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“Life in Mogadishu returning to Normal, after more than twenty years of Fighting and Insecurity”

Addis Ababa, 2 May 2012– Life in Somalia is slowly returning back to normalcy according to many inhabitants of Mogadishu interviewed by members of the Network of journalists covering peace and security issues in Africa (NetPeace). The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) working with the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces have pushed the Al Shabaab militia out of most parts of the City, securing market centres, the sea port, neighborhoods as well as all the major roads leading in and out of Mogadishu. *“We are at a critical juncture where Somalia is moving from an era of lawlessness, warlordism and chaos to an era of peace and stability, and to reach there we have a roadmap,”* said Somaliland's Prime Minister, Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali.

He told the NetPeace journalists during a press briefing in Mogadishu that security remains a priority for his Government. *“Since I assumed this position in June 2011, we have made a lot of progress, and today, the capital city Mogadishu is safer and more secure,”* he said.

In the streets of Mogadishu, reconstruction and commerce have resumed, the national economy, which relied heavily on the humanitarian assistance is now shifting to business. With the reconstruction boom, Somali businessmen are trading in construction materials and are also creating new employment opportunities. A visit to the seaport of Mogadishu, which reopened in 2007 after fifteen years of inactivity, showed that imports as well as exports are on the steady increase. Cargo boats were busy off loading cars, construction materials, fuel and food. According to the Deputy Manager of the seaport, the facility has now reached its peak in terms of revenues, since Al Shabaab were pushed out of Mogadishu. This represents an increase of approximately 50% over a period of one and a half years.

The Prime Minister cautioned however that despite the tremendous progress made, the threat occasioned by al Shabaab's change in tactics towards asymmetric warfare is real and serious. *"They are now targeting soft spots and innocent people using suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices but I assure you that this will not continue as the TFG moves to consolidate its full control of Mogadishu and its surroundings,"* he said.

With the support of AMISOM and other partners, the TFG will need to rebuild its institutions, create a more conducive environment for business opportunities and take over the humanitarian assistance. Challenges still lay ahead but the people of Somalia are confident that they can be tackled if the threat of Al Shabaab is eliminated and security restored sustainably.

YNS - MM