

Joint article by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia, and Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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Few would have expected, a few months ago, that Somalia would supply an example of progress in the struggle to bring a country out of the misery of civil war and destitution. And yet this is the case. Somalia is no longer a failed state. Instead of furnishing the world's media with terrifying headlines about piracy at sea and bloodshed on the streets, Somalia is providing an example of the old saying, that no news is good news. Working with the European union and other international partners, a new Somalia is defying the cynicism of outsiders. Spoilers may bark but Somalia's caravan of peace moves on.

How come? In short, we have set out to tackle a number of separate but linked issues. A successful military campaign has succeeded in asphyxiating Al Shabaab while, daily, defectors seek to give up violence and find a future in this new Somalia. Piracy in 2012 was 95% down on 2011. Somalis are returning from exile, investing and helping build a new state. Mogadishu, the capital, is bustling. The aroma of coffee has replaced the whiff of cordite. Militias, once the instruments of warlords, are now negotiating their integration into a national army. Regions that had to survive on their own through twenty years of civil war are now engaged in a debate over how they will become part of a federal system. It is not the stuff of dramatic headlines – but it IS the stuff of human progress.

We did not get this far by chance. One of the reasons that we have chosen to write this piece together is because we believe that a partnership between Somalis and Europeans has helped lay the foundation for the progress. We shall now consolidate the progress. Through Somalia's most difficult moments in the last twenty years, the EU was present, providing support. When starvation haunted the country, European humanitarian assistance never ceased. When opportunity for longer term development work was possible, investment occurred. When it became apparent that piracy from Somalia threatened the sea lanes of the Indian ocean, it was the European Union naval force that played the key role to contain the pirates.

It has taken a military campaign in which African countries have fought - and still fight - on behalf of the African Union and with the indispensable support of the European Union to provide the security and space for politics to occur, a new president to be chosen and for the process of reconciliation to begin.

But now, we will secure the peace and work together, to develop a habit of normality in which political disputes are not settled through violence, corruption is not an option, clan interests give way to citizens' interests and the country is at peace with its neighbours.

There is no room for complacency, delay or a fragmented approach by the international community. We only have to look at the arc of instability circling the southern fringes of

Europe, from the Sahel to Syria, to appreciate that a potential success in Somalia becomes an example for greater stability and security for all of Europe.

The keys to success lie in keeping up the momentum, clarity in priorities and confidence in the new found Somali capacity to build its own future. The government of Somalia has a plan that will reconcile the nation, build a new federal state, establish the rule of law, ensure transparent financial management and thus provide the assurance to its neighbours that it is no longer an exporter of insecurity but a guarantor of regional stability. We believe that this is feasible. But we must act now. If we do not, we leave a vacuum for those who want failure in Somalia.

Today, the priority remains security. Without security for every Somali citizen there will not be the rule of law and the space for economic development. The country needs a national army, a police force, a maritime police and a justice system offering fair access to all Somalis. The European Union is already at the centre of this strategy. An EU training mission which has trained two battalions of the Somali National Army will now continue its work in Somalia. A new programme to support the development of coastal police is underway and will eventually help Somalia guard its coastline from pirates, illegal fishing and toxic waste dumpers. EU funding has supported the rule of law in Somalia and this will be intensified. As this strategy unfolds and shows success, so there can be a gradual reduction in the role of the African Union's Mission in Somalia.

With the foundation of security, the government of Somalia can accelerate the process of reconciliation. This is complex, but September's election showed that the vast majority of Somalis want a fair process of integration rather than survival in disintegration. New local administrations that are inclusive, drawing in many marginalised people, will be set up soon. These districts and regions will be folded into a federal state structure. The federal government promises that this will be done in a way that Somalia's neighbours - which are host to Somali refugees and attacks from terrorists - do not feel they are threatened.

Meanwhile, building the capacity of the state is a priority. As Somalia acquires new revenue, this must be well managed and free of any taint of corruption. This is key to maintaining the loyalty of citizens and the confidence of the international community. Somalia has arrears in debts to international institutions and wishes to resolve this issue and re-enter the multilateral financial marketplace. It will only be able to do so when it demonstrates that it has a public financial management system that meets international standards.

Somalia cannot be asked to achieve these goals alone. Success will lie in a partnership between Somalia and the international community - a genuine partnership in which Somalis assume the rights and obligations of a sovereign state. This arrangement, to manage the way to peace and prosperity in Somalia, will be enshrined in a new compact between Somalia and its many friends in the international community. The work has begun and we have both decided that we will create the framework at a conference co-hosted by Somalia and the European Union this autumn.

We are confident that the conference will demonstrate something that is as essential as it is rare in today's world: how patient co-operation to further a genuinely collective cause can tackle even the toughest challenges.