

Briefing on Somalia

US Congress – House of Representatives

Statement of SRSG Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah

25 June 2009, Rayburn building

•Chairman Payne,

•Congressman Smith,

•Members of the committee,

•Ladies and gentlemen,

•First of all, my congratulations and thanks to chairman Payne for his initiative in convening this meeting. My thanks and congratulations to all participants, Somalis – Mr. Charge d'Affaires and the president of Puntland - and their friends, represented here by the African Union delegate, Fred N. Gateretse, the Minister of Defense of Uganda, Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, and to the staff of the chairman.

•The priority of this hearing is to put emphasis on the interests of the population. Its timing is important in bringing the issue of the suffering of the Somalis to the heart of international concerns. In this context, Somalia has been my assignment for the last 20 months, and I am not an expert or a specialist on the country. And I have no ambition to attempt being a specialist. My modest aspiration is with others to

contribute to bringing stability and peace to a devastated country.

- The International community, including the UN, has to face this long running crisis, to end the policy of double standard with intervention a la carte. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has always stated that Somalis should be an international priority.

- Somalis deserve to live in peace like other Africans. There is no reason to desesperate. War will end, like those of Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone etc. etc.

AMISOM troops - from Uganda and Burundi – have lived civil wars in their own countries. Their presence in Somalia to help stability is an eloquent testimony that there is always a way out, a peaceful solution.

- This hearing should also discuss current issues of extremism, which is threatening internal security in Somalia, but also security in the IGAD region, and indeed that of the world at large. The same is true of piracy. Its origins, causes and consequences on the people, the countries and the whole world are known. I would like just to point out that the international maritime presence off the coast of Somalia is a welcome show of solidarity with people and countries and the region in East Africa.

- Addressing the Somali crisis only as a technical issue is reductionist. People and their concerns, including their protection against abuse and impunity, should remain at the heart of our preoccupations. They deserve active action, and the issue of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is at stake. Peace in the country is taken hostage by different actors – international and external. There is a need to liberate the Somalis

from their grip. Insecurity has become a source of revenue and power.

- Indeed, Somalia is a difficult case, but challenges always exist. They should not be a reason for non-action. Moreover, past failures should not discourage from taking new and future actions to help the people, and to hold up to fighting impunity and various abuses against civilians. The International community should never surrender its obligation. As we all know, the price of appeasement has often been very high, and still could be.

- Today, the situation is serious due to external interferences and to neglect by the International Community. Still, the situation can and shall be addressed, and the spiral downward reversed. There is need for effective action now, because: when if not now, and who, if not the International Community, the United States? Bad things happen only if good people do nothing.

- Since 8 May, an armed group is trying to topple by force a legal and legitimate Government. This violent action is against African Union and United Nations Security Council resolutions and policy respectively. In this context, I am pleased to recognize the positive role played by the US Government in its support for stability in Somalia. The Djibouti Agreement, signed last August, has been and remains open to all those who would like to address the crisis through peaceful means. This was demonstrated last weekend with the signing of an agreement of political cooperation between the Government and a group called Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaa.

- Those opposed to peace keep voicing different claims. They have stated over and over that their only motivation in waging the war was to combat Ethiopian presence in Somalia. On 15 January 2009, all Ethiopian troops have withdrawn completely from the country. However, the killings of Somalis by Somalis continue unabated.

- Somalis should discuss amongst themselves in their country the way towards lasting peace. The International community can and should help, and is ready to support.

President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has been making attempts to reach out, and all serious external partners support this approach.

- It should however be clear that no group or individual should have a veto power on the future of the whole country. Those who push for a radical agenda happen to be on the United Nations Security Council list of terrorists presumably for their past activities in Asia. I am ready to help, if they make the necessary steps to qualify for the lifting of their names from that list. The ball is in their camp.

- How can the International Community help:**

- Four concrete and simultaneous actions are needed:

- As the situation in Somalia remains serious, immediate support to the legal Government and encouragement to stable authorities in Puntland and Somaliland with adequate means and resources are needed.

- Immediate, concrete and multiform support to AMISOM is long overdue. They are

present on an African Union legal mandate, and should not be considered foreign troops. They are helping Somalis on many levels, health, economy, security etc. They deserve praise and continued support from all. They have no hidden political agenda, and their presence constitutes an expression of African solidarity with the people of Somalia.

- Largely funded armed groups who attempt to overthrow the legal and legitimate Government should not be let to take over Somalia and East Africa. Their supporters, individuals, entities and states, should face effective actions.

- Support to IGAD and the African Union's recent decisions on Somalia will be helpful. Both organizations have interest, concerns and expertise on Somalia. The US Government and the United Nations Security Council must help them urgently to address the Somali crisis as an emergency. I call on this Subcommittee to encourage the White House and Department of State to lead international action with resolve, and to help the Government of Somalia to achieve peace.

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- Finally, people all over the world strive for similar situations – peace, security, dignity. The people of Somalia are no exception, and yearn to live under normal conditions. They have been denied this simple request for the past 20 years. I hope that this hearing will help to encourage a minimum of stability in the country. It should send a clear and final message to all Somalis and others that it is no longer

'business as usual'. The International community has finished with conference after conference, proposal after proposal to reach stability in Somalia. Everyone should stop making Somalia a case study.

- To that end, Mr. Chairman, Somalia should no longer be a sore in the eyes of the International community.

- Thank you for your attention.