

Madame President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present my report covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, which provides an overview of recent political, security and humanitarian developments in Somalia and an assessment of the human rights situation in the light of the key benchmarks and indicators for progress in improving the situation of human rights.

Discrimination against women, girls, youth, minorities and persons with disabilities remains pervasive in all aspects of Somali society. It is rooted in traditional structures such as the clan system and patriarchal norms and practices, which permeate all aspects of the country’s social, economic and political life, and create the potential for recurring tensions and conflicts.

I commend the President of the Federal Government of Somalia, H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and leaders of the Federal Member State for their constructive discussions during the National Consultative Council meetings on key issues of paramount national importance, including speeding up the drought response, prioritizing the constitutional review process, adopting a one-person, one-vote electoral model for Somalia, delegating powers among the federal and state levels and the federal model of the judiciary, among many others. However, I regret that Puntland is not part of the decision-making process and I encourage them to do so without delay.

I am encouraged by reconciliation efforts by the Government, in particular the appointment of former Al-Shabaab leader of the militant group, Mukhtar Robow, as the Minister for Endowment and Religious Affairs.

I am further encouraged by the passing of eleven legislations relating to security by Parliament. I also welcome the significant legislative developments, including the Child Rights Bill and Juvenile Justice bill, approved by the Federal cabinet, which are due to be presented to Parliament for enactment.

I also welcome the peaceful conclusion of the one person, one vote elections in Puntland in May 2023, which increases the prospects for direct universal suffrage in Somalia.

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During the reporting period, the Government made security its top priority and launched a military offensive operation with clan militias, the African Union’s Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) troops and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) against the Al-Shabaab militant group. All these forces must continue to comply with the principles of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

However, the military offensive has resulted in a marked surge in attacks by Al-Shabaab targeting civilians and members of security forces, including ATMIS troops through the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), mortars and suicide bombers. According to the report of the Secretary-General covering significant developments from 8 February to 7 June 2023, the first quarter of 2023 saw the highest number of improvised explosive device incidents compared with any other quarter since 2017. Regions that recorded the highest number of improvised explosive devices included Banaadir, Shabelle Hoose, Hiraan and Juba Hoose.

I remain gravely concerned about the continued conflict in Laascaanood, which has taken a heavy toll on civilians and led to the destruction of civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities and schools, and caused significant displacement of internally displaced persons to surrounding areas and refugee flows. According to an interagency assessment by OCHA, more than 185,000 people have been displaced from Laascaanood thereby heightening the humanitarian situation. I reiterate my earlier call for the parties to the conflict to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities and resolve their disputes through dialogue. I also call on the government to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to fight impunity and hold perpetrators of human rights violations to account, in accordance with international law.

Excellencies,

Despite the ongoing security challenges, successive Somali governments have given priority to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which should be attaining the completion point in the period 2023–2024. I look forward to the planned end date and the resources it will offer to the government and people of Somalia, and trust that the human rights agenda will be included in the budgetary allocations in the succeeding years.

Excellencies,

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental human right and the cornerstone of the existence of a democratic society. However, disturbing trends of intimidation, harassment, arrest and detention of journalists continue and undue restrictions on freedom of expression and of the media has regrettably led to self-censorship or to several journalists fleeing the country. I want to seize this opportunity to reaffirm my strong condemnation of such acts and to call on the government to immediately cease the use of the Penal Code Act of 1964 against journalists and media practitioners, where it undermines freedom of opinion and expression.

I also call on the Special Prosecutor appointedto investigate crimes against journalists to provide an update on the progress made thus far.

Excellencies,

The humanitarian situation remains dire in Somalia following five consecutive seasons of failed and below-average rains exacerbated by climate change. Although famine was averted by the *gu* rains and the humanitarian response, flash and riverine floods in several regions affected at least 468,000 people and displaced over 247,000 people, as of 6 June 2023. This has also resulted in death and the loss of livelihoods by farmers and pastoralists alike, destruction of infrastructure and increased the rsisk of waterborne diseases, and also contributed to stagnation in human and economic development thereby increasing poverty. I call on the international community to increase their assistance, close the humanitarian aid funding gap, so that humanitarian organizations can have the funds and resources they need to respond appropriately during emergencies.

I welcome the increase in the health care budget and the recent launch of the US$ 11.4 million project to strengthen emergency care services at regional hospitals in Somalia.I also note capacity building efforts by UNSOM and various stakeholders to strengthen the judiciary and the progress in the constitutional review process. I look forward to its impact in dispensing justice to those aggrieved.

Excellencies,

More than 70 per cent of the population of Somaia are youth. However, in the context of the ongoing conflict, Somali children and youth continue to suffer the most and their future remains bleak. The recruitment and use of child soldiers by fighting forces has limited the schooling of children resulting in some youth joining the Al-Shabaab militant group and others fleeing the country in search of a safe haven and economical survival. Limited opportunities for vocational training and apprenticeship, participation in political and public life leads the youth to join the Al-Shabaab militant group, take part in criminal and drug-related activities. Availability of capacity building while welcome is negligible compared to the massive needs of the society.

Excellencies,

While welcoming the launch of the Women`s Charter to enhance the participation of women in public life and the Women in the Maritime Sector National Action Plan in February 2023 to enhance and empower Somali women in the maritime sector, Somalia requires a legal framework against conflict related sexual violence, domestic violence and the impact of traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriages. I call on the government to pass the sexual offences bill and to take meaningful steps towards the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, or to repeal provisions that discriminate against women, thus building on legal accountability frameworks and access to justice for women and girls.

I thank you for your attention.