

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI CGH, MP, PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AT THE LONDON CONFERENCE ON SOMALIA, 23RD FEBRUARY 2012, LANCASTER HOUSE LONDON

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister,
Mr. David Cameron,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Honourable Prime Minister and Her Majesty's Government for convening this conference on Somalia, which I strongly support. The meeting convenes at a defining moment in the history of Somalia. After more than 20 years of untold suffering and numerous failed efforts, we are now able to, collectively, put Somalia on a path of sustainable peace and development. This unprecedented opportunity comes in the wake of the remarkable progress in the recent months.

AMISOM, the Transitional Federal Government forces and their allies continue to restore security in Somalia. In this regard, I sincerely thank Burundi and Uganda for continuing to pay the ultimate price in pursuit of peace in Somalia, and commend Djibouti for offering its troops to assist towards this effort. To this end, I also call on African countries that have made their offers to assist Somalia to fulfil their pledges.

Excellencies,

As you are aware, Kenya is fully committed to the search for peace in Somalia. We facilitated the peace process that led to the formation of the Transitional Federal Government in 2005.

And we continue to bear the burden of hosting the largest population of Somalis outside their country, including some 630,000 refugees in the Dadaab camps, and an even larger number spread across the country.

In October 2011, we launched "Operation Linda Nchi", in pursuit of Al Shabaab and other armed terrorist elements, that sought to destabilise our country, our economy and the region.

The operation has so far liberated large territory and populations from Al shabaab control; and significantly reduced the incidence of piracy off the Somalia coast. Similarly, the assistance of Ethiopia to the TFG and allied forces has seen the liberation of other large territories of Somalia.

Presently, the region is firmly engaged with Somalia, and this conference must acknowledge, recognise and build on these successes. We must agree on activities and programmes to consolidate peace, support legitimate inclusive political process, jump start recovery, the rule of law and development in Somalia.

Excellencies,

Two weeks ago, Al-Shabaab confirmed what we have always known in the region: that they are part and parcel of the Al Qaeda international terrorist networks. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a wake-up call to the International Community.

We have recently apprehended a number of foreign fighters within the Al Shabaab ranks.

Clearly, a new and more dangerous theatre for terrorist action has emerged in Somalia, and this calls for focused and concerted international effort.

Kenya welcomes the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 2036 of 2012 that has reviewed the AMISOM future operations in Somalia, as recommended by the African Union. It should be noted, however, that the resolution does not provide for a maritime component.

Yet, this is critical to the eventual success of the campaign in Somalia, as well as the fight against piracy and international terrorism.

Excellencies

The development of a Somali national security force is vital to guaranteeing its long-term security and stability. In this regard, there is need to support the setting up of a nucleus Somali armed force.

This demands that the international community facilitates the immediate integration of the various trained units into the TFG force. Such action will also enable the TFG to take effective control of the liberated areas.

On the issue of piracy, I wish to reiterate Kenya's commitment to continue playing our role in pirates offender mangement. However, this must be guided by the principle of burden sharing.

We, therefore welcome the opportunity to work together on the modalities for achieving this.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What began as a humanitarian crisis has evolved into multiple critical challenges for the consideration of this meeting.

The size of the Somali displacement in Kenya far outweighs our capacity to carry. It is adversely impacting our political and socio-economic dynamics. It is posing growing and serious security threats to Kenya and the region.

Further, the refugee camps in Kenya are overcrowded, have caused huge environmental degradation, have led to growing tensions with host populations and are infiltrated by extremists. This is the reality of the humanitarian and security crisis that Kenya continues to bear.

In this regard, Kenya expects this conference to map out a firm and durable solution, including the return of these populations to their home country. After all, Somalia needs its displaced human resources to speed up its recovery.

Therefore, the humanitarian actors should, now take advantage of the areas secured from the Al Shabaab to resettle these populations. This is a matter of utmost urgency as Kenya can no longer continue carrying the burden occasioned by this situation.

Excellencies,

As a neighbouring country, we wish to see peace and security restored in Somalia promptly. This is because our security in the Horn of Africa is inextricably linked to long lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

This conference must not let this unprecedented opportunity slip through our hands. I call upon all of us, here today, to lend full support to all efforts to return Somalia to a functioning State, at peace with its population and its neighbours.

It is also my sincere hope that our conference declaration will reflect the reality on the ground, underscore the need for urgent action and reaffirm our individual and collective commitment to Somalia.

I thank you.