

Seizing the Opportunity for a Better Somalia

The joint Ethiopian and Somali forces have crushed the extremists in Somalia resulting in the ushering in of peace and stability to the country.

Somalia is now witnessing a new chapter after sixteen years of chaos and instability. The Transitional Federal Government is undertaking activities to ensure lasting peace and make the best of the opportunity at hand.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin on 22 January 2007 paid a one-day visit to Mogadishu, Somalia, to discuss with Somali officials issues pertaining to the current situation in Somalia and efforts being made to sustain the calm earned by the heroic deeds of the Ethiopia-Somalia joint forces.

During his visit, Seyoum delivered a message from Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf.

After talks with the president, Seyoum told journalists that the TFG has been doing an encouraging job in bringing about stability in Somalia. He urged Somali people to strive for sustainable peace and stability.

"Ethiopia wants to sustain the current opportunity" Seyoum said.

President Yusuf, on his part, told MoFA Newsletter, in Mogadishu, that his government is doing its level best to secure peace in the capital.

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Describing the prevailing situation in Somalia as "much better", he said that an opportunity has been created for an enduring peace in the country.

The disarming of the warlords, one of the major sources of insecurity in Mogadishu and a few other places, also adds to the reinforcement of peace in the area.

Higher officials of the TFG told MoFA Newsletter that, with a view to making the capital more stable, the government is engaged in activities including the appointment of officers for district police stations on the basis of power sharing among clans.

Putting emphasis on bringing reconciliation in Somalia among different groups, Yusuf explained that the TFG is making preparations to conduct a national reconciliation conference that will be held in a matter of two to three weeks. He said: "We need financial assistance from the international community as the program demands organizing a lot of people."

Yusuf commended the immense role Ethiopia played in the effort to bring about stability in Somalia. "We are grateful to Ethiopia for what it has done for Somalia."

He stated that the TFG believes Ethiopian forces are absolutely needed until its security forces fully achieve preparation needed to ensure peace and security in Somalia.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian troops have begun to withdraw from Somalia on 23 January 2007 as part of the first phase of withdrawal of Ethiopian forces in line with the parliament plan.

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The press statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the commencement of the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia states that this "has been made possible as they have achieved the completion of their mission with resounding success in collaboration with the TFG forces."

The statement confirmed that the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops is made in a manner that would not create a gap so that another round of bloodletting will not happen in Somalia.

In this regard, Ethiopia finds very much encouraging the authorization by the African Union Peace and Security Council of the deployment of the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which in turn was authorized by the Security Council of the United Nations.

The TFG of Somalia is committing itself and continues to deploy efforts for the realization of sustainable peace in Somalia, according to Yusuf.

The TFG has the vision to pacify the land, reconcile the whole country, strengthen public administration, develop strong security force, and ensure total reconstruction of Somalia to walk through the path of development.

"The era of confrontation between Ethiopia and Somalia is already over and this would, I hope, sustain in the long future" said Yusuf.

According to Yusuf, opportunities could be exploited in some areas of cooperation that would benefit the two countries aspiring for enduring friendly relations.

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The counteroffensive successfully accomplished against the ICU forces has been widely supported by the international community as it was Ethiopia's inherent right to defend itself from clear and present danger threatening its sovereignty, and also because it has created an enabling environment in Somalia that never was in the past two and a half decades.

Thus remains sustaining the opportunity to rebuilding Somalia, which, owing to the magnitude of the problem, needs the concerted efforts and participation of the international community. From political to financial support Somalia deserves the assistance of all who wish to see a stable and prosperous Somalia where terrorist elements would not be a menace to the country, its neighbors and the rest of the world.