



**Remarks by H.E. Omar Abdirashid ,**

**Prime Minister of Somalia**

**Rome, June 10, 2009**

**Excellencies,**

**Dear friends and colleagues,**

Thank you for the opportunity to attend this preparatory conference on thematic linked to Africa. Since the collapse of its last national government in 1991, Somalia has been characterized in the last 19 years by political upheaval and general insecurity. The Somali people made several attempts to re-establish working institutions. The International Community has also attempted to support such Somali efforts at institution-building to bring stability to the country. Recent events, however, have revived international interest in Somalia, as efforts to reconstitute a durable governing framework has been challenged by the rise of extreme groups and spoilers. Acts of piracy along the coast of Somalia have also distorted the root causes of the Somali social and political dilemma.

Just to give a broad view of where Somalia stands we need to begin from recent past. A new political dispensation in 2002-2004 led to the formation of the current Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG). Regional organizations such IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development), African Union and League of Arab States, together with international entities like the UN, EU, organization of Islamic Conference have played a major role in supporting the Transitional Institutions of Somalia with humanitarian and capacity development. In 2007, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative has initiated a process of reconciliation among Somali political entities that culminated with the 2009 Djibouti peace process which led to a renewed government of national unity of that elected, as its President, Hon. Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. As the Prime Minister of the Somali Transitional Federal Government, let me assure you that Africa has been in the forefront in supporting the Somali people and institutions with AU deploying a limited peace support mission known as African Union

Mission in Somalia or AMISOM mainly from Uganda and Burundi. AU has recognized the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) of Somalia as the legitimate governance structure in the country.

The current government is a product of a reconciliation process that benefited from the considerable support of regional and international actors. All government institutions of the national unity government of Somalia, from the executive to the legislative to the presidency, are working in Mogadishu, an unprecedented event in the last 6 years. My government has presented, for the first time, budget documents promptly approved by the Transitional Federal Parliament and has streamlined the revenues of the government; it has established an oversight committee for all financial transactions to strengthen accountability and transparency of government processes. We reviewed structures, processes of TFG security forces injecting new leaders to reflect and counter the new challenges facing us; we started government and structural processes to re-establish an embryonic marine force to counter the menace of piracy and take all available measures to stop the plunder of our marine resources.

My Government has succeeded in including a faction of the opposition group Hizbul Islam in government following laborious negotiations; we are still trying to attract and reach out to other elements of the opposition and our doors are always open to whoever wishes to play a constructive and positive role in the country and in the region. At regional and continental level, we are working hard with the African Union and UN for a change to the mandate of AMISOM troops in Somalia to reflect the current reality inside the country.

Acceding to the wishes of the people and respecting the Muslim culture of the Somali population, the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker as well as the whole government fully embraced the application of the Islamic shar'ia in Somalia hoping that common element could usher a broader view of the political dialogue and reconciliation in the country after 19 years of civil strife. However, today some extreme elements and groups attack, maim, bomb and kill innocents Somalis. The ultimate objective of these foreign elements and their local allies is the perpetuation of the institutional vacuum.

Today, the TFG is making progress, but it still needs that the international pledges to support the institutions to materialize in order to tackle seriously a

number of security concerns. Piracy is one of these, but we need to understand both the root causes of the piracy and the best methods to defeat it. The acts of piracy is not a new phenomenon in Somalia: in the early '90s sporadic piracy acts took place along the north and south coasts of Somalia, often arising from disagreements over illegal "fishing fees" for foreign-owned vessels.

From 2003 onward, piracy acts increased in all parts of Somalia even though focus was along some sections of the Somali coast. For some time coastal communities in Somalia felt excluded from the lucrative fishing business and the perception that illegal and over-fishing activities along the Somali territorial waters was depleting the livelihood of many communities. Both the central and local authorities were unable to either offer alternative ways for environmentally sound fishing means or to secure the marine resources of the country; lack of policy and capacity were pointed out as the main constraints facing Somali institutions, while grievances were being expressed by traditional structures of governance in the country. Hence, the piracy acts, while criminal in nature, has somewhat found a niche in the under-development and lack of opportunities in local Somali communities challenging state structures. International shipping companies have not made things easier, in their quest to reduce costs and downtime, by paying exorbitant and outrageous ransom fees for vessels further escalating the piracy phenomenon.

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and institutions at local level welcomed UN Security Council resolutions on subject. The UN Security Council, African Union and regional body IGAD as well as the League of Arab States have encouraged international actors to support the Somali government efforts to combat and root out piracy acts along its shores by making available capacity in equipment, training of marine forces and financial incentives to local communities to discourage such acts among local youth.

UN has given wide powers to international actors such as EU, US, countries in Far East Asia and other parts of the world to send military ships and forces to interdict these pirates and pursue them in their bases of the pirates in close coordination with local government. These efforts have been welcomed by Somali people and government to counter the menace. However, we should go further and address some of the root causes of the piracy acts. Even if piracy acts are curbed along the Somali coast, nothing

forbids these same pirates to migrate elsewhere in Africa and beyond. Hence coordination / information sharing amongst these countries is a must to counter pirates. All Somali components (TFG, local authorities, community leaders) are committed to address piracy acts due to its human and financial costs on international shipping; above entities do not have enough capacity to address the issue alone and have forcefully raised the issue of illegal fishing in Somali waters by a number of countries. Political settlement as well as institutional set-up in Somalia is only long-term solution to piracy. At the same time, the TFG appeals to international community and UN appropriate bodies to address the illegal fishing in Somali waters that deprive people of a livelihood and resources for development.

I welcome this preparatory work on African issues and I hope that piracy issue will be addressed by the forthcoming G8 Summit through tangible steps. Legal and technical framework could be offered by the African experience with NEPAD and African Peacekeeping experiences which offer cost-effective security elements needed to counter the piracy issue. African leaders reaffirmed the importance of above initiatives for promoting ownership of processes, development and shared responsibility. Criminal piracy acts are symptoms of lack of opportunities and capacity in a specific context. The hope is that after r 20 years of conflict and humanitarian tragedies, Somali people is ready to move forward and the Transitional Federal Government is committed to peaceful and stable institutions inside the country and in the region. We hope that the upcoming G8-African interactions will address some of the problems faced by the African countries in terms of security, governance and development.

Thank you