



Federal Republic of Somali
GUDDIGA XAQIJJINTA QOONDADA HAWEENKA SOOMAALIYEED EE 30% KA AH
(Goodwill Ambassadors for 30% of Somali Women Realization)

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**Statement by Asha Gelle Dirie, Chairperson, Committee of Goodwill
Ambassadors**
**At the UN Security Council on Women's Political Representation in
Somalia: Achievements and Challenges Women**
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**Somali Women's Representation in the 2016 Electoral Process:
"Achievements, Challenges and lessons learned"**

Mr President, distinguished members of the Security Council, SRSG Michael Keating and colleagues, all protocol observed.

It is an honor for me to speak before this esteemed Council on the state of women's political representation in Somalia. For the limited time I have I cannot go through all the key milestones in the 2016 electoral process of achievements, challenges and lessons learned and it is just distributed around.

Mr President

The Committee of Goodwill Ambassadors, which I have the privilege of chairing, was appointed by the Federal President of Somalia to help women secure 30% of the seats in both house of Parliament. That was the goal agreed by the country's political leaders, in the National Leadership Forum.

As in other countries, advancing women's political empowerment in Somalia is a challenging task. Despite the huge contributions they make to society, women are often excluded from decision-making and leadership roles.

In 2012, women were selected for only 14 per cent of the seats in the federal parliament. The National Leadership Forum's decision, for the 2016 electoral process, to reserve a minimum 30 per cent of the parliamentary seats for women was therefore very encouraging.

Mr President,

To achieve this objective, the Goodwill Ambassadors first carried out a clan-mapping exercise showing the distribution of reserved seats per clan. (*The detailed mapping is attached also to my notes just distributed around*). We then launched an advocacy campaign involving civil society actors, political lobbyists, as well as Federal and state Women's Affairs Ministries, to secure the buy-in of political leaders and clan elders.

We received enormous support and encouragement from the UN and the international community at large in our quest to realize the 30 per cent goal and I would like to thank largely to the partnership and collective efforts of Somali Federal Government, National Leadership Forum, Women's Affairs Ministries, Civil society, Women activists, UN- UNSOM Gender Office, UNDP, UN Women, EU, IGAD, AMISON, Members of the Diplomatic community, Women were elected to 25 per cent of the seats in both houses of the new Parliament and my Fellow Goodwill Ambassadors. This is a substantial and unprecedented achievement for Somali women, and for Somali society as a whole.

Mr President

In the course of our work, we faced numerous challenges and learned important lessons. Allow me, to present a few of those lessons, which should be considered in preparation for the 2020 universal elections:

- In the absence of a legally- binding provision, the political decision to reserve 30 per cent of the seats for women was extremely difficult to enforce. No one was or could be held responsible and accountable for their action or inaction. *A secured legal provision is therefore critical to advancing women's political equality.*
- Securing the reserved seats for women relied in large measure on the will of clan elders, who are traditionally opposed to women's political participation. This affected women's ability to secure clan endorsement and to operate freely, without threats and intimidation. A massive structural transformation is required to advance women's representation in politics and the democratization process in Somalia.
- Throughout the electoral process, women presented a unified position, which served as a source of strength. The Goodwill Ambassadors, civil society, Women's Affairs Ministries, *we all worked in a united fashion, which had a very positive impact on our campaign.*
- Lack of adequate financial and logistical support posed a significant challenge to women candidates during the campaign period. In addition, women were disproportionately affected by election-related corruption and abuses, which weakened their position vis-à-vis the clan elders, the state-level electoral implementation teams, and state authorities. Provisions for adequate support and the creation of a level-playing field will be critical to the success of women candidates in the future.

Mr President on behalf of good will ambassadors I would like to thank government of Sweden, current chair of the council and UN Women who facilitated my trip to New York.

I thank you, Mr President and members of the Council, for your kind attention.