

United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

PRESS RELEASE

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UN Secretary General's Special Representative Condemns Resumption of Fighting in Mogadishu

Nairobi, 25 May - The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Francois Lonseny Fall, today condemned the resumption of hostilities in Mogadishu. As heavy fighting flared anew in the city, Ambassador Fall said he was deeply disturbed by the cost to the civilian population, the wasting of opportunities to reconcile and reconstruct the country, and the impact of heightened insecurity on United Nations humanitarian responses to a severe drought emergency.

"Somalia is already at war with nature and poverty on a scale that is difficult to conceive," he said. "The last thing this country needs is for its leaders to be fighting among themselves. I appeal to all parties to immediately and unconditionally hold their fire and respect the needs of the people. This is a time for pulling together, not for pulling further apart. I appeal to those faction leaders in Mogadishu, who are also Ministers in the Transitional Federal Government, to put down their arms and join the political process in Baidoa for the good of the nation."

Ambassador Fall said Somalia had struggled successfully with its internal differences to establish Transitional Federal Institutions – the first sign of centralized governance and state institutions in more than 15 years of civil strife – and had framed a Transitional Charter. A parliament now in session in Baidoa was also working towards the framing of a Constitution.

"Given Somalia's tragic recent history, these are not small achievements," Ambassador Fall said. "We are encouraged by them. The United Nations and the international community as a whole, is firmly committed to building on its longstanding support for Somalia. However, we need a country that is universally committed to security for those efforts so that we can move ahead at maximum speed. It is essential that all parties respect basic humanitarian and human rights norms of access for all Somalis in need as well as protection for those who are attempting to deliver what is needed for people to rise above their differences and their poverty. "

Ambassador Fall urged all parties to find a solution to the current problems in Mogadishu within the framework of the Somali Transitional Federal Charter. He said he was deeply disturbed by reports that militia of the union of the Shariah Courts and the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism were redeploying in and around the city and resupplying their lines with munitions, with external assistance in direct breach of the UN arms embargo. "I am also troubled by reports of children being recruited from the streets and the schools to carry on these adult struggles for control and influence," he said. With every new gun, grenade or bullet there is the greater likelihood of civilian casualties."

Ambassador Fall said that the United Nations agencies and organizations were determined to stay the course in Somalia. "Our people are operational in emergency mode today across the spectrum of human needs in Somalia," he said. "There is no question that we will continue to deliver, as we have for decades in Somalia, ramping up our support as needed in food and water supply, health care and shelter, both for local populations and for the tens of thousands of Somalis who have been displaced internally by prolonged conflict, drought and floods."

Ambassador Fall said however that the most serious obstacles to national progress would remain until those with the guns and political influence made a serious commitment to internal peace and reconciliation: "The power for peace and change for the better in Somalia is in the hands of the

warlords and I urge them, as a first step, to sit together and discuss a vision that gives everyone in Somalia a chance.”

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