Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the UN General Assembly Mini-Summit on Somalia, 26 September, New York

Presidents, Prime Ministers, Excellencies: there’s no doubt the election of a new President is a decisive turning point for the country of Somalia. Somali people have expressed their desire for something new and we have to listen and more importantly we have to be ready to move. The transition may be over but I would argue that the work of transformation is just beginning. In four years time, we need a Somalia that is secure, stable and able to hold elections under universal suffrage.

One of the reasons we all know why Somalis were able to vote for a change was because of that new sense of security. That’s been provided by AMISOM as so many other speakers have referred to. I would argue we have to stay the course and I acknowledge the sacrifices that have been made by the forces of AMISOM, something I referred to when I had the privilege of meeting the Commander in my visit to Mogadishu.

A bold security strategy created the space for the political renewal that has taken place in Somalia. The President, with whom I have spoken, has a real vision for his country and we will work with him so that the institutions of government have the capacity to deliver what the people of Somalia have a right to expect.
Our challenge, I would argue, is to align our collective actions into a truly comprehensive approach. We need to make sure that our strategy is able to adapt and deliver the support at the right place and at the right time. We’ve already begun to work across the European Union to make sure that we deliver that. That means in practice focusing on accelerated and intensified approach to security sector reform, a comprehensive approach to the elimination of piracy, immediate support to build the capacities of the institutions and the rapid delivery of services to regions no longer under Al-Shabab control. We have to review quickly and carefully how the international community is organised so we can react and coordinate and support. This country deserves a united, efficient and transparent organisation of our international assistance. So we begin the process of transformation.

I would say that it is a three stage process: in the next four weeks, a period when we should provide immediate support so that we have the resources delivered that can support the capacity of a President, Prime Minister, Government, Parliament and regional administrations. The next four months, when we should have the design of a new deal for Somalia; symbolised perhaps in an event that could take place in early 2013 and which I am ready to host. That should form the basis of our relationship with Somalia until the elections in four years time. And then finally, the four years time; the strategic phase in which we consolidate security, build Somali capacity, reintegrate Somalia into the international financial institutions and help to prepare for those elections.