

21 December 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,  
President of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Joint Visit of the President of the General Assembly and the  
Secretary-General to Somalia**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am convening today's meeting to brief you on the joint official visit that I and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had undertaken on 9 December to Somalia.

This represents the first ever joint visit of a President of the General Assembly and a Secretary General to Somalia. It is also the first time a President of the General Assembly has visited Somalia while in office. I thank the Government of Qatar for providing logistic support to facilitate this important trip.

The Secretary-General and I felt that it was very important to visit the country, to demonstrate that the United Nations stands with the Somalis at this critical moment.

For more than two decades, the people of Somalia have been going through very painful and difficult period of violence, conflict and civil strife, which has claimed the lives of many civilians. Somalis have experienced untold suffering and severe devastation of their country's resources.

During this past summer, the humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorated. Famine was declared in six areas of Somalia.

In June, the Kampala Accord was signed between the President and the Speaker. In August, the insurgents of Al Shabaab were forced to withdraw from the Capital. The following month, in September, the Transitional Federal Government and its partners agreed on an inclusive Roadmap for ending the transition. The Roadmap includes finalization and adoption of the Constitution, parliamentary reform, and improvements in governance and security.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is continuing to consolidate its control over the Capital, and Kenya is also on board to support the Transitional Federal Government.

From October onwards, there has been a slight sign of improvement in the situation in Somalia. This change is due to increased humanitarian assistance. Three of the six regions were lifted out of famine in mid-November, thanks to the efforts of international and local aid workers on the ground.

This is the moment, therefore, to seize this newly created window of opportunity. This is our opening to be able to support Somali efforts to promote national reconciliation and inclusive political process. Now is the time to act and to make this process happen for real.

In Mogadishu, Secretary-General Ban and I held meetings with H.E. President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, H.E. Dr. Adiweli Mohamed Ali, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government and H.E. Sharif Hassan Sheikh, Speaker of the Transitional Federal Parliament. We discussed a wide range of issues including the humanitarian and security situation and the implementation of the Somali Roadmap.

As President of the General Assembly and on behalf of the Member States of the United Nations, I extended to the Government and the people of Somalia my commitment to help ensure a better, safer and more prosperous tomorrow.

We urged the Somali authorities to provide exemplary leadership and to intensify efforts to promote full national reconciliation. We encouraged them to abide by their commitment to complete the transitional tasks set out by the Roadmap, by the end of the extended Transitional period on 20 August 2012. We made it clear that while the United Nations and the international community stand ready to offer whatever assistance they can, it is ultimately up to the Somalis to determine whether or not the roadmap succeeds.

The Secretary-General and I then visited the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya, which is the largest one providing shelters for Somali refugees. We extended our gratitude to the Government of Kenya for its generous support. We were deeply saddened by their suffering. I would reiterate that our interlocutors also should be reminded that the humanitarian needs remain important and we have to mobilize to address them. In order to assess the impact of famine and disease in the region, I accompanied my senior advisor on humanitarian and public health, a physician who has been conducting medical research and relief work in the Horn of Africa for many decades.

During our meeting with international and local aid workers there, I commended their life-saving work on the ground. I stressed that their security and safety is also a top priority.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by AMISOM. I pay tribute to AMISOM troop contributors for their sacrifice and steadfast commitment to peace in Somalia. AMISOM requires further support. I encourage Member States to extend whatever necessary to support them.

I also commend the efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and all other UN personnel and Civil Society members. Each of their staff is doing an extraordinary job trying to save lives and to help build local capacities.

It is important to stress here, though, that they must be able to continue to perform their missions unhampered. I urge Al-Shabaab and other parties to respect the humanitarian law.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Mahiga, is leading with great professionalism. I welcome the Secretary-General's announcement that the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) lead by Mr. Mahiga and his core team will relocate to Mogadishu next month. I extend all my support to Mr. Mahiga and his office, as well as the entire UN country team working closely to support the TFG's efforts in governance, recovery, development and capacity building.

In closing, I would say that despite some recent improvements, the security situation in Somalia is still challenging.

Our visit sent a very important message of support and goodwill to the Somalis, from the Membership of the United Nations General Assembly and the entire UN system.

I believe that we are all working towards the same goal, to make Somalia a safe and secure country. So let us all join our efforts to achieve peace for Somalia and the horn of Africa.

Thank you.