

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,  
ON COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR THE REALIZATION OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN  
SOMALIA AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON MARCH 10, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President.

First of all, I would like to place on record our appreciation to you, Mr President, for organizing today's Open Debate, which is very timely and gives us an opportunity to discuss the situation in Somalia comprehensively.

I would like to thank, in particular, the Secretary General for setting the coordinates and tone for our discussion. I would also thank AU Chairman's Special Representative for Somalia Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra.

H.E. Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, deserves our special appreciation for his comprehensive outlining of the achievements of the Transitional Federal Government thus far as well as its plans for the immediate future. I draw inspiration, in particular, from your determination to regain your land, your identity and your dignity from the extremists. I would like to assure you, Mr. Prime Minister, of India's continued commitment to supporting every meaningful effort aimed at furthering peace, reconstruction and institution building in Somalia. In keeping with discussions held earlier this week in Mogadishu by our Ambassador, including with Your Excellency, we will examine ways of intensifying our cooperation aimed at building capacity in the various identified areas of interest and in dealing with the scourge of piracy.

India and Somalia are linked by two millennia of shared history and culture. We are neighbours across the sea. In recent times, Mogadishu, Kismayo and other Somali cities have had thriving Indian communities and even today India is home to many Somalis. Indian teachers are fondly remembered by many Somalis.

In recent times, as Somalia fell into difficult circumstances, India contributed significant numbers of peacekeepers and naval and air assets [*to UNITAF and*

*UNOSOM-II]* and the work of Indian medical units among the civil populace is recalled to this day. We also remain active in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia while continuing with existing measures to protect our seafarers and maritime commerce.

Mr. President, peace and security issues confronting Somalia as well as the immediate and greater region surrounding the country are matters that concern us all. I join in commending the TFG forces and AMISOM for their recent successes. We extend our sincere condolences over the sacrifices that both have made. We have had reports of the trying circumstances in which the various contingents operate. We also wish to record our appreciation for the good work being done by UNSOA. The Council should examine the recommendations made by the African Union and others for supporting AMISOM and Somalia and its people.

Mr President, international efforts to re-establish security in Somalia will, however, not be successful so long as Al Shabaab continues to generate internal resources for its activities. We would, therefore, like to see control of Kismayo port by TFG forces so that port earnings are not misappropriated by Al Shabaab. Simultaneously, serious efforts should be undertaken by all stakeholders to cut off supplies of arms to Al Shabaab.

It is important that any nexus between domestic destabilising forces and external support agencies that aims at the induction of outside combatants or arms and ammunition be broken. This requires effective monitoring of existing sanctions and a common commitment to honour them.

The drought in Somalia as well as in neighbouring countries has assumed alarming proportions in lands even otherwise not adequately blessed with water resources. We would be prepared to work with the TFG to assist the Somali people in this regard.

Mr. President,

One of the unfortunate outcomes of the larger and ongoing tragedy in Somalia is piracy. It has not only had a destabilizing effect on global and regional trade and security, but has also brought about much suffering to seafarers and their families. Killing of four US citizens recently by the pirates is only an example, and we strongly condemn this.

As I have mentioned in the debate in the Council on 25 January 2011, Somali pirates are operating further and further off from the Somali coast. A few recent incidents of piracy have taken place about 250 nautical miles away from the Indian coast. The shift of attacks to the south and east of the Indian Ocean reflects the pirates' ability to adapt in order to bypass the security corridor established by naval forces and to extend their reach to approximately 1000-1200 miles from Somali Coast.

The Indian Navy and Coast Guard have stepped up their vigil against pirates in its EEZ. They have recently neutralized two 'mother ships' being used by the pirates.

The issue of sailors taken hostage by pirates and their plight is one that the Security Council has not addressed. My delegation feels that the ways and means of addressing this issue requires the most urgent and serious consideration of the UN. The International Maritime Bureau reported that in 2010 alone, 1,016 sailors of all nationalities were taken hostage by Somali pirates of whom 638 continue to remain hostage. It is a matter of serious concern for us that 53 Indian nationals who were aboard the hijacked ships are being held captive by pirates. The hostages are generally from working class backgrounds and often the only bread-winners of their families. The primary responsibility for the release of hostages lies with the owners of the ships concerned. In many cases, it has been observed that the owners of the ships involved do not take responsibility or display adequate interest in securing the release of the sailors under their employ. Sailors are in many circumstances required to endure very harsh conditions under the captivity of pirates and are often tortured by their captors. My delegation views this issue with the greatest concern. Democracies are, in particular, sensitive to public opinion and are impacted by a public sense of need to act on the adverse situations faced by their citizens. There has to be more effective action that the international community can collectively take. I was encouraged by the remarks of my Russian colleague. I look forward to receiving details of his initiative on piracy and supporting it.

India has been fully engaged in the efforts of the 'Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia' (CGPCS to share information, coordinate actions of navies in combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden, raising public and merchant marine awareness and, examining legal and criminal justice issues with respect to apprehended pirates. The Indian Navy has been undertaking anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since October 2008.

Mr. President,

We will work with Somali authorities and support the work of the African Union and this Council in a constructive manner. We are happy that even through trying times, bilateral cooperation programmes such as the Pan-African e-Network are being successfully implemented in Somalia. We look forward also to a visit by the Deputy Prime Minister for Planning & International Cooperation H.E. Mr. Abdiweli Ali. We will remain engaged with Somalia.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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