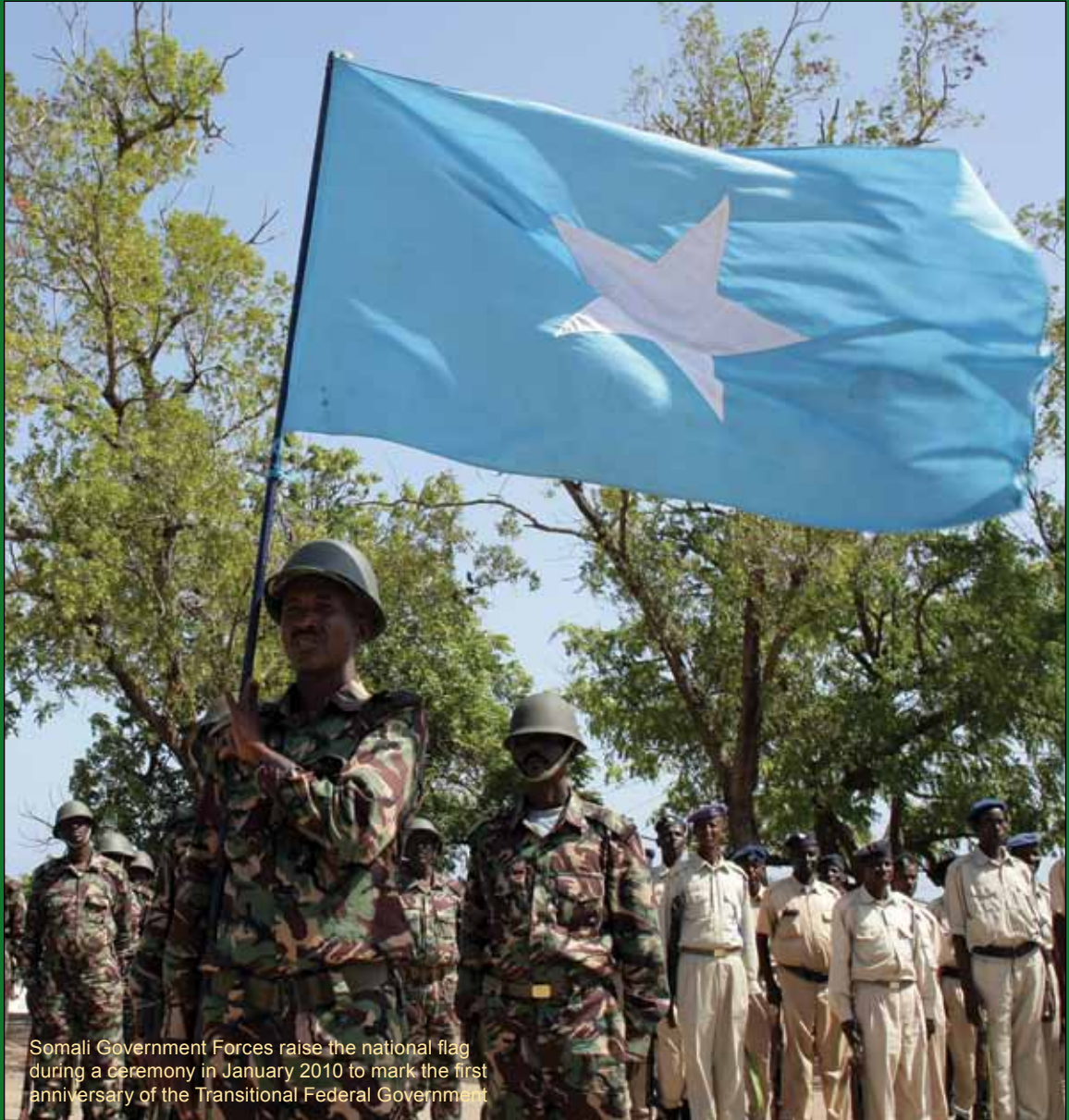


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Somali Government Forces raise the national flag during a ceremony in January 2010 to mark the first anniversary of the Transitional Federal Government

Transitional Government signs agreement with Ahlu Sunna

– AU congratulates both parties

The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia has signed a power-sharing agreement with the Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ) group. The Framework for Cooperation Agreement was formally signed on 15 March 2010, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during a ceremony chaired by the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Dr. Jean Ping. The signing

occurred after lengthy negotiations and broad consultations between the parties and within their respective organizations.

Present at the ceremony were Ministers from various countries, AU Commissioners, Ambassadors and other dignitaries, including the Prime Minister

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Transitional Government signs agreement with Ahlu Sunna



Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. His Transitional Federal Government has been strengthened by its Agreement with Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a

(continuation from page 1)

of Somalia and the spiritual leader of Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a. The agreement provides for cooperation between both parties in the quest for a peaceful resolution of the Somali conflict. It formally brings Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a into the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, by offering the group some cabinet positions, ambassadorships and other high-level appointments in the Somali government.

In a statement released to the media following the signing ceremony, the African Union described the agreement as "clear testimony to the TFG's strong and continuous commitment to reach out to those still outside the Djibouti peace process, with a view to broadening the scope of reconciliation among Somali interlocutors."

The African Union recognizes that implementing the Agreement would be challenging. Implementation would require the strong determination and will of both parties to ensure that the spirit and the letter of the Agreement are continuously upheld in a manner that guarantees the overall benefits envisaged. A key benefit of the Agreement would be the enhancement of the security situation in Somalia, which would enable the Somali Government to expand its presence across the country, in order to deliver peace dividends, including social services, to the population.

In that regard, the AU Commission has reiterated its support to the Somali Government and pledged its commitment to help the TFG implement its peace and security agenda, as well as other tasks

aimed at restoring the country to normalcy. The AU has further reiterated its call to all opposition groups that have not yet joined the Djibouti peace process for Somalia, especially the armed opposition groups, like Hizbul-Islam and Al Shabaab, to renounce violence and join the peace process.

The African Union considers the signing of this Agreement as "a clear manifestation of the desire of the Somali people to end the long running crisis in their country. It also translates to a hope for the Horn of Africa and, indeed, the continent and the world community." Therefore, the AU Commission has welcomed the invaluable support of the regional organisation IGAD, the United Nations and other partners in ensuring the Agreement's full implementation. ■

UN and EU welcome agreement between TFG and ASWJ

The United Nations and the European Union have welcomed the signing in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 15 March 2010 of a Framework for Cooperation Agreement between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia and Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a.

In a statement issued in Nairobi on 15 March 2010, the United Nations Special Representative (SRSG) for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah commended the TFG and Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a for signing the Agreement, which commits both parties, in the spirit of the Djibouti peace process, to fully cooperate towards peace and reconciliation in Somalia.

"I congratulate the signatories for reaching an agreement in the interest of the Somali people and the nation, in the interest of their dignity and towards peace in the region. The Agreement is a success for both parties and demonstrates that things can, and are changing in Somalia," Mr Ould-Abdallah said.

The SRSG reiterated his belief that Somalia is moving from a failed state to a fragile state, and his conviction that more rapprochement between Somalis would soon follow, as old obstacles to stability in Somalia slowly crumble.

He expressed appreciation to the African Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union, Norway, the United States, IGAD Member States and especially the organisation's Ethiopian Chair, for their role in securing the agreement and their overall commitment and efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Somali conflict.

"In thanking all the parties and those who assisted, I invite all the friends of Somalia to adapt to an emerging reality-- the rebirth of the Somali State." The UN Envoy added.

Similarly, the High Representative of the European Union Commission and Commission Vice President, Catherine Ashton welcomed the agreement as an important step towards broadening the reconciliation process in Somalia in support of the Djibouti peace Agreement.

The EU High Representative called on all parties to implement the Agreement and promised EU support for the implementation. She thanked the African Union, IGAD, the United Nations and all who helped make the agreement possible. ■

Communications key to restoring peace and Somalia's Islamic cultural values

- SRCC reminds experts

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and AMISOM Head of Mission, Ambassador Boubacar Diarra, has reminded communications professionals of the importance of good public information in the quest for a peaceful resolution of the Somali conflict, and the restoration of Somalia's erstwhile good image and peaceful Islamic cultural values. Ambassador Diarra was addressing staff of the AU/UN Information Support Team at their Nairobi Headquarters on 18 March 2010.

During his maiden visit to the facilities of the consortium of communications consultancies contracted by the United Nations to support the work of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the SRCC underscored the strategic importance of good and effective public information about Somalia. The work of the consortium, he continued, was rendered necessary by the misguided propaganda of the violent Armed Opposition Groups in Somalia. He called on the team to focus its messages on the youth of Somalia, whom he described as the hope and future of the country.

The SRCC lauded the work done so far by the consortium to spread the message of peace and reconciliation in Somalia, and pointed to the positive



AMISOM Head of Mission and SRCC, Ambassador Boubacar Diarra (left) receives a briefing on Radio Bar-Kulan from the station's Deputy Director, Soule Issiaka (right)

feedback from audiences across the globe, as proof that Somalis and friends of Somalia are thirsty for a message other than the destructive misrepresentations of Islam and Somali culture offered by the extremists.

He underscored the importance of broadcasting, particularly radio, in communicating peace and facilitating dialogue among the people of Somalia, and acknowledged with appreciation the contribution of international partners and experts to the communications efforts of AMISOM. The SRCC offered special compliments and encouragement to the sizable Somali staff on the team.

Following his meeting with the team, Ambassador Diarra toured the facilities of the consortium and said he was pleased by what he had seen and heard. The AU/UN Information Support Team is a consortium of three leading international communications firms contracted by the United Nations in November 2009 to provide capacity support and strategic communications advice and services to the African Union Mission in Somalia. ■



Somali civilians

Burundi's commitment to peace in Somalia is strong

By: Major General Cyprien Hakiza, AMISOM Deputy Force Commander



AMISOM Deputy Force Commander
Major General Cyprien Hakiza

For any responsible government in any self-respecting country, the decision to deploy troops in a mission like the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a big decision. You must have very good reasons to put your people's lives in harms way. In Burundi, that decision was not made lightly.

Burundi had suffered war, politico-ethnic violence for several years beginning in 1993. The violence in Burundi created too many casualties and displaced a lot of people. It caused much suffering to many of our citizens. Much infrastructure was destroyed. Our recovery was not guaranteed and we could not take it for granted.

The African Union, United Nations, our neighbouring countries and the international community helped us to come together, sit around a table, talk to each other, reach a peace agreement and implement it. We held successful democratic elections and elected a government that represents the will of our people.

All that could not have been achieved on our own. We needed and benefited from the assistance of others. Today, Burundi enjoys peace. The decision to send troops to help restore peace in Somalia is our modest way of paying back our debt to our neighbours and the international community.

We in Burundi cannot sit back and watch our Somali brothers and sisters continue to suffer because we have been there and we know from our own experience what they are going through. We owe it to ourselves and to our neighbours to help bring peace to Somalia just as others helped us in our time of need.

The second reason why Burundi joined this peacekeeping effort was

to answer the call of the African Union – this is an AU Mission. The African Union had appealed to African countries to mobilise to help find African solutions to African problems. Burundi being an AU member state, we decided to respond positively to that call.

The third reason why Burundi joined an African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia is that there exist a long history of extraordinarily close relations of friendship and cooperation between Burundi and Somalia. Since 1972, for instance, many Burundian military officers

ous Deputy Force Commander. But Burundi will not be intimidated. We shall not be discouraged because the mission – peace in Somalia – is too important.

After both attacks and our huge losses, people back at home were hurt and some were understandably angry and started wondering whether our presence in Somalia was worth all the sacrifices. However, the majority of the Burundian people know why we are here; they understand our mission and are fully supportive of the government's decision to send Burundian peacekeep-

you must ensure that they are self-sufficient. We are also here to help the population in different areas of need, for instance healthcare. We receive and treat hundreds of patients every day at our Field Hospital here in Mogadishu. We distribute water to the population. We also assist in de-mining roads, etc. Obviously, we have cooks, mechanics and other specialists.

One of the two AMISOM doctors who currently head the Fistula Repair Centre in our Field Hospital is Burundian – Dr. Evariste Nitunga. The centre is one of few fistula repair facilities in Africa and its services are in very high demand here in Somalia. So, Burundi is proud of the work its troops are doing within the African Union peacekeeping Mission in Somalia and we are determined to continue doing our best to help our Somali brothers and sisters find peace, the peace we in Burundi today enjoy.

More important than Burundi's role is the need for peace in Somalia. Certainly, this mission has its peculiarities and challenges. Nevertheless, the goal of peace in Somalia can be achieved. The most important thing is that the great majority of the Somali people seem willing and determined to end this war. They deserve support and assistance and the International Community cannot afford to let them down. The time to catch the ball on the rebound and seize the momentum is now. If this opportunity is lost, the International Community might have to use more force and marshal more resources to save Somalia from total collapse and the entire region from dangerous chaos.



Burundian peacekeepers in Somalia

have been trained in Somali military academies. Our relations with Somalia are deep and historical.

Since our deployment, we have lost more than 30 Burundian peacekeepers in this mission. Most of our fallen heroes lost their lives in terrorist attacks – 12 Burundian peacekeepers were killed in the February 2009 attack and another 12 died in the September 2009 bombings, including my predecessor the previ-

ous to help restore peace in Somalia.

**Our peacekeepers:
who they are and what they do**

The Burundian contingent consists of about 2,650 peacekeepers who are generally deployed for about a year before being rotated back home. Our contingent includes all trades because when you deploy troops in a theatre like this,

Editor's note: This article was culled from an exclusive interview the Deputy Force Commander recently granted to AMISOM Bulletin in his office at Force Headquarters in Mogadishu. The full text of Major General Hakiza's interview will be published in the first issue of the AMISOM quarterly Review – coming soon. ■

Peacekeepers celebrate Women's Day in Mogadishu



AMISOM Force Commander, Major General Mugisha (left) and Somali PM's Advisor on Gender Affairs, Asha Omar (right) co-chair Women's Day celebrations in Mogadishu

Despite the perpetual threat of suicide bombings, mortar attacks and sniper fire posed by Armed Opposition Groups opposed to the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) and the African Union peacekeeping Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), International Women's Day was successfully celebrated on 8 March 2010 at Camp Halane in Mogadishu, the main base of AMISOM's Ugandan Contingent and the Force's Headquarters.

The event, which opened with a minute of silence in honour of the Somali members of government killed in a suicide blast at a graduation ceremony for medical students in Mogadishu last December, was complementary to the main Women's Day celebration held at the presidential palace

in Downtown Mogadishu.

Organised under the theme "equal rights, equal opportunities: progress for all," Women's Day activities at AMISOM Force Headquarters were spearheaded by female peacekeepers, representatives from the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs and leaders of the Coalition of Grassroots Women Organizations (COGWO) - a Mogadishu-based umbrella group of Somali Women's organisations - as well as a cross section of activists and elders from the city.

Speaking at the event, AMISOM Force Commander, Major General Nathan Mugisha observed with regret that in many parts of Africa, conflict, poverty and other factors continue to undermine the positive contribution of women to the devel-

opment of their societies. He cited the practice of female genital mutilation which persists in many parts of the continent, parental discrimination against daughters in education, early marriage... as further challenges to the full emancipation of African women.

On her part, Asha Omar, advisor on gender affairs in the Office of the Somali Prime Minister, representing Khadija Mohamed, the Minister for Rural Development and Sports, condemned the rising spate of suicide bombings against innocent people in Somalia. She regretted that war and anarchy had rendered Somali women more vulnerable to abuse. Ms Omar thanked AMISOM peacekeepers for their efforts and sacrifice to help bring peace to Somalia.

As part of the event, the Force Commander formally received two containers of medical items donated to COGWO by Somalis in the Diaspora. The donated items were meant for use in the Fistula Repair Centre at the AMISOM Field Hospital in Mogadishu.

Elsewhere in the capital city, women activists organised a peaceful march from Bakara Market to the National Theatre, from Hamarwyne to the presidential palace and from the airport to the Ina District Headquarters. The demonstrators strongly condemned the perpetrators of violence operating from within extremist groups in the country. One group - Al Shabaab, a self-declared partner of the Al Qaeda global terrorist network - was singled out for special criticism for its practice of forcefully recruiting underage children, thus exposing the youngsters to bodily harm, criminal activity and drug abuse. ■



An AMISOM female peacekeeper in a festive mood with a Somali woman on Women's Day in Mogadishu

FC Private Anita Harerimana

Starting with this issue, AMISOM Bulletin will endeavour to tell the stories of the men and women in AU green berets, who daily put their lives on the line for peace in Somalia. Titled "Profile," this column highlights the life, activities, career, hopes, dreams, thoughts and achievements of the often faceless and nameless peacekeeper. It is an attempt to salute and honour in their lifetime the men and women who currently stand between hope and total chaos in Somalia and the entire Horn of Africa.



Private Anita Harerimana (front), with fellow AMISOM peacekeepers, helps secure the Siad Barre Academy in Mogadishu

Our first profiled peacekeeper is First Class Private Anita Harerimana. She serves in the 5th Battalion, 2nd Regiment of AMISOM's Burundian Contingent. Upon her deployment in October 2009, Anita's unit was assigned to secure the Siad Barre Academy in Mogadishu, a frequent target of insurgent mortar attacks launched from the former Somali Ministry of Defence.

Anita is not intimidated by these and other attacks from the Armed Opposition Groups. She says her rigorous mental and physical training in the Burundian National Defence Force have adequately prepared her for any peacekeeping assignments in Somalia.

Her role as an AMISOM peacekeeper, she says, offers her an opportunity to help restore peace and security in a fellow African country and she is prepared, if need be, to make the ultimate sacrifice. Her motto is 'service and honour to Burundi and Africa.'

Do not be deceived by the youthful looks and coy smile of this peacekeeper. Anita is a tough soldier. Before joining the Burundian army in May

2009, Anita had spent five years in the jungle as a guerrilla fighter with the National Front for the Liberation of Burundi (FNL), a rebel group that unsuccessfully fought the Burundian government for over ten years.

In spite of her experience, training, courage and determination, Anita misses home. She misses her friends, parents and siblings and frequently talks to them by phone. Family and friends mean a lot to this peacekeeper who regularly draws inspiration from their love, support and encouragement.

Besides the environmental and professional challenges of soldiering, Anita says she and her fellow female peacekeepers in AMISOM do not have any particular problems. Their commanding officers have made sure that their living and work conditions are appropriate for women soldiers.

Private Harerimana considers herself fortunate to have been granted the opportunity to serve her country and Africa in this mission and is enjoying the experience of working with AMISOM peacekeepers from other countries like Uganda. ■

Somalia President concludes visit to UK

On the invitation of the government of the United Kingdom, the President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, visited the UK from 8-11 March 2010. During the four-day visit, the President met with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest. President Sharif also met with Foreign Secretary David Miliband, Home Secretary Alan Johnson, International Development Secretary Douglas Alexander, Foreign Office Minister for Africa, Baroness Kinnock and Communities Minister Shahid Malik.

A joint statement released to the media at the end of the visit, indicates that the trip provided an opportunity for the UK government to hear about the TFG's efforts to enhance peace and stability in Somalia and for open and frank discussions on various issues of mutual concern. The visit also offered an opportunity for the UK to confirm its support to the Government of Somalia and commitment to the Djibouti peace process.

According to the statement, the UK's ongoing support to the TFG and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) demonstrates Britain's commitment and the bond between Somalia and the United Kingdom. Both governments agreed that a peaceful and stable Somalia is vital to alleviate the suffering of the Somali people, who face an ever worsening humanitarian crisis.

Somalia's stability, both parties observed, is important to regional stability and prosperity in East Africa, the security of the United Kingdom and other countries across the world. They noted that unrest and lawlessness in Somalia had created the conditions for terrorism to flourish, seen most recently in the declaration by Al Shabaab of links with Al-Qaeda.

The Prime Minister and the President discussed recent progress on governance and encouraged the need to continue with outreach and reconciliation efforts to all groups supporting peace in Somalia. Mr Brown thanked the President for his government's assistance in trying to secure the safe release of Paul and Rachel Chandler, two British nationals held by pirates in Somalia since October 2009.

During President Sharif's meetings with the Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Africa, both sides agreed that continued support to the TFG and the Djibouti process should remain at the core of the international com-



Prime Minister Gordon Brown welcomes Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to the United Kingdom

munity's strategy to achieve long term stability in Somalia. The Foreign Secretary acknowledged the dangerous, challenging conditions that the President, Ministers and Parliamentarians and the Somali people face every day in Somalia, as seen in the deadly 3 December 2009 terrorist attack that killed four TFG ministers and several medical students and journalists. The Foreign Secretary promised that the UK would continue to work closely with the TFG, United Nations and other international partners to deliver a cohesive and focussed programme of support to Somalia.

More UK assistance

The Secretary of State informed the President that the UK would be providing an additional £7.5 million to support humanitarian activities in Somalia, bringing DfID's humanitarian spending for 2009/10 to £19m, and DfID's total spending in Somalia to £30.5m. The Development Secretary also announced a £5.8m programme to help promote peace and stability in the region by supporting reconciliation and local peace building initiatives between clans and communities.

The President welcomed DfID's continued support, in particular their new governance programme that aims to promote stability and political progress in Somalia. Both sides discussed how the new programme will work not only with Transitional Federal Institutions to help them deliver a political transition by August 2011, but also with civil society organisations to promote their role in policy making and in reconciliation and local peace building initiatives.

During his meeting with the Home Secretary, President Sharif discussed the security challenges facing Somalia, violent extremism in particular. The Home Secretary informed the President of his decision to ban Al Shabaab, adding that it was a tough but necessary process to tackle terrorism. The President welcomed the decision and both parties agreed that the decision would help send a clear message to Al Shabaab that both countries condemn its terrorist activities, and urge it to end the indiscriminate violence against the interests of Somalia and Somalis around the world.

An important part of the President's visit was his meetings with the Somali Diaspora in the UK. At meetings in London and Birmingham, President Sharif informed Somalis in the UK of the efforts and progress his government was making towards peace and prosperity for the Somali people. He answered concerns by Somalis abroad and sought to dispel some of the negative propaganda spread by the Armed Opposition Groups about the TFG, AMISOM and the International community. ■



Somali civilians in Mogadishu

Photo of the week



Somali men dance in Mogadishu (Januray 2010) to celebrate the first anniversary of the the Transitional Federal Government

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