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AN ALAN AND JANE BATKIN
INTERNATIONAL LEADERS FORUM WITH
THE PRESIDENT OF SOMALIA HASSAN SHEIKH MOHAMUD

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PARTICIPANTS:

Featured Speaker:

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President
Federal Republic of Somalia

Moderator:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Everyone, welcome to Brookings. Actually to our friends across the street at SEIU, we are grateful for the space here. We are still waiting on some water, but in just a moment we'll get started.

I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. We are honored today to have the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, visiting with us and speaking about his country, his challenges, and the broader region and all that he's been able to do in his nearly two years in office, but all that still remains to be done, which, as you are all aware is a great deal.

But let me say a brief word of welcome to the President and then once I've done, I'll ask you to join me in giving him a big Brookings round of applause to welcome him again to Washington where he's been part of the Africa Leaders Summit, and also just to thank him for the honor of his presence here with us today.

But before that, he is a long-standing academic. If he were not President of Somalia, perhaps we'd be offering him a position at Brookings; maybe someday we could be so fortunate. He grew up in Mogadishu, and attended the Somalia National University, graduating there in 1981, doing graduate studies in India; coming back to Somalia, toughing it out through all the difficult years that have been experienced since then, helping found a new university in Somalia thereafter.

And Mr. President, I know you were the Dean of SIMAD University in Mogadishu for a number of years and (inaudible) as well. In between he had been involved in education, to some extent under U.N. auspices with UNESCO and UNICEF, and also helping start some local schools in Somalia.

So, a great commitment to education, and now a great commitment to the stabilization of his country, and the reconciliation efforts with various elements,

various clans and tribes that have often been at war in recent decades. And of course the development challenge that remains ahead, because clearly, creating a modicum of stability is just the first step towards helping Somalia truly get back on its feet.

A word or two more of background and then we will, please, welcome the President. He is now working with an African Union Force of some 24,000 soldiers, from a number of countries, but four of them in particular, the largest contributions; are Ethiopia, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya; and a number of other participants as well.

One of the great encouraging things about this effort which is showing, indeed, some true signs of hopefulness, is how much Africa, and Africans are working together to deal with their own problems. How the African Union has really stepped up. And yes, there's a long way to go, but this is truly an effort about which Africans can be proud, as their ability to work together as an international group, has really been manifested in recent years in Somalia.

I think that we will have a number of things to talk about today. I'm going to spend about a half hour with the President in a back and forth discussion; and we will go through a few of the challenges his country is facing, and then we'll open it up to you, until about 11:20. Once we get to questions, please state name clearly after waiting for the microphone. We are fortunate to have some television coverage today, and we'd like to make sure your questions get heard as well.

But before we get to that, please join me in welcoming the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. (Applause) Mr. President, thank you for being here.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you. Thank you, Mike. And thank you -- ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming and giving me this opportunity to talk to such a distinguished group of people in Washington.

Just to give you a glimpse of what Somalia is. Somalia is situated in the

most corner tip of the African Continent; we call it the Horn of Africa. Somalia, in general, is a very, very rich country, with the largest coastline in the African Continent, of 3,300 kilometers of coastline on both the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. It's located at a very strategic location. Both in the Cold War era and today in this different era, it is in the doorsteps of Bab el Mandab, and Suez Canal, and the Red Sea, and the vast Indian Ocean that's open to Asia, until the Cape of Good Hope. So Somalia is located there.

It has -- it's a population of 10 million people, with 8 million hectares of arable land, with two permanent rivers throughout there, a number of underground rivers. Somalia has the largest per capita -- largest (inaudible) in the African Continent, and recently we were told that we have a huge reserves of natural resources, gas oil, and other minerals, which we don't know yet, but that's what at least that's been set by the speculators.

So this is the country, besides it's that Somalis are one ethnic group, with one language, 100 percent Muslims, Sunni Muslims, with Shafi'i School of Thought, until recently there were other introductions into other new schools of thoughts in the Sunni Muslims.

So this is the country, and got its independence in the Year of Africa in 1960. Somalia was one of those 17, 18 countries of Africa who got their independence for local powers in 1960, and again, Somalia was one of those African countries who experienced the state failure in 1990. Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone. It's just a number of African countries that -- having problem in the '90s.

There was no one winner in Somalia after the state collapsed, so the war against the state later on become the factional war, clan-based war, and it was not easy to reorganize and get back to the mainstream of the state route.

In 2000, was the first time that a transitional government was established

in Somalia, and since then there was a Successive Transitional Government in place, until 2012, when we ended the Transition after 12 years. The government -- the President is the first Non-Transitional Government in place in almost 22 years.

We come through reconciliation and different clans get together to reconcile it, established a professional Constitution; nominated a new Parliament which elected the President; and the President appointed the Prime Minister, who established in the Cabinet of Ministers.

So that is the Somalia we have. We have a very clear mandate for four years, 2012 to 2016, which we are supposed to bring back all the foundations of a function estate in place. Building the estate institutions on one hand, and fighting and winning the war against the extremists and terrorists; on the other hand, it's among the set of challenges that Somalia of today is facing.

Since we came into the office, we have a very clear program in the State Building, reaching out the peripheries, linking them to the center. Establishing the Federalism, establishing the program called the Vision 2016, that ends in 2016, whereby we want Somalia to have a Government Constitution, Federal units in place, electoral systems, and political laws in place, and political parties established, and then people go to elections.

Elections, which Somalia is going to experience in 2016, after 45 years; the last time when elections took place in Somalia, we could say (inaudible) election took place in Somalia was 1969. So after 45 years, Somalia is now heading towards having elections. And the next parliament we expect will come through elections.

Some people do believe that, still, it's impossible. We say it's possible and we are working on that. People are asking what type of election, what will be the coverage? How far it will be free and fair? All these questions are there, but still, we do

believe that we can make it, and we are very much committed to make sure that elections happen in -- by the end of 2016.

In brief, this is Somalia. Somalia is fighting with one of the difficult wars that the world is facing today, an extremist and terrorist group, called Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab is organization based on ideology, and we all know that ideologists have no citizenship, and have no boundaries. Al-Shabaab is in Somalia for one reason only, they operate in Somalia, they have their base in Somalia; they have their training camps in Somalia. They use Somalia as a transit, the state that links Africa and Asia, where the terrorists move here and there.

And these organizations, although they have different names, they all have linked somewhere or the other. There are very clear evidences that Al-Shabaab trained in Somalia, and members of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the other part of the continent. Somalia is in the east, Nigeria in the west, and in between Mali, Central African Republic, Chad, all of them.

So that's how Al-Shabaab -- its leadership are not Somali. There are more Non-Somalis than Somali at the highest level in the leadership. We have people from the America -- from North America, people from Europe, people from Asia, the Gulf, the eastern part of the Asian Continent. So we have all kind of people in place. Our neighbors in Africa, but its still -- Somalia has good -- the name associated with Al-Shabaab, and that is the only reason.

And why they operate in Somalia is, Somalia has been -- there was a vacuum for a long time, so this was a very breeding ground for them. In the last two years, the African Union Mission in Somalia, and Somalia National Army have jointly made operations against the territories that controls Al-Shabaab, and these territories are shrinking day after day, and the plans are now, by the end of the year, there will not be a

territory controlled by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, but that does mean it's the end of the war.

The war will continue.

Right now when they lost the military front today, they just come to the metropolitan places like Mogadishu, where more than 2 million people are living, they just melted down into the society, and they are doing this hit-and-run. Urban warfare, a significant war for groups (inaudible) the target assassinations and suicides. So it will take some time, the war is not one of military only, it has multifaceted fronts.

Economic front, poverty is one of the -- poverty and grievances are always the two areas where Al-Shabaab benefits the Somali society. A society that has been without a functioning state over two decades; wars, conflict, this clan, internal, so displacement, over 2 million people are not living in their home places in Somalia; almost 1.5 million outside the borders of Somalia, half-a-million inside as IDPs.

So this is the situation, in brief, in Somalia, but still we have that hope that we can defeat Al-Shabaab, and we can put back that functioning state institutions in place, one which is -- have strong demographic foundations. We are starting everything from scratch. Maybe in some areas we have better chances than those who want to change systems that have been in place for a long time. So, in brief, this is Somalia. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Mr. President, thank you. That's an excellent introduction. (Applause) I'd like to just make two brief points and then ask a question. One is, I want everyone who doesn't remember, to understand that this President has own mandate, he explained to us how there hasn't been an election in a long time, but he was chosen with a strong mandate by his parliamentarians.

And so it's in that way that he came to power two years ago and enjoys a certain degree of democratic legitimacy, even though we haven't yet been able to see an

election in Somalia in recent times. As he points out, there is a plan for that to happen now, within a couple of years.

Secondly, I was speaking with the President prior to the meeting, and I was consulting a map that was put out by a think tank in London, just a few months ago, and I said to him, Mr. President it looks to me as if, you and the African Union are essentially governing maybe a quarter of the country in terms of territory, and maybe half, or a little more in terms of population.

And what he said to me, and I'll give him a chance to further elucidate in a moment was, oh, that map must be a few months' old, because we are actually doing better than that now. The map may have been correct when it was printed six months ago, but we are continuing to expand our control, and there really has been a notable progress in the degree to which the African Union, and the Government of Somalia have managed consolidate a good chunk of the country, again without defeating the threat and certainly without having made the necessary progress on the economic and development fronts yet, but nonetheless a very hopeful place.

The broad question, if I could, Mr. President, and I'm going to begin with a general question about the region, and we'll get back to Somalia very specifically in just a second, and then we'll stay there, with my part of the conversation. But I did want to ask you to speak about the broader threat of extremism in the region, because it's clearly a concern, all Americans and many others around the world share.

We are waking up today to news about the latest crisis in Iraq, I realize that Al-Shabaab may have some ideological affinities with the ISIS group in Iraq and Syria. I would just ask, if you wouldn't mind explaining, from your perspective, how you see the inter-linkages between these groups. Are they still on the ascendance? How worried are you about them in a broader regional and global sense? And then we'll get

back to Somalia specifically.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you very much, Mike. As you rightly said, this is an ideology, and maybe they have a slight different color in one country or the other, in one continent or the other, but basically this group is they have common principles and common ideology that they propagate all over the world. We are just the one that's going to -- that this brand of extremism, everything; to the hard lineup, to the corner of the spectrum.

There is of course, links between them, Somalis were not, sometime in early 2000 we were, all of us, with many of our international partners who are academicians, who know Somalia, they claim that it's not possible that Somali becomes a suicider. We don't have that type of history in the past. We don't have the culture of honor killing. We don't have these types of things.

So no one was believing that a suicide bomber, a Somali suicide bomber would ever come. And it was only late 2005 early 2006 when the first suiciders where -- they appeared in Mogadishu. Showing the people that they were fighting, doing this against the forces that they see as occupiers and things like that, but since then it has been proven that suicide is not something that belongs to one particular community or country or continent. But it's something that's made by people who knows how to make it.

Like these terrorist groups, and it has been -- it has been realized that there are institutions, training camps that produces the suiciders, particularly very young people who were still -- was born in that environment and who has not much vision of the what the world looks like.

So, then how it affects the region and the world is, they train people there and they send, that's what happened in Kenya, what happened in Ethiopia, in Uganda,

and maybe very faraway places. They have training camps and that's where they brainwash the young people. That's where they show, and they teach the people how to do these terror activities.

So it's a very serious concern for the region, and for continent and for the world at large. So it is indeed, Somalia is -- the problem of terrorism it's not a Somalia problem only. It's regional, continental and international. So that's why we are seeing the support from the outside world and we are getting, right now, one from the sub-region in the African Continent, and the world is supporting both the Somali Government, the Somali security forces, and the African Union Mission, to (inaudible).

The question I want to say again and again is that this war is not military-owned, and we have experience that military cannot end the war, that we need to come up with other creative one. I have a classical example that I always used to say, a boy who was 5 years old in 1990, when the Somali State was collapsing, today is 29 years old. And most of them probably have got a wife and kids.

He has never been to school. He has never exposed to any training, so he has not the tools of life in his own hands. There, in the very remote area, desperate, doesn't know what to do, cannot offer a cup of milk to his kids. That boy simply becomes very, very vulnerable to be recruited by Al-Shabaab. Come and join and you will have \$50 by the end of the month, or you will be recruited by the pirates. Come and join us, we go to the sea and in a few days or a month or so, you'll have \$100,000 with you.

So it is a risk-taking (inaudible) and this is what makes -- and then this age group, unless -- the bulk of the society; 65 percent of the population in Somalis, it is estimated that age, less than 35 years. So you can understand how huge is the number in the society, and the people is disquiet. Even if you provide them an opportunity to employment today, the question is, are they employable. Can they be employed?

Using the AK-47 gun, does not need much training, and does not need any specific qualification, so everybody can hold and use it, so that is the easiest way to earn a living. So developing and providing alternative way of life, for the young generation is among the challenges that the Somalia Government is facing right now. And this is an area where the -- our international partners is showing a minimum understanding.

Maybe the world is very -- ready to support in the security sector, but creating an alternative way of life, providing training facility for them, skills training, and then providing gainful employment opportunity, these are some of the things that pose to be a bit difficult to convince our international partners that we are doing very, very hard, and we believe that, yeah, the military campaign is only one part of the war. There are other parts of the war, which we have to win also.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. So let me just ask two more questions in that spirit. First of all, I want to ask a little bit more about your plan for consolidating control in security terms, without asking you to give away detailed campaign plans, but with an eye towards where the international community could help more.

But then, secondly, I want to come back and ask; what can we do as an international community, on the economic and development front, your concern that you mentioned. And I think between both of these we'll have the issue of political reconciliation that I know you would think about a great deal. So let me ask about security. If the trends are favorable, maybe you could tell us a little bit more about the progress of the last year, just briefly, to help people understand that there really is positive momentum.

But as you look forward towards your goals for the next one to two years, could you explain what your concerns are and where you perhaps could use even a little

more help or a little more capability to make the odds of success greater than they might currently be for consolidating more control over the country.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Well, security was the top priority of my government, at the beginning in early 2013, last year, and since then we've been working -- improving the capacity of the security institutions; building the security institution and professional security forces with national character, not one but particularly group of society but all the different sectors of the society. That was the aim and the plan of the government.

The reality on the ground sometimes distracts you away from what you have planned, and the war on the one hand, building the forces and on the other hand, fighting the war was the challenge, and as I said earlier. The Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force and the Somali National Intelligence and Security agents, these are the three major components in the security sector of Somalia. The custodian corpus will follow.

Now, we started from scratch converting the militia forces into a professional and national forces which as I said -- which as I said, have a national (inaudible) and proves to be very, very difficult but it's doable and we are doing. We have not yet completed everything but we are -- we did a lot progress. Now, and we got enough support in that area. The European Union has provided a European Union Training Mission in Somalia. This mission used to be out of Somalia, and training Somalis out.

Last year we agreed to shift them back into Somali, now they are into Somali and they are training inside Somali. Somalis are training more soldiers for specialized courses, specialized training, European Union Training Mission is supporting this. Similarly, the United States is supporting in training the Special Forces, whereby we

think the seed of a national army of the future is now beginning, starting with Special Forces training inside Somalia. So this is going on.

Equipping those forces is there still but we don't have enough equipment yet, but it is supported, and the Somali Government has allocated enough of its budget in the security sector. Improving the quality, improving the equipment, improving the care of the forces, these are areas that we are -- constituted in and it's going well.

So that area of security sector development is moving in a very good pace. Regarding the territory, Al-Shabaab has been operating almost 11 regions out of the 18 regions of Somalia. The remaining Somali regions, mainly was Somaliland, Puntland, where there was relative stability in place for some time.

The central regions and the surrounding regions were the ones that were facing the difficulties of Somalia. Now the Somali Government has succeeded to take over all the regional headquarters of these 11 regions. And now most of the districts, there were 25 districts that were under control of Al-Shabaab last year. Today there are less than 15 districts that are remaining under their control, and that's what I'm saying, by the end of the year we are expecting that there will be no one district that's under control of Al-Shabaab.

But Somalia is a vast area. When you engage them away from the districts and the towns, they go into the rural area, and that's where they remain a threat to the community and they use the means to terror people. If you deal with the government, if you deal with the government forces, this is the punishment; beheading, snatching, killings, and so on.

So this is how things are going, and now they are changing the tactics into a symmetrical warfare -- in the urban places. I'm sure that at least we will succeed soon to eliminate all the training camps, and all the bomb-making factories in the rural

areas. So our war will continue, maybe in the urban places, and this will continue for some time. We are not expecting that soon, there will not be a suicide bomb, or roadside bomb, or things like that, but most of it will (inaudible).

In the meantime, we've been developing. One of the challenges was in the Somali laws; we were not having any law for terrorism and all this, that's not part of the norm, in Somalia. So in the courts, the common criminal who maybe stabbed someone with a knife, and the one who explodes 100 people in a place, maybe we have the same criminal acts to make them. So many of the Shabaab in the past they work easily, of course, because of the government is -- burden of proof for what they did.

And the laws we were having, some of the current evidence, electronic evidences were not evidences in those laws. Now this has changed now, there's a new act of terror that the Somali Government has prepared, and it's almost now finished, so treatment of Shebaab is now different legally, and the war has now a legal place to fight against the terrorists and those collaborate with them.

So this is the situation in general. But, you know, we cannot claim the final victor of the war today, but we are very much -- the situation is much, much different than -- today the Somali Government has succeeded to organize the society. Mobilize the whole nation to fight against the Shebaab, so the rural, nomadic people, the (inaudible) have to be in many parts of Somalia fighting the Shebaab, not only the government and the African Union forces, but the society now understood that there's no future with Al-Shabaab and their fighting. So that makes their days now limited.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I'm going to ask one derivative question before going back to the economics and development. And I think you can probably help us here, and this may seem like just a semantic question, but it relates to the broader issue of the international threat. I was careful when I asked you about the international

threat not to use the word Islamic extremism.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Mm-hmm.

MR. O'HANLON: I also didn't say Jihadist extremism. We Americans are still searching for the right way to describe this threat, and understand the threat, because we know that Jihad is actually a legitimate activity within Islam, and it's generally not a violent activity, it's a lifelong quest to become closer to one's maker, as I understand it. And therefore I'm wondering if you can help us understand and properly describe the international threat.

I don't want to make this all about a label, but what do you call the broader movement that has its tentacles in your country through Al-Shabaab; in Boko Haram in Nigeria, with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, with the elements, the residual elements of al Qaeda Central over in Pakistan, and the tribal areas, and then also Afghanistan. How do you describe the overall movement? Is attack (inaudible) theory, is it Salafiste? What kind of a term do you use?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Well I would use the term extremism. I will not rather use Jihadist or Islamist, or whatever. These are, as you rightly said, maybe are not the right nomenclatures, but extremism, the Kamikaze of Japan were not Muslims. The IRA of Ireland were not Muslims, and all of them, they were doing suicide. So it's everything, that one goes to the extreme makes him to do that type of behavior.

Killing the people in mosques, killing himself, while he is still happy and smiling, feeling that he's victorious while he's killing himself, so this is the nature of when people go to the extreme, whatever base is that; whether it's religious, whether it is nationalism, whether it is something else. So I would have liked to call these people extremists.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let me get back now to the challenge that

you've said is the one that we've neglected the most as an international community, which is now building on the military and security progress in your country to get to the development challenge, which is the only way to make the security progress durable as I think I understood you to say.

What do we need to do better? May be you could begin by telling us a little bit about what you are able to do today, and then that will naturally lead into a discussion of what you think you need to do more, and how we can help.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: In many -- many times there is a very clear link between poverty and extremism, poverty and hope, when people lose the hope, and they become very fragile and very easily to be influenced in whichever way, direction, and in organizing group wants to move. Hiring them with very small amount of money, threaten them easily, showing them there is a better way of doing things than just being -- remain idle.

So there are so many -- there are many areas that in Somalia now, the question is which comes first, the security? Full and security and the stability to be put in place, and then only we start the development; or a lack of development feeds the insecurity that existed. When the people have no opportunity to love, they (inaudible) still have no chances, then we cannot be secure. And if there is no security, we cannot attract investment, and big project is to come so that people get employment and all this, so the whole thing links together.

But the average we are using is that wherever there is relative security, we need to start some economic activity so that the people can -- And security right now, is more of perception than reality. Recently -- recent indicators are that Mogadishu is not among the top ten cities of the world. It's not number one, number two, number five even, it's not number six, number seven.

There are cities that today, in the eyes of the people, seems to be very secure cities, but research shows that there are more deaths in Mogadishu than -- more death in those cities than in Mogadishu. So a (inaudible) more of it is perception. Somalia is the wrong place, it has been there, it's a no-go.

In 2011, 2012, early, many of our international partners called Somalia, it's a no-go only. You'll remember that the Prime Minister of Turkey, his family, more of his cabinet were there, and they were moving in Mogadishu, all the corners; and by that time the young boys and the girls who work with the international (inaudible), were not allowed to go Mogadishu because it's not secure. It's not safe enough.

So, it's more of -- more of perception than a reality, the security issue, but the most important thing what I would say is that, economic endeavor should start. It has to go hand-in-hand with the security progress we are making. And that's what happening. Today Mogadishu is a different place, the roads are rehabilitated well. A lot of people get employment. New hotels emerge, new malls and supermarket emerge, new business has taken place, so it's moving.

And there are road rehabilitation program that will start soon in the two adjacent regions to Mogadishu which are the food basket of Somalia, to make at least, the agricultural produce, reach the major markets easily.

Somalia, particular in the southern part, we started the export of livestock, and in a couple of months, we will be starting the export of banana again, after almost 18 years. So life is coming back like that, it's pretty slow, but it's coming, and this is very important. In one project in Mogadishu where there was a training center, was the building of a huge training complex was there, 2,000 people were working for six months. After six months, it gradually declined, and another six months, maybe 1,700-800 people will go as the projects ends.

So 2,000 people getting employed today, earning something was very -- and that was only one project, when we have a number of the projects in different places. Now we are going to start 100 kilometer road to the construction in three different places, so 300 kilometers of road will (inaudible), will start soon. So that will be important. So this is -- these are some of the things, and Somalia is getting back to the world. I don't know.

Of course the banana we used to export to Europe, but today it's not possible because of the quality, standards, criteria, but still we have a very large market in the Arabian Gulf, which we can export both meat, livestock, hides and skins, banana, sesame, and many other agricultural produce. So Somalia is just getting back its economic activities alive.

MR. O'HANLON: How can we help more? And here I want to make clear, I'm not necessarily asking you to repeat what you might have asked President Obama earlier this week. Or what you might have asked any specific Member of Congress this week, because any -- I'm sure any such conversations, first of all, might have been private. Or secondly, might have been constrained by politics and by budgets.

But if we can just put that aside, just to help us think through the real needs in Somalia, and where you would like the international community to do more. Are there specific kinds of funds, tasks, expertise where we should be trying to find the ability and the resources to do more than we are doing today?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: The need is for Somalia, if we just start to list, the list is endless, it's too long. The challenge is, how do we prioritize those long lists of needs? Which ones are the ones that if we succeed will become a sort of triggering effect for others to also move forward? So security has to be number one priority in Somalia.

And then the estate-building program, building institutions, capacitating the institutions with qualified people, with norms, rules, regulations, procedures put in place so that the old practices will be changing. That itself is another priority area.

The third priority area is the issue of economic recovery. The country has been in an emergency state for a long time. Now we are very much focused on moving the country from emergency to recovery, and then from recovery to development. So making that happen and what we have been and -- what we have been presenting to our international partners in the New Deal Program year in Brussels; and in London also last year, here in the United States, is how Somalia can be supported in the issues of the capacity building of the institutions.

And then the development of -- and this part of development of human capital, which is training, and all this education, and the development of the infrastructure; when one opportunity exists, it's one corner of Somalia. And the other corner of Somalia there's the need for that particular facility or opportunity, but it's very difficult to move, because there are no roads, there are no bridges, or because there are no human capital that is strong enough to make this thing useful to the country.

These are the areas that we have been on. So there are sub-areas of all of them, but capacitating the state institutions, capacitating the human capital of Somalia, and then developing the infrastructure. Roads, energy, bridges, ports, airports, these are -- so, within each area there are certain -- some priorities of where to start, but these are the overall major areas that we have been focusing in the last one year or so.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much. I'm going to open it up now. So please, once I call on you, wait for a microphone and we'll go from there. We'll begin with the gentleman here in the second row. Oh, he's coming right up. Yeah. Please identify yourself.

(Question not heard)

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you, Joe. The issue of (Inaudible), the American, Somali Citizen in Belgium, we have contacted with the Belgium authorities, our Ambassador in Brussels have been constantly engaging, but you see it is a case that is in the judicial system of the Government of Belgium, and we are following closely the case, and our Ambassador continues to visit them in the prison.

That's, right now, what the Somalia Government who have been in contact with their lawyers, and whatever necessary information that the Somali Government has and that supports this case has been provided to them, and just, we are awaiting the result of the courts, so that's a case in the court, and the Somali Government is closely watching and working with the lawyers.

Our Ambassador is in charge of that in Brussels. Now regarding the role of the United States, yes; but Mogadishu, as you rightly said, is not as dangerous as maybe Bagdad and Kabul, but it has one difference. In Bagdad and Kabul there are American forces in place, who at least can guarantee the security of the America staff in the ground. In Somalia we don't have the American forces in the ground. So it took a bit longer but now we have an embassy, our embassy here in Washington opening.

We appointed a new Ambassador. Similarly the United States is opening soon its embassy in Mogadishu, appointing a new Ambassador, replacing the Special Representative, now we have, in Nairobi. And this Ambassador and this staff would be placed in Mogadishu, and they will be operating, so that will take the relationship between Somalia and USA at a different level. And we are expecting that soon. Already facilities are in preparation for the new ambassador that would be coming to Mogadishu, so the United States Government has already assured -- give us the assurance that soon the ambassador will be in Mogadishu.

So right now, the last year we have been -- the relationship between the United States and Somalia has been improving, and making a lot of progress. With the two ambassadors now in place, we are expecting that a farther improvement of progress will take place in our relationship. On the other hand, yes, the United States is supporting Somalia in the security sector, but not only in the security sector, the United States is supporting in all -- it was a major donor, traditional donor of Somalia throughout the years.

The only thing is now the kind of aid that was given to Somalia, now it's different. Mainly, it was -- previously it was more focused on the images, food handouts, what are tracking health facilities like vaccination. This is needed still, the need for that is there. But we have been engaging with the United States Government to increase the support, and to diversify it instead of emergency package only, recovery package capacitating the state, working with Somalia having a new Constitution, a new set of laws.

All this is the areas where the United States, right now, is supporting -- the support of the United States is not limited to the security sector only. It's very wide.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Next question. Ma'am here, in the third row.

MS. LaPIN: Mr. President, thank you so very much for coming to speak with us today. My name is Deirdre LaPin, I'm attached to the Africa Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Before 1990, I was the Planning Officer for UNICEF and Mogadishu, and helped to evacuate the U.N. from Hargeisa in 1988. So my heart still is very much with the country.

I wanted to ask you if you have any plans to harness the tremendous talent of the Somali Diaspora, around the world. Most Somali-extended families have members who live in communities all over the globe and this talent, their wealth and their

knowledge could do a great deal to rebuild Somalia.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you. Thank you very much. You touched a very important area, the Somali Diaspora. The Somali Diaspora is a national wealth for Somalia. It is an asset, and it's proving that that asset is very, very useful to Somalia. Today, if you go to Mogadishu, the economic activities that are going on in Mogadishu today, mainly is done by the Diaspora, the new technologies that are there, the hospitality industry that you mention now, all these are Diaspora-run business, organizations.

And in other sectors, if you go to the ministries of Somali Government, there is no one single ministry if you go today that you will not see, four or five Diaspora people working in that ministry. Some of them invaded by some partners, some of them, they can -- they are volunteers. So it's there still, but I think the usefulness of the Diaspora is more than that, it's still we are working on organizing farther.

But then we are still feeling in the ground, the usefulness of the Diaspora, they are there, but we are still feeling that more organization, and more harnessing is needed to get the maximum benefit out of our huge Diaspora that is both North America and Europe, and in the Gulf States. So it is -- the Diaspora is in the situation.

MR. O'HANLON: Ma'am, here in the second row.

MS. IBRAHIM: Thank you. Mr. President. My name is Huda Ibrahim. I am a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame. My question to you is, you mentioned Al-Shabaab, and military force is not the only solution to defeat Al-Shabaab. And my question to you is, is there room for the Somali elders to negotiate between the government and Al-Shabaab? Or, is there another alternative to talk with (inaudible)?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you. Thank you, Huda. My

government is a government that comes in place through reconciliation, through negotiations, and through dialogue, among the different clans, different elders, different social forces that exist in Somalia today. So the door of dialogue is always open. Those of -- and the government has very clearly articulated the way forward for that.

Anybody who denounces the violence, the rest we can negotiate. Whatever ideology he believes we are ready to negotiate with him. Whatever style of governance in the country that you would like to see, we are ready to negotiate, but the only thing that is negotiable -- that's not negotiable is the violence, killing the people. A mass, a lot of them, disturbing the social life, manipulating the -- because of the certain weaknesses that certain circumstances are compelled to the Somali society, benefiting out of that, and then changing the social fabric of the whole nation.

These are some of the difficult things that are not easy to negotiate or to accept it, but -- and we have said a number of times, we have produced a document on that. Publicly we have said, the first -- the only condition that we have with them is to denounce the violence, beat it. Denounce the violence, denounced the ideology of Al-Shabaab, which is violence-based, extremism-based.

The rest we can negotiation, and that door is open, and we have a very good number of young people who came back through this process of -- and we established centers for them so that we can make sure that they are back, and we have people to have a dialogue with these young boys, when they are in that center. And then they are given the skills training. Some of them, when they were young boys who come from different corners of Somalia, and when they went through these rehabilitation centers, we call it their address, and they took back to the community.

So it's already there, the mechanism is there, and there is a very good number of young people coming through that, but the top group, the Shebaab mainly,

they consist of three groups. One group is the bulk of the fighting force, young boys that have been distorted, that have been misled by using religions coupled by using that economic (inaudible), and many others. That's one group.

There is another -- and that's the bulk, there is another group, which next to that, which belongs to minority, minority clans or minority groups that have been pressured and subjected to maybe unfair treatment by major clans. So they have sense of revenge, and the Shebaab gives them opportunity, to come and to your revenge, that they can kill their elders, kill their intellectuals, and nobody can (inaudible), so they utilize that sort of grievance in some parts of the society.

The third is a core group, which is the leadership and Emniyet, those who are committed to the ideology, many of them, Non-Somalis. So we are dealing with these three different groups, the bulk of them try to provide economic opportunity; training, new skills, so that they can be easily employed. The other group who've got that revenge, using reconciliation, the elders, that they will not be punished because of what they have done, but they need to recognize that they -- and then ask forgiveness or that process is still there.

The third group, I don't think we have readily available tool for them, the foreigners, they have to go home, this is not their country. And the others, as I've said, if they denounce the violence and the extremism; this is their country, they can't be a part of the main stream of the society. So there is a possibility of negotiation, reconciliation, possible

MR. O'HANLON: We might go back to the fifth row.

MR. CALINGAERT: Thank you. Michael Calingaert, Brookings, and Council for the United States and Italy. I was a diplomat in Somalia long ago. I was in Mogadishu before independence and after independence, and I was there in July 1,

1960, when Proclamation of Independence was made.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Good.

MR. CALINGAERT: One question, at the time there was a lot of interest and concern not on Somalia, but all the emerging countries in Africa, of how this was going to work out. One cause of concern was tribalism, if that's the right term, the existence of the clans, which in a sense provides some stability in democracy, but also is the cause of conflict and tension. And certainly the history of Somalia as of late 1960s bears that out.

So my question is, what about today? Is that still an issue? What is the clan division, and what is the role and significance of that today?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: First of all, Somalia has no tribes, but Somalia has clans. Somalia is one tribe, when we got the definition of tribe in line with the tribes in Africa. Kikuyu, Hausa, these kinds of tribes when you look, Somalia is one tribe with the same language, same feature, same culture, same everything, but we have clans. And it is the social way of life, the social architecture of the Somalis is clans. It's there. And clans were a socialist structure that was very useful in the Nomadic society in the rural areas, and in the old traditions.

But it shows to be a little bit difficult, and maybe not as good as it is in other parts of the social life in the politics. Clans have very limited interest, and the scope of the clan is limited, and the national politics is ideas that can sense of Somalis and all the geographical locations in Somalia. Clans, they have a way of life and how to deal with the neighboring clan. Not the one next to that even.

The traditional laws of the customer laws that depends on the context of that clan, there are certain Somali level, custom laws, but mainly it is contextual situation. So clans prove to be not very much useful in the politics, national politics, and as you

said, it's still there, and because in Somalia we don't have political parties, we don't have trade unions, we don't have other professional associations, so the only means of association we have is the clan, so we are using it, and that's how today, the 4.5 formula, used to reorganize the political topography of Somalia.

So clans are still there, they have major influence in the politics, and sometimes good, but sometimes very difficult to meet with them, align with the modern thinking of estate building. So the challenges are still there, but this is who we are, and this is what we are, we use them in as the good trends, and the good aspects the clan has.

MR. O'HANLON: If I could just interject, before going back to the audience. Is it time for Somalia to consider political parties? Is that something that should arise either before or maybe shortly after the 2016 elections? Or do you think that that's just going to have to happen if and when it ever happens, or should it be something that you consider encouraging as President?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: No. Even today in Somalia, there are political parties established by the civil society members, established by different groups; groups who are not attaching much hope to the clan politics. The only thing is that it's still our political structure, or the framework, it's not yet well established. The laws that govern the political pluralism is not yet fully in place.

We are working on that in the parliament. So we have the political parties already there. People organizing, trying to organize themselves on the paces of the idea, the political idea they have, and the political vision they have on Somalia, but we cannot say that that's exactly the political party as the standard of other places, where the rules of the game are in place.

But Somalia, we need to start somewhere, and that's the beginning, and

I'm sure it will improve. Somalis are people who are very entrepreneurial, catching up new ideas and improving new ideas. Already it's there, the only limitation that we have is still these rules are not yet finalized in many parts. So we are working on it, and before the year ends, we will have the political party law in place and you will see political party is mushrooming in Somalia.

MR. O'HANLON: There, in the third row; in the yellow tie.

QUESTIONER: (off mic)

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Well, there are a lot of questions on aid and its effectiveness all over the world, we know. Aid is useful when it's used properly, when it's provided at the right time, when it's provided in the right area, and when it's led by the needs identified by the recipients, not by the -- by those who provide it, but the recipients, this is the need we have today. But many times aid has already decided somewhere else, and people will go (inaudible), and is it readily available, but not necessarily that that package, the response the needs of the recipient.

So it all depends on how we manage the aid, but aid is useful, and will (inaudible) Somalia; in the history of the post conflict environment there is no one country in the world that experience a state collapse and come back by its own, without international support. Every country that got out of the post conflict situation was done so with the support of outside.

Whether that's a multilateral organizations of the U.N., or regional organizations, or whether it had come from friendly country, like what the United Kingdom did in Sierra Leone, or what France did in Cambodia, or (inaudible), or what now, African Union is doing in Somalia. So, there's one way or the other always, imposed conflict -- otherwise the transition would take longer and longer, and that's the experience of Somalia.

It took us 12 years to transit from a Stateless to a state, 12 years transition. Why? One of the reason was Somalia was not given the proper aid at the right time, and in the right place. So it prolonged the transition. So countries may come back at the end, but it will take long and it will -- they will pay a heavy price on that.

So aid is always -- Somalia is not an exception, in one aspect, it's part of the post conflict environment in the world, and on the other hand, Somalia is an exception because it's almost now, the coming January, 2015, (inaudible) general rule be toward 25th year, since the collapse of the state in Somalia. Quarter of a century is a long time, so that makes Somalia an exception, and we need exceptional treatment even in the aid, to Somalia. Compared to countries who have been in civil war or state collapse, three years, four years, five years, it's different when you are there, 25 years, or 20 plus years.

So aid is useful if it fills this type of criteria. Somalia is not an exception compared to other past conflict, on one hand. On the other hand, it's exception because it's the longest state collapse that the modern history of the world is experiencing today.

Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Here, in the front row.

MR. SIMONSON: Hi. Matt Simonson, and I work at the Search for Common Ground. I'm wondering, as your state modernizes and develops, will there be a future for the nomadic herders in the countryside, with that lifestyle?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Well, the traditional way of life is nomadic in the rural area. And the Somalis, they are herders, looking after their cattle, camel and goats, searching constantly for water and pasture. And traditionally, the traditional conferences of Somalia were basic on that, looking water and grazing for the livestock. Now, that's the way of life, we do not intend to change that life as people calling them all to come to the urban area, no. But we wanted to improve the nomadic life, provide them

the facility that is available.

It's very difficult when the society is in -- communities, in caution to move, to blend and presented, but even then, Somalia has experience in how to deal with this, because this is what we have been doing in the 30 years we were a state. So the intention is to improve the life, to provide the veterinarian service for the livestock, to provide the health service for them, to provide education for their kids, but not to change the whole thing, and say, now you'll become sedentary, or you become -- no, that will not be possible.

The Somalis, this is the way of life, and we do believe if we improve that, and we instead of getting the traditional practices of livestock herd, and if we introduce new technology, new ways of herding the livestock, and the modern (inaudible), I think economic it will produce -- very good for the country, and it will give better life for the -- without changing their way of life and their culture.

MR. O'HANLON: Before going to the gentleman here in the second row, let me interject a quick question that's partly related, although it's a little more geographic in scope. Do you have a long-term vision for Somaliland and the Puntland to be reintegrated under common leadership and common governance? Or is that too distant of a prospect, even if you might still hope for it, too distant of a prospect for us to be talking about it at this stage?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Yes. The unity of the country, making Somalia united again, and one country, and functioning under one state, was a priority for us, and day one, when I come to the office we'll start. There is negotiation going on, with Somaliland in Turkey, Istanbul. There were four sessions in the last year, and the beginning of this year, and still this is going on.

We are much, much closer than we were two years ago, because two

years ago we were not talking to each other. Now, at least we are talking. We have people who are known to be the negotiators of the unity of Somaliland and the rest of Somalia. So this is going on and we are very much hopeful that it will happen. We are working a framework; now to agree that Somalia will remain united. How? What means? What will be the style of governance? These are questions that will come later on, but now we are trying to move the obstacles that make the unity to dysfunction in -- over 20 years now.

So with Somaliland, this is going on. With Puntland the case is completely different. Puntland has never claimed that they secede Somalia, they always have been part of Somalia. But as in my introduction, as I said, the challenge of the center attracting the peripheries is one, and it's not only Puntland. In many other regions the government is continuously working. There is a program we call the stabilization program, that's working, and the top leadership of the government to make -- to reach out into the regions, and to the different administrations that are existing.

Those that were existing before we came, like Puntland, we could do that -- I visited Puntland, the Prime Minister visited, the President of Puntland visited Mogadishu. We continuously interact with the Ministry, the education sector working together, the health working too, but still we are not as solid as we would have liked to see.

So the negotiation is two layers, one is with Somaliland who claims that they are not part of Somali anymore; that's a completely different negotiation. And one that says, yes, I'm part of Somalia, but I have X concern, or Y concern, or I want to see this thing happen like that. Or I want that much of autonomy, this is something that's going on, and it's still us going on with that dialogue -- than making the Constitution.

The dialogue is taking place in a structured manner on the Constitution.

Jointly we established -- the Government of Somalia established, for example, an independent Constitution commission, and that comprises Somalis, different Somalis. Whether administration, whether clans and all this put together to negotiate on the terms of the Constitution; similarly, another commission that's in place which, again, consisting of different Somalis and regions, geographically on the issue of federalism. What type of federalism, to what extent to what will be? So these are things that are going on at two levels; one level of unity, one level of state building.

MR. O'HANLON: I see. I'm going to take two last questions together, if I could. It's the final round here, and then we'll wrap up. So here, in the second row, and then over to the gentleman in the front row. I'm afraid we've got to stop there.

MR. JOHANNES: Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity, and welcome to the United States. My name is Glodis Johannes. I'm from Ethiopia. But my first question has been asked, was the role of the Diaspora in terms of capacity building. (Inaudible), so my background is in international relations, and media and communication. One thing I'm working is, I'm in serious (inaudible) to get in the African Diaspora and development, because partly in terms of remittances, capacity -- intellectual capacity and all that stuff.

But the idea is, how is the current government is using media and technology to change the perception, or the process of what you guys go through, the opportunities that are available, that are accessible to other media? Is there information available for us to change this perception in (inaudible) to engage people, other investments or in terms of capacity?

MR. O'HANLON: Yes. Pass the mic right over here, and we'll do the two questions together, if that's okay?

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Mm-hmm.

SPEAKER: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. President, for informing this community about Somalia, and I appreciate that. As a member of the Somalia Diaspora, I had the privilege to work in Somalia in the year 2010, and work for the Organization of Federal Government. So there is already contribution of the Somalia Diaspora to Somalia.

But 40 years ago, this year, Somalia embarked on a campaign to improve literacy in Somalia. The Somali literacy campaign of 1974, '75, which improved literacy levels from 5 percent to 65 percent, as we know today, literacy in Somalia is at the local levels. Even for men it's about 35 percent, and for women and youth it's below that, under 30 percent.

What plans do we have to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Somali Literacy Campaign, and could this be a tool to help the youth and the communities learn the language, learn how to read and write, and get employment opportunities with education as a tool. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: I thank you very much, both (inaudible) and Johannes. If I go to the question of the media, Somalia enjoys -- I can claim that Somalia enjoys the media freedom that exists today in Africa. And in that part of Africa, particularly Somalia situated, we have a large number of media above TV and the radio, and websites. In Mogadishu alone we have more than two dozen radios operating, and we have, in Somalia, around seven TVs that are on the satellite, you see people using.

And let alone hundreds of websites that are Somali -- in Somali language and operated by Somali, so that's it. And the media, it is the Somali Diaspora and the Somalis who make this happen even before, long before the media law was in place. Right now we are organizing and establishing the media law. Recently there were discussions with the media people and the Minister of Information in Mogadishu, on the

media law.

There were three sessions, each one a minimum of three days, some of them five days on the -- discussing the media law before it's presented to parliament. Now, this has been finalized in consultations, and now it's on the parliament. The parliament right now is in recess, but when they come back it will be one of the first legislations that will be passed.

So today Somalia is enjoying a lot of -- yes, it's a very difficult area, a lot of media people have been killed throughout the war by the extremists, but even then, the Somali community. But there is issue of regulation and all this is needed. Issue of capacity, issue -- there are always issues, and there are always room to improve what's going on. But compared to many of our neighbors, Somalia is much, much ahead in terms of media today, in both.

And on top of that, Somalia today, the fiber optic cable landed in Somalia, in Mogadishu, and the media quality, and the capacity will further improve with the use of this fast Internet facility that's today available in Mogadishu. So media is there and it's very good, and they are useful, we call it -- it's the media is their -- the eyes and the ears of the people.

We always tell them, and advise them to tell the people good thing, put in their eyes -- in their ears, and to show the people also good thing. In a place like Somalia, there are so many bad things that can be presented, but what's important is to show. And that slogan is there, in the media society of Somalia.

When I come back to (inaudible) question about literacy; that's right, and I'm proud to be one of those young Somalis who went into the rural for the literacy campaign in 1974, and recently I visited the place where I went that day, a few weeks back, as the President, again; as a young boy in the intermediate school, in those days.

So it is there. That was a very, very huge undertaking by that time, when the Somali language was written, and the literacy campaign took place, and it changed along the path. As you've rightly said now, it (inaudible) back again, today we have 25 percent of the school-age children going to school; 75 percent are not going to school.

The rule has been working in the education, and today, only last year we succeeded to reestablish the public education public schools, before there were schools, but they were private schools. And schools run by angels, and then community contribution, some amount of money is always spending there. Only last year we started that there are public schools, that by the end of the month, the parents are not asked to pay \$10; 1,500 teachers recruited, and around 50,000 students enrolled in the first academic year.

The second academic year is starting right now. We are expecting more will be recruited -- more students will be enrolled, and more teachers will be recruited. It's a matter of -- again, it goes back to a matter of financing, to rehabilitate the school is to recruit teachers, to pay them, to train them, and this is -- it needs a lot of resources.

We are partnering with the international partners, like the USAID, and we -- extensive discussion with them yesterday, and the day before yesterday, supporting the education, but Somalia now has -- public schooling is coming back after 23 years. So, literacy, as you rightly said, it went back, but we have now in place to establish, first of all, the public schools back, then the adult education system. Then later on we may take the campaign similar to that of 40 years ago. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, as we conclude here, let me voice a couple of quick thank yous. First, to Alan and Jane Batkin for sponsoring this Statesman's Forum at which we've been honored to have the President of Somalia today; second, to all my Brookings colleagues, as well as friends here as SEIU for making this event happen, and

doing all the hard work with logistics and everything else.

Third, I think we should all be grateful to our security personnel, they don't like us to talk about them too much, they do a great job discretely, but they've had quite a week here in Washington, and we want to extend our gratitude.

And then, most of all, of course to our distinguished guest today, the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Thank you very much for being here.

PRESIDENT MOHAMUD: Thank you. (Applause)

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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