage of the National Human Rights Commission Law, the fact is that harassment and intimidation of journalists, MPs and civil society actors continue.

The situation of women and children is of grave concern, including children captured from Al Shabaab and sentenced to death. The July visit of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict reinforced advocacy with both the Federal Government and the Government of Puntland regarding the need to uphold international law, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Somalia ratified last year. Yesterday, the Puntland authorities told my Deputy that they would immediately transfer all children under 15 to a rehabilitation centre and revisit the death sentences that were handed down.

Mr. President,

These challenges are considerable. But, crucially, progress is being made in almost every domain.

On 10 September, IGAD held a meeting of heads of state and government in Mogadishu – the first of such summit on Somali soil in 42 years. The significance of this, and its psychological impact, should not be underestimated.

Central to continued progress will be the arduous hard task of establishing institutions that are both capable and that are trusted by all Somalis. Accountable governance and capacity across the board is at the heart of the state-building agenda. The good news is that many of the conflicts between clans and power brokers that have plagued Somalia over the last decades are now being converted into politics. Administrative capacity is gradually being established around the emerging federal architecture; an architecture that did not exist a few years ago. And the political basis for that institutional capacity, whether to strengthen the rule of law, generate revenues, provide public services, fight corruption or improve security, is broadening.

An important development has been the emergence of the National Leadership Forum as a key decision-making body. Its status will need to be resolved, like so much else, through the constitutional review. But its political value, representing both federal and state-level political leaders, as a forum for bringing the country's leadership together is beyond doubt.

Recently, this has been evident in the security field, not only in approving the New Policing Model, consistent with Somalia's federal architecture, but in its last meeting two weeks ago, by deciding to establish a National Security Committee.

That provides the international community a docking point for advancing a comprehensive approach to security encompassing policing, community recovery and extension of state authority, and countering violent extremism. I am delighted that the Federal Government issued a national strategy and action plan on preventing and countering violent extremism only two weeks ago.

A major priority now is to define and implement a plan for structuring and strengthening Somali National Security Forces, at the same time as strengthening the capacity of security forces accompanying AMISOM in taking on Al-Shabaab. The AU Commissioner for Peace & Security has said that AMISOM's transition will begin in October 2018. So there is no time to lose to build capable, accountable and affordable security forces trusted by all Somalis.

Other key priorities beyond the electoral process include the review and finalization of the Federal Constitution, agreement on revenue and resource management and sharing, preparations for one-person, one-vote elections in 2020, which will be a formidable undertaking, and steps to attract both private and public international investment, including through debt relief. There is no shortage of tasks at hand – but progress towards them is encouraging.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by thanking members of this Council for their unified position on Somalia, and for the advice and support that I continue to receive.

We are determined to ensure that the electoral process is implemented, fully aware of the risks with no further delays and we are aware of the consequences, if it is not seen as legitimate and complete. But if all goes well, the stage is set for Somalis to take their country to a new level of membership of the international community in the coming months.

Thank you.