Special Representative Patten welcomes the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Somalia to develop a National Action Plan to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

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United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mrs. Pramila Patten, conducted a five-day visit to Somalia from 14 to 18 July 2019 at the invitation of the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The purpose of her visit was to take stock of ongoing efforts; gain first-hand knowledge of persistent challenges and engage with national authorities on how best to support their efforts in addressing conflict-related sexual violence and ensure effective implementation of the Joint Communiqué signed between the Government and the United Nations in 2013.

Accompanied by Her Excellency, Deqa Yasin, Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, Special Representative Patten visited Baidoa where she met with the President of South West State, several members of his Cabinet as well as representatives of civil society organizations. She also met with social workers who are working on an innovative Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration pilot project, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), aimed at providing much needed support to women and girls formerly associated with Al Shabab.

In Mogadishu, Special Representative Patten held constructive meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister, National Security Advisor, Speakers of Parliament, including the Upper House, and the Human Rights Committees of both Houses of Parliament as well as the Attorney-General. Although she was not able to meet with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence due to severe security constraints, her engagement with civil society organizations, including women’s grassroots organizations and service providers in both Baidoa and Mogadishu provided ample insight into the immense protection challenges faced by survivors, particularly in displacement settings.

The visit concluded with an express commitment by the Government to work with the United Nations, and the Office of the Special Representative to develop a new National Action Plan to End Sexual Violence in Conflict for the implementation of the Joint Communiqué. Special Representative Patten stressed the importance of the engagement of justice and security sector actors, as well as civil society, religious and traditional leaders in the development of the new National Action Plan, which should incorporate essential elements of Security Council resolution 2106 (2013) which outlines the nexus between terrorism and conflict-related sexual violence, and 2467 (2019) which calls for a holistic survivor-centered approach.
“My dialogue with the national authorities was frank and constructive; they did not deny or downplay the gravity of the crimes of sexual violence. Such acknowledgement is critical as no problem in human history has ever been resolved through silence and denial” stated Special Representative Patten.

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