

**MEDIA STAKEOUT WITH FRANCOIS LONSENY FALL, THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR SOMALIA AND HEAD OF THE UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA**

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA

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PRESS CONFERENCE OR SPEECH

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Q (Off mike) -- the number of the African troops in Somalia, the U.N. forces -- they are far short of the number that you have determined. Is there any hope of increasing that number anytime soon?

MR. FALL: Initially, it's 8,000 troops we are expecting to Somalia for African Union. We have now 1,700, all from Uganda. We are expecting soon 1,500 from Burundi and that is because of a lack of financial and technical support that the deployment of Burundian troops was delayed.

And we are expecting also some troops from Nigeria and Ghana. And we expect that, with the progress in the political dialogue and also with the funding, if we get the funding from the international community, we will be able to complete the mission.

Q Is it funding, sir, or more the infighting in Somalia? We heard from many African countries, "Were not going to send our troops to die there."

MR. FALL: We have -- let's say -- I can't say it's only because they are fighting. Some have some concerns because there's no ceasefire in Somalia. The deployment is always difficult, as you know, when there's no ceasefire in the country. But if you see how the Ugandan are doing in Somalia today, my -- what I'm saying is that if we get funding, more troops can be present in Somalia -- if we get the funding.

Q Mr. Fall, did we hear you correctly over there just a minute ago saying that the AU has made the decision to extend AMISON?

MR. FALL: Yes. AMISON was extended for six more months.

Q When did that take place?

MR. FALL: It -- two weeks ago. Two weeks ago.

Q If I may -- this was at one of the meetings of the AU Peace --

MR. FALL: It was the Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa in which they take the decision to extend the amending of AMISON for six more months.

Q Just to expand a little bit on what you've just said, do you see any pressure in the Council, particularly among the African members, to have the U.N. take a more active role in Somalia?

MR. FALL: Oh, absolutely. You know, the president of the African Union Commission, Mr. - (inaudible) -- just wrote to the Secretary-General, and this later was shared with the Security Council members. And the African countries are pushing really for the deployment of U.N. troops in Somalia to replace AMISON.

Q So is this something that you would expect at the end of this six month -- the six-month extension of AMISON or that you would hope for or expect?

MR. FALL: I cannot respond to that question because this is the decision of the Security Council members. But what I can say, in six months, if we get enough political progress and if we complete AMISON, there's -- the door is always open for the U.N. peacekeeping in Somalia.

But we need to push in the political dialogue to have some political progress.

Q Is this what you think the expectation of the AU Peace and Security Council is -- to keep it for another six months in the hopes that, by that time, to declare --

MR. FALL: That is --

Q -- that will be the conditions for the Security Council?

MR. FALL: That is absolutely correct from the African Union.

Q What's the timetable for the deployment of the troops you just spoke about, AMISON? How soon for that?

MR. FALL: AMISON has already started to be deployed in Somalia. We already have 1,700 from Uganda. We are waiting that soon also that Burundi will send two battalions.

Q How soon, sir?

MR. FALL: I can't say how soon because we have -- are working with the international community to -- for the equipment and the funding of the Burundian troops. But it will take place.

Q Can I, sir, get an update from your perspective on the success of the reconciliation efforts? There were -- a conference recently wasn't really successful. So how much progress has been done in terms of reconciliation in Somalia?

MR. FALL: They have just ended the first phase of the International Reconciliation Congress. By the ending, the discussion of the social issues. The social issues was very, very important in Somalia. Now, they will start in two days the discussion on the political issues. And we are expecting that the outcome of the political discussion will pave the way for assisting in Somalia. And that's our expectation.

Thank you very much.

Q Do you think it's inclusive enough, the National Reconciliation Congress? Are there groups that are being excluded?

MR. FALL: We were expecting to have all the stakeholders in -- at this Congress. We put enough pressure on the government to call all the Somalis to participate. Unfortunately, some members -- there is some part of the conflict, they need -- except to come to the Congress. But anyway, we considered that this Congress is a very good step, and it will open the door for further negotiation with the other group, particularly the -- (inaudible) -- group.

Thank you very --

Q (Off mike)

MR. FALL: Islamic Courts Union were invited, and even recently, President Ali Mahdi informed that. But if the Islamic Courts was willing to participate, they can come not only -- (off mike.) But we are still waiting to receive something from them.

Thank you very much.