

Speech: “Al Shabaab remains a vicious threat to security in Somalia, and indeed to the region.”

Thank you Madam President for convening this session and for maintaining the Security Council’s focus on preventing conflict in Africa.

I also thank Kairat for his comprehensive briefing, as Chair of the Committee, and for his tireless efforts to advance the work of the Committee since he took on the role.

And as he has reminded us, Al Shabaab remains a vicious threat to security in Somalia, and indeed to the region.

The sanctions regime remains in place to reduce that threat from Al Shabaab and to tackle threats to peace and security.

It does so firstly through the arms embargo. The regime makes it harder for illicit weapons to flow into Somalia, and it supports the Federal Government of Somalia to establish robust arms and ammunition management, accountability and transparency. These are key elements in wider security sector reform, which is both essential and urgent.

To help make progress on this vital issue, in May the United Kingdom will host the London Somalia Conference, co-chaired with the Secretary-General and the Federal Government of Somalia. We will accelerate progress on security and agree the new international partnership needed to keep Somalia on track towards increased peace and prosperity by 2020. Central to this is continuing the battle against Al Shabaab.

But as several Security Council members said during the peacekeeping debate convened by the United States Presidency last week, we cannot defeat armed groups through military means alone. The political progress made by Somalia in 2017 has laid the essential foundations for peace, stability and growth which will be so vital to ensuring that Al Shabaab’s support is choked off at the political and economic level, as well as through the restrictions of the sanctions regime which denies Al Shabaab its revenue streams.

This sanctions regime cuts off Al Shabaab’s funding, it preserves Somalia’s natural resources for the benefit of its people and Somalia’s economic empowerment, it tackles spoilers to Somalia’s political progress, and it helps to support the development of Somalia’s security forces. In this way this regime supports the Federal Government of Somalia’s fight against Al Shabaab, alongside the bravery and sacrifice of the troops of AMISOM.

And now more than ever Somalia needs our continued support. The consequences of the drought in Somalia are far reaching and we must all take action now to address the humanitarian crisis, and preserve the political and security

gains that have been made since 2012.

Turning to Eritrea, Madam President, I would like to commend the Chair for his great efforts, and those of his team for their work to engage with the Government of Eritrea since assuming the role.

The UK continues to urge the Government of Eritrea to comply with its international obligations, including compliance with the Chapter VII resolutions of this Council. We welcome the increased engagement by Eritrea with UN human rights mechanisms. And we continue to urge Eritrea to engage with the Committee, its Monitoring Group and this Council.

We should also recall that some serious outstanding issues remain. Firstly, the ongoing mediation by Qatar is vital to ensure that all Djiboutian combatants missing as a result of the 2008 conflict, including the bodies of any who have died, are accounted for, and their families given all the information available.

And secondly, the ongoing refusal by the Government of Eritrea to cooperate with the Monitoring Group, including by allowing them to visit Eritrea, means that we have no way of verifying the Group's lack of evidence for Eritrea's support for Al Shabaab, and of understanding the concerns about support for other regional armed groups.

We hope that by the time of the review of the sanctions on Eritrea, due following the mid-term report of the Monitoring Group, the Council will have some positive momentum to reflect on. To that end, we encourage Eritrea to take the opportunity for engagement, which this Council is once again offering.

Thank you Madam President.