



UNITED NATIONS

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Office of the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia

Springette, Off Lower Kabete Road, P.O. Box 28832, 00200, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. (254 20) 4255000; Fax (254 20) 4255101 Website: www.somalia-un.org

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Message of the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator to Somalis

As we mark UN Day today, I wish to reflect on the difficulties and challenges in Somalia. The situation in Somalia has worsened over the course of the year; the people of Somalia know and experience this firsthand. Since January, we have witnessed a 77% increase in the number of Somalis who need assistance. This means that nearly one out of every two Somalis needs some sort of aid to help them pull through these challenging times. The number of civilian deaths and human rights violations continues to rise, while peace becomes a fading memory.

The UN and other humanitarian partners have also had a difficult year in Somalia. Since the beginning of 2008, 29 humanitarian staff have been killed, six (6) of whom were UN staff, and 23 were NGO staff, essential partners in daily our operations. Whether or not these people have been targeted because of their humanitarian work, it is a deep and regrettable loss to the UN, to the humanitarian community and to the Somali nation as a whole. Staff have also been subjected to harassment, abduction and threats, posing further challenges to our ability to deliver to the people of Somalia.

Unfortunately, those most at risk are the Somali national staff who are making every effort to ensure that the work of the UN – whether it be the delivery of aid, the building of schools and boreholes, the training of staff or the support of institutions – goes on. It is they who are on the frontline, driving these programmes forward for the betterment and advancement of Somalia's future.

Despite these challenges, the UN would like to reiterate its commitment to working towards peace and to better the lives of ordinary Somalis. We are there and we shall remain there. We know there are things we can do better, such as more communication, greater consultations with communities, and above all, more presence on the ground. We are working towards this, and count on your support.

We recognise that the increasing insecurity calls for innovative and flexible approaches to ensure that those most in need are taken care of. But we are a large, multinational institution and it can be hard for big institutions to learn to be nimble. We therefore appeal to the Somali people to work with us and our partners in finding solutions that allow us to operate in safety and security so that we can continue to work with you.

Today, I wish that instead of passing this message to you by written letter, we were celebrating UN Day in Somalia together. Here's to the hope and the promise that next year that may be the case.

Mark Bowden
Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator
UN Somalia