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جمهورية الصومال
مدير مكتب الرئيس
دائرة الإعلام

Republic of Somalia
The Presidency
Directorate of Communications



SPEECH

Signing of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
Tuesday 20 January 2015, 10am

Mr Nick Kay, Special Representative for the Secretary General
Mr Steven Lauwerier, UNICEF Representative for Somalia
Interim Ministers of the Federal Government and Members of Parliament
Mr Mahad Ahmed Mohamud, Principal of Hamar Jajab School
Staff and students of Hamar Jab-Jab School

I am delighted to be here with you today to celebrate the signing of a very important document – the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sometimes, documents don't seem very important. Sometimes their connection with our everyday lives is not very clear.

But today, I am happy to say, this document is one of the most important that I can sign as President of Somalia.

Do you know why?

Because this piece of paper is all about you- all about the children of Somalia, and the children of the world.

This document – which is called the Convention of the Rights of the Child – was written in recognition that children need special care and assistance so that they grow up able to take their proper place in the community.

Growing up is a bit like taking a journey- except that you are not exactly sure where you are going or how to get there. There are many new things to learn, new experiences to go through; new choices to make.

Growing up in Somalia can be difficult. Some of you may have memories of tough times that you and your families have gone through. Some of you may be wondering what the future holds for you.

Thanks to God, I am not just a President, but also a father. It is a father's job to look after his children, to provide a safe home for his children to grow up- a place where they can feel loved, protected and cherished.

As President, my job is quite similar. It is my job not just to look after my own children, but all the children of Somalia. It is my job- working with my government, and our international partners, like the United Nations – to make sure that your homes are safe and that your mother and father have everything they need to look after you. It is my job to make sure that you have a school to go to and that your teachers can teach you well. It is my job to make sure that when you grow up, you can have a job and work to support your own families.

It is my hope that we will create a Somalia that is safe and peaceful for you to grow up in.

And we are doing that. My government has worked very hard over the past two years to build a country that you will be proud to call your home. We have built roads and put in lights so that you can walk safely along those roads.

Through programs such as UNICEF's 'Go To School' program, we have worked together to re-open schools, trained teachers and put children back into school. With our partners in the United Nations, we have set-up new health clinics, given injections to children to stop them from getting sick, and made sure that food and water get through to people living in areas where those things are scarce. We have started to write laws that will protect you and your families from people who seek to destroy our country. We have started to create opportunities for people to safely open businesses to generate money to look after their families and contribute towards running Somalia. We have achieved a lot, and we have much to do.

Today, I have signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This means that Somalia sees you with all the human dignity and worth of an adult.

As President, and together with the Parliament, I have agreed that the Federal Government will protect your rights as a child through our legal system. We have promised you full and equal access before the law. We have promised to make sure that you never have to become a soldier until you are old enough to make that decision for yourself. We have promised to support your families to love and care for you and not to abandon you, or try to profit from you. We have promised to protect you from people who may have bad intentions. We have promised that regardless of whether you are a boy or a girl, you will have equal access to all the opportunities that life will bring you: to have a good education and to get a good job. We have promised to respect your right to thinking independently and to express those thoughts.

But any agreement has two sides. With rights come responsibilities.

So today, I want to remind you of your responsibilities. You are Somali. This is the first thing and it is the most important thing. You are part of one people, one nation, and together we are creating one future.

Stay in school. Learn as much as you can. Put your learning into practice.

Respect your teachers, your parents and your friends. Treat them as you want them to treat you. Listen to them, set an example through your own behaviour.

Look to the future. We cannot allow the past to bind us. If and when you hear stories about Somalia in the past, you must not be held captive to that. You must think of the Somalia you want in the future, and then you must make that happen.

ENDS

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