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**"Let's utilize the talents of our ingenious people to rebuild our nation"**

**THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN SOMALIA  
CALLS FOR A DECISIVE ACTION BY  
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

**15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

I was recently interviewed by the Italian news agency, [agenzia.nova.com](http://agenzia.nova.com) about the political crisis in our country. Nova published excerpts from the interview which you can see [here](#). I present below the original interview questions and my answers, in full. All questions are printed in italics.

*Q:*

*You are among the candidates for the presidency of Somalia in the next general election. What are the main points of your program? Do you think you have a chance of winning?*

*A:*

Well, one has to always be realistic about what can be achieved by a country that has suffered from decades of conflict and failure! We need to come up with actions and initiatives that signal new beginnings to build trust in an inclusive way across society.

There are five critical reforms that we need to undertake: 1. Security sector reforms: Somalia ranks fifth in the latest Global Terrorism Index List (2020) which measures the direct and indirect impact of terrorism, including its effects on lives lost, injuries, property damage and the psychological aftereffects. Therefore, security reforms are vital for protecting the rights and liberties of citizens and for ensuring the territorial integrity of the country; 2. State capacity and effectiveness: Building an effective and non-corrupt state, with strong rule of law and an effective public administration that successfully delivers basic public goods and services is critical for nation-building; 3. Domestic resource mobilization: Mobilizing domestic revenues—and thus reducing

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reliance on foreign aid—is critical to accomplishing the above goals. In addition, when citizens pay taxes, they demand more accountability; 4. Economic reforms: Young people represent more than 70 percent of Somalia’s population, and the unemployment rate is as high as 67 percent. So economic reforms, especially those aimed at creating jobs for young people, are key to avoid vulnerability to violent extremism, especially where over 50 percent of the population lives below poverty line. Therefore, more economic freedom, increased agricultural productivity, diversification, industrialization, and better deterrents to and management of shocks (which create food insecurity and poverty) are key Somalia’s success; and 5. Accountability: An accountable government is vital for peace in Somalia. It enables people to know how the Government is doing, and how to gain redress when things go wrong. It ensures that government officials and politicians are acting in the interests of the people that they serve. Accountability can thus increase the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the public. Accountability has five dimensions: personal accountability by leaders; peer accountability; vertical accountability embodied in free and fair elections; horizontal accountability through strong and independent institutions providing checks and balances; and diagonal accountability through a vibrant civil society.

Do I think I have a chance of winning? Well, of course, I do. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be in the race. I meet the requirements to run. I have a simple message that describes what I want to do. I’m reaching out to people, both at home and in the diaspora, to help out with my campaign; and I’m also fundraising to help pay for it. So I’m quite positive about my chances of winning.

Q:

*The situation in Somalia remains extremely chaotic, with the electoral impasse that does not seem to be about to be resolved quickly. What needs to change for this to happen?*

A:

Let’s go back one step, and ask why are we here? We are here because of the bungling by Mr. Farmaaja’s regime in the course of his four-year administration



that led to the inexcusable failure to plan and prepare for elections to facilitate a peaceful and democratic transfer of power.

That said, what we need to do now is to implement the electoral model agreed by the the Federal Government (FGS) and Federal Member State leaders on 17 September 2020. This model was also formally endorsed by both houses of Parliament and supported by all other major political actors. In my view, as the Constitutional Term of the FGS President has expired on February 8, 2021, a decisive action by Somalia's International Partners on the ground is called for.

Q:

*The opposition, as well as the states of Puntland and Oltregiuba, accuse the outgoing president Farmaajo of trying to remain in power beyond his mandate, which expired on February 8. What is your position about this?*

A:

Anyone (and I mean literally anyone but, most importantly, Somalia's International Partners on the ground) could see that Mr. Farmaaja's dictatorial tendencies were a cause for widespread political grievances capable of unravelling the FGS at any given point. Almost from the moment he came into office, the Farmaaja regime started dismantling core elements of the provisional constitution that stand in the way of threats of new dictatorship and repressive rule: the independence of parliament; the principles of the federal system enshrined in the constitution; a free press; and the rule of law.

I published my first article about Mr. Farmaaja's highly problematic leadership a year ago, and here's what I said: "Having recently installed an ally as president of Galmudug State by fiat, President Farmaajo has now begun his fourth year in power which, many believe, portends a possible undoing of the FGS itself and the tenuous peace that currently prevails in the country." This, in my view, is what is happening now.

Q:



*What are, in particular, the points that represent an obstacle to a solution to the electoral impasse?*

A:

There are three contentious issues that need to be genuinely resolved in the meeting currently ongoing in Mogadishu which has been sponsored by Somalia's International Partners, namely: the composition of the electoral management bodies; the modalities for selecting representatives from "Somaliland" in the federal institutions; and the management of elections in the Gedo region of Jubaland State.

Q:

*The international community, with the United States in the lead, have long been calling for a quick solution for holding elections quickly. Do you consider it appropriate for foreign powers to intervene in the Somali electoral process?*

A:

The track record of international interventions is indeed a mixed one. In some cases such as Bosnia, Croatia, Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, East Timor, and Sierra Leone, international interventions have helped to end violent conflicts, impose some political order, and, arguably, put societies on the road to democratic development. In others, such as Cambodia, violent conflict has all but ended and political order has been reestablished, but democracy has yet to take hold. And in other cases-such as Somalia, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, violence continues, and where nascent democratic institutions have been established, their long-term future remains in doubt. But it is not just the empirical record that generates such intense debate; it is also the nature and purpose of the nation-building enterprise itself, which many critics fear is a futile exercise in social and political engineering in societies that are, at best, poor receptacles for democratic values and institutions.

My view would be sovereignty is not only about self-government. It is also about realizing human potential and advancing the legitimate goals and aspirations of



the Somali people, including the goal of negotiating peace and ending the war. To this end, sovereignty must serve Somali people's human dignity and rights.

If we accept the proposition that only genuine democratic elections will serve to resolve peacefully the competition for political power in our country, and thus are central to the maintenance of peace and stability, we must welcome our International Partners to intervene to help us legitimize our government through genuine democratic elections as that will in turn reduce the scope for non-democratic challenges to power in our country.

Q:

*Somalia has been plagued for years by a series of enormous internal problems. In this context, external powers such as Turkey and Qatar are the main sponsor of the federal government, while others - such as the Emirates - are expanding their influence especially in the northern regional states of Puntland and Somaliland. Do you think there is a risk that Somalia will never gain its autonomy?*

A:

The norms of international legal sovereignty and Westphalian/Vatellian sovereignty became universally accepted during the twentieth century. But it has often been tacitly assumed that these norms would be accompanied by effective domestic sovereignty, that is, by governance structures that exercised competent and ideally constructive control over their countries' populations and territory. If a country lacks the capacity to exercise 'effective domestic sovereignty', external powers will be tempted to intervene. Somalia is no exception in this context. That said, no external power can eliminate the causes of our country's failure: poverty, weak indigenous institutions, and insecurity and much more. We need to do it for ourselves by reconstituting a sense of affinity, trust and cooperation, and the creation of inclusive polity, economy and society. I intend to be the leader who brings about this sense of affinity between the Somali people.

Q:

*What is the role that Italy plays and can play in helping Somalia to solve its problems?*

A:

Somalia is a prime example that without security, there can be neither peace, nor development, nor justice. Of course, we must track al-Shabaab terrorists down with a stronger military, tighten the net around their finances, and improve our intelligence capabilities. But ultimate victory against our enemies will come only by rebuilding our country and bringing hope and opportunity to millions of young Somali people around the country. Italy, as the former colonial power, has a vital role to play in supporting our government financially and technically to implement our own programmes.