

**CENTER FOR
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**CONFERENCE ON
SOMALIA'S FUTURE**

**REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR JENDAYI FRAZER,
U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

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HOWARD WOLPE: I want to begin my introduction of our next speaker, Assistant Secretary Frazer, with just a brief anecdote from my first encounter with Somalia, which actually goes back to 1981 when I was chairing the Africa Subcommittee in the Congress and I led a delegation into Somalia. It was during a time of drought and a time of political repression. We spent four days in the capital, met with Siad Barre and his entire government. And then six months later, I met with the entire government again in Washington. This time they all were in my office as dissidents – (laughter) – telling me that everything they had told me six months earlier were a pack of lies.

I tell that story not just because of the humorous dimension of it, but because it is indeed, I think, a useful reminder that the origins of the crisis today really go back even more than 16 years. The origins of state failure in Somalia go back to the failure to build a kind of inclusive, participative, democratic governance inside Somalia that led to all the subsequent breakdowns. One of my favorite sayings is the road to hell is paved with good intentions and it's so difficult for the international diplomatic community to think in the long term, but actions that are taken to stabilize the government for one short-term purpose having very much a series of unintended long-term consequences.

Jendayi and I actually first met when she was in an earlier academic capacity. We first met in Beijing, where we were both present for a conference on South Africa. But prior to her service in government, Jendayi was then assistant professor for public policy at the Kennedy School of Government. She taught earlier at the University of Denver. Something I did not know until recently, she was also an editor of the very respected journal "Africa Today," for several years in her earlier incarnation. And then we re-engaged each other when we – neither of us at that point expected, I think, to be in government within a couple of years. In fact, it was '96 was the year I began my services as an envoy. In the Clinton administration she was serving then as political military planner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as director for African Affairs at the National Security Council and we both were engaged in Great Lakes policy.

Over the past several years I've often been asked by journalists and others about my reaction to this administration's policy toward Africa. Knowing my politics, I think people were surprised by my response, which is that I have been so pleased to see the kind of continued engagement, the mobilization of resources, the attention that this administration has taken to the Africa. In some ways, Africa has been the exception in my view compared to other parts of the world. And I think that a lot of part of that credit goes really to our speaker today, to Dr. Frazer.

She, of course, before taking on the role of assistant secretary served at the National Security Council as Africa director, advisor to the president, and then as ambassador to South Africa. And then shortly after her tenure, much to her dismay, I think, was brought back from South Africa to take on the job of assistant secretary.

During her tenure as – in both these Security Council capacities and her subsequent role as secretary, she’s been key in all the decisions that led to the establishing the \$15 billion president’s emergency plan for HIV/AIDS in Africa, the Millennium Challenge Account that’s contributed to raising American (assistance to Africa ?) to the historic high of some \$4.1 billion in 2006. And she’s also been deeply involved in establishing policies and providing support for peace-building efforts in a variety of countries from Liberia to the Congo to Burundi and Sierra Leone, as well, of course, as now Sudan.

So I’m delighted to be able to introduce to you Dr. Jendayi Frazer. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR JENDAYI FRAZER: Good afternoon everyone. It’s a real pleasure to be here and, Howard, thank you very much for that very nice introduction, very kind introduction, and also for the good friendship and partnership on Africa that we’ve had over all of these years. I really do value the work that we’ve been doing together.

Good afternoon and thank you very much for being here. I’m extremely pleased to have this opportunity to publicly discuss U.S. policy and engagement in Somalia and I thank the organizers for hosting this meeting. Clearly with the audience here, it tapped a real demand and a real need to bring together the elements of the U.S. government with the American public, academics, NGOs, and others to talk about this important country at this important time.

I know that a lot of ink has already been dedicated to this topic in the American and in the international press, but I would like to offer my impressions of everything that has transpired over the past few months and weeks. It has been a very, very busy month in the Horn, to say the least, but all of the frenetic activity that has also offered reasons to be optimistic. For the first time in at least a dozen years, we have been presented with the real opportunity to rebuild Somalia and restore effective governance, representative of all aspects of Somali society.

This moment might not have come about by exact design or in a way that we had hoped and intended, although it is not entirely surprising, but our response certainly can and will be purposeful. For over 15 years now, we have all been preparing for that moment that offers a glimmer of hope. It has arrived and we should seize it. As many of you know, I recently had the opportunity to visit Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Yemen, in addition to Kenya, in support of the broader efforts towards achieving lasting stability in Somalia. If there is one lesson I took away from the trip it is this: Somalis are ready. Somalis are ready for peace, they are tired of war. And while the transitional federal government and the transitional federal institutions are not yet ready to stand entirely on their own, they offer a promising vehicle forward for Somalia.

In all that I do as assistant secretary for African affairs, I apply the principles on any approach of the president and Secretary Rice. The principle of partnership with Africans, our conflict resolution and, Secretary Rice has coined this sense of partnership with a notion of transformational diplomacy. Working with my counterparts in African

countries and regional organizations, I always rely on the wisdom that these officials and diplomats bring to resolve in conflict. This situation has not been different.

During my recent trip, I participated in a series of high-level diplomatic meetings, conveying the United States government's position on various issues. I spoke with President Museveni in Uganda, African Union officials in Ethiopia. I also met with President Yusuf, Prime Minister Gedi, Parliamentary Speaker Hassan, representatives of Somali civil society. Of course I met with the President Saleh of Yemen and Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia.

On January 5th, Foreign Minister Tuju of Kenya and I co-chaired a meeting of the International Somali Contact Group on Somalia. I think this meeting demonstrated that the international community is committed – strongly committed to supporting a sustainable political solution in Somalia through a broad-based national dialog and providing appropriate development, security, and humanitarian assistance.

At the end of the meeting, the Contact Group issued a communiqué recognizing the historic opportunity the Somali people now have to reach a sustainable political solution based on the framework of the Transitional Federal Charter. The Contact Group reaffirmed its readiness to provide immediate support to stabilize Somalia based on UN Security Council Resolution 1725, and to build a governance capacity of the TFI and to provide immediate humanitarian and development assistance. I would ask that you have a chance to look at that communiqué, because I think it really reflects very concisely of what our policy is and the consensus of the international community as represented by the membership by the Contact Group, including the African Union, the Arab League, the United Nations, the European Union, the IGAD countries, Norway and the U.S., the cofounders of the International Contact Group on Somalia. And Tanzania is a member of IGAD as well.

The Contact Group called for inclusive governance and additionally emphasized the urgent need for funding to facilitate the deployment of a stabilization force in Somalia based on UN Security Council Resolution 1725. This communiqué and the other sentiments expressed by members of the Contact Group that day demonstrate the unity and common priorities of the international community on Somalia. And let me just say here that it is extremely helpful to have the international community, as represented by the members that I just discussed, marching in one direction on Somalia policy with common purpose. The idea of convening a contact group really came from Norway; and they came to the United States and asked us to join with them back in June. Secretary Rice very much supported this initiative and it has definitely been a mechanism of communality on our approach to Somalia.

Well, let me talk about U.S. priorities – what our three primary priorities are for Somalia. First, we want to mobilize international support to help the governance capacity of the Transitional Federal Institutions and provide humanitarian and other assistance to the people of Somalia. Next, we want to move toward the deployment of an African stabilization force in Somalia. Third, we want to encourage inclusive political dialog

between the Transitional Federal institutions and other key Somali stakeholders. There's a lot of talk about staging and phasing and what's the right approach amongst these three priorities; they are all necessary, simultaneous priorities. We are pursuing all of them together.

On the first objective, we've made good progress during the meeting of the Contact Group on Somalia, during which the United States made an initial down payment of \$40 million in new assistance for Somalia. This contribution signified our commitment to an engagement with Somalia's revitalization, and we're pushing our donor partners to work to identify additional resources. That \$40 million reflects \$16 million in humanitarian assistance, \$14 million for the stabilization force, and \$10 million for development assistance towards the people and the government to build the capacity.

As for our second objective, Uganda has offered to deploy 1,500 troops, the African Union is already working on plans for a more robust stabilization force, and other African countries are beginning to offer troops for this effort. Kenya's Foreign Minister Tuju recently traveled to five African countries to seek additional troop contributions.

However, the Somali people must be responsible for maintaining low level security. This requires the development of a civilian police force as well as an effective, unified national army representative of all Somalia's clans. Towards that end, we supported the International Contact Group's call for quickly establishing local level stability throughout Somalia – effective Somali security forces, including this civilian police force. These efforts will be supported by the deployment of a stabilization force to Somalia, which will provide a secure environment in which a political process can move forward and effective security institutions can be developed and trained.

It is very important that the peacekeeping force is led by Africans, especially participation by Muslim countries. The Contact Group correctly praise Kenya for its constructive leadership as chair of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, or IGAD, as well as the Arab League and African Union for their constructive contributions to this dialog. Africans have developed a strong record of negotiating the end of conflicts in recent years as well as developing a strong ethic of peacekeeping, and I must say we've been a part of that through our training program like the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance program, to help build their capacity to provide peacekeepers across the continent.

As Nigeria took the lead in Liberia and South Africa did in Burundi, we are hopeful that Africans will once again help what President Mbeki has called one of their sister countries. We hope that they will help it to move beyond strife and toward reconciliation. I believe and the African Union officials argued that the most direct parallel to the current situation in Somalia is the African Union's support for peace and stabilization in Burundi. That's a model that has worked and I think it offers a lot to what we're trying to accomplish in Somalia.

Most importantly is the path of peace reconciliation and stability. To a great extent this process relies on the government's willingness to reach out and create an inclusive political process. This objective, frankly, remains our greatest challenge. To be clear, the United States has supported a process of inclusive dialogue since the then Union of Islamic Courts defeated the warlords in Mogadishu in June, 2006. The United States supported the Khartoum process and the seven points of the June 22nd Khartoum Declaration, including the points of mutual recognition and cessation of hostilities.

Unfortunately, extremist elements within the Council of Islamic Courts, particularly the radical al-Shabab organization, hijacked the Courts, driving the CIC towards an agenda of military expansion and aggression. Despite international efforts to encourage a dialogue between the CIC and the TFIs, the CIC chose to repeatedly violate the terms of the Khartoum Declaration, through the takeover of Kismayo, the attack on the parliament building in Baidoa, and the military build up around Baidoa and – (unintelligible). The Council of Islamic Courts repeatedly attempted to provoke Ethiopia into a broader conflict, beginning with the probe towards Baidoa on July 19th, and again from November through December, until the fateful end of December 22nd when there were repeated clashes between the CIC and Ethiopian forces.

These were decisive moments. Ultimately, the CIC miscalculated in its decision to pursue a military agenda and refuse to join in the governance process and the transitional federal institutions through a peaceful dialog. When Ethiopia launched a counteroffensive against the CIC in December, the CIC structure disappeared faster than anyone here had anticipated, driven in large part by the withdrawal of support from the Somali population.

Hopefully, we have all learned from these developments, including the leadership of the Transitional Federal Government. The United States believe that the key to long-term stability in Somalia now lies in a process of inclusive dialogue and reconciliation – a Somali to Somali dialog. The leaders of the Transitional Federal Government must serve as symbols to this process. The statement that President Yusuf made to the Contact Group in Nairobi was a positive step, but the statement to the TFG leaders must be matched by more actions inside Somalia.

Unfortunately, it's our view that the no-confidence motion brought against the parliament speaker earlier today is likely to have a negative impact on this process of dialog and this is another challenge that we must overcome. That said, the speaker's own words and statements have also been counter to the spirit of reconciliation recently, so over the past weeks the United States has encouraged the leadership of the Transitional Federal Institutions to make clear through statements and actions that they are committed to an inclusive process of dialogue and reconciliation.

We have been clear: we see a role in the future of Somalia for those who renounce violence and extremism and we strongly believe that the Transitional Federal Government must reach out to the groups that have previously been marginalized from the TFG and the political process. The TFIs must reach out to keep groups inside Somalia,

including clan leaders, business and civil society, women's groups, religious leaders, among others. These groups, particularly those in Mogadishu, must also demonstrate their willingness to engage with the TFIs and work together constructively. And I can certainly say that civil society representatives that I met with in Nairobi were very clear that they supported their government, but they were going to demand good governance from the leadership and that they did want a process of national dialogue and reconciliation.

Additionally, the United States government suggests that the Transitional Federal Government reach out to the moderate Islamists. We do not believe that the Court should be reconstituted as a political entity. The CIC, we do not believe, should be reconstituted as a political entity, but the Transitional Federal Government should reach out to the diverse range of local, organic courts affiliated with various clans. The court's members were of course also a heterogeneous group from the outset, so they were all moderate individuals who should be drawn into a larger official political process.

We believe that this dialogue must move forward very quickly to reach a sustainable solution on the basis of the TFG charter in order to stabilize the situation in Mogadishu and allow all components of the TFIs to relocate to the country's capital. To clarify, we do not see this as an either/or proposition. The security and political components of our policy – of the policy I've just described – are more likely to function as two simultaneous efforts progressing towards the same endpoint. We understand that this is an ongoing process and that we have not reached the end.

Along with our African and international partners, the United States will remain engaged in supporting this much needed process of inclusive dialogue, while also attending to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people. I think it's important to say that it's U.S. government policy that ultimate, long-term stability and security in Somalia is based on a political process, not a military solution.

We have come a long way since mid-June, 2006. How different things looked then. I believe that we have made significant progress towards supporting the TFIs and moving toward a rapid deployment of an African peacekeeping force, which is our immediate objective, towards building a basis for a sustainable, long-term stability and security which will allow the Somali people to realize this moment of opportunity.

Clearly, work remains to be done if the political process is going to be inclusive, comprehensive and successful. While we, again, welcome the positive statement from Somali leaders and encourage them to take positive action, we are cognizant of the challenges we face and they face, possibly including a lack of political will from some elements of the TFG to engage in such a process. But we must also keep in mind one thing that works strongly in our collective favor: the Somali people, again, are tired of war and yearn for what the TFIs can now offer – stability, security and governance.

By the time the International Contact Group convenes next, and I believe that will be next month, I hope that we will be able to remark upon the political progress Somalia

has made. I am optimistic – certainly more optimistic than a few months ago, and I'm reminded of something Sojourner Truth said: "it is often darkest just before dawn." Of course, we don't always know until later.

Thank you, and I'd be very happy to take any questions that you may have.
(Applause.)

MR. WOLPE: We have 25 minutes in the session so again the same injunction please of one question and one minute. Let's begin right over here.

(Cross talk.)

Q: Thank you very much. My name is Idd Mohamed, I'm Chargé d'Affaires of the Somalia mission (to here ?) and I (was speaking ?) a few minutes ago.

I would like to share you on behalf of my government how grateful we are for your support and for your engagement on Somalia. I remember nine months ago, you came to the Security Council on the issue of Darfur and you were sitting with a delegate lunch for the special envoy of Kofi Annan for Burundi. I saw you. I was very glad to see you and I have to crash that meeting because I was a desperate man with a desperate agenda. And I have to tell you that I came and told you, please, we beg you, as a most important political figure on the state – (unintelligible) – Africa, try to engage on Somalia. So I am very grateful that you have done.

On the issue that I would like to make very clear – on the issue of this speaker, please convey the message that the United States have used (a lot of resource ?) to assist the resolution of the lifting of the army in – (unintelligible) – have tried many times and we wait patiently for two years on the issue of deployment, and you have given the Islamic Courts an – (unintelligible) – to come to terms on peace and negotiation. And they failed because we are legitimate government and you support all that. Speak of parliament, I have just spoken to my prime minister in this morning, and he has assured me that it is the prerogative of the Somalia parliament to decide what is good of Somalia. The speaker of parliament highest put a motion against the prime minister twice and he failed miserably. And no international community has said it don't do it. And even he refused. What goes around comes around. Now he lost the vote of confidence and I hope the international community will respect the decision and the sovereignty of the Somali people and the Somali parliament, and I thank you Mr. Ambassador. (Applause.)

MR. WOLPE: In the middle there, a woman in blue. We'll take a few questions and package them.

Q: Thank you. Julie Donnelly, South African Broadcasting. The goal of the Combined Joint Task Force in Djibouti is to, quote, "counter the reemergence of transnational terrorism in the region through civil-military operations and support the governmental organizations operations, enhancing the long-term stability of the region." Are those goals being met?

And the follow-up is, how do you reconcile the recent military strike with the more peaceful mission of the Joint Task Force?

MR. WOLPE: And one more question. Maybe someone who hasn't spoken before. Sitting down at the back there. Yes.

Q: Hello. My name is Jeff Hoffman. I'm from George Mason University. And I just have a question in regards to international coalition building and cooperation. The one country we haven't heard a discussion of, where you met in Beijing is China. Has there been a past influence of Chinese investment in regards to infrastructure, roads and bridges? And looking to the future with China as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, what may be a future influence of the Chinese government, and is the U.S. supportive of advantageous cooperation?

MR. WOLPE: Thank you. Let's begin with those three questions. We'll take more in a second.

AMB. FRAZER: Thank you very much. And let me first address the issue from my colleague here who we met in New York. I certainly respect the sovereignty of Somalia, and certainly will respect to the degree that we can the decisions of the Transitional Federal Government. That said, it's our role to assist and advise, and the point about the speaker is that – what happened in the past should be very different from what happens going forward and the going forward requires one thing: it requires reconciliation. The past has to be left in the past and this – the speaker is a member of the Transitional Federal Institutions. It's the symbol of the president and the prime minister backing a move to push him out is counter to that spirit of reconciliation, and so we're advising the government, as supporters of the government, to demonstrate something different now going forward. (Applause.)

And obviously we will work with them. (Laughs.) And we have resources as well, and our confidence in this government is based on that inclusiveness and that reconciliation, and so that's the spirit of I think our efforts towards the speaker.

As I said, the speaker himself has to do more to reach out. His own statements are such – against this government are such that are not helpful, not in the spirit of reconciliation, so we're pushing all sides towards this – to demonstrate something to the Somali people that's different.

On the issue of CJTF-HOA and the civil military, that is certainly part of its mandate. It's not his only mandate and I think that it was demonstrated most concretely recently in Somalia by the CJTF-HOA folks airlifting in assistance to northeast Kenya for Somali refugees from the floods. And over the last year, we've spent \$90 million. That doesn't get a lot of attention. Somehow the press never seems – no matter how many times I say it, they don't write that. In the last year, we spent \$90 million on humanitarian assistance including this airlift by CJTF-HOA, so that is in its mandate, but

its mandate goes beyond that. It's also there to help train military forces, peacekeeping forces. It's certainly there to support our efforts to counterterrorism.

As far as the one military strike that has happened with the C-130, that's not a HOA operation as such. There was a lot of talk about us being overstretched internationally. We were able to surge our capacity into the Gulf with an interdiction force, and that was at the request of the Transitional Federal Government's president, who wrote a letter to President Bush and the foreign minister who wrote a letter to Secretary Rice asking for our assistance. And so that strike came from U.S. forces that had surged into that area. And so there's no contradiction: whether HOA's conducting civil military programs, training programs or pursuing terrorist elements, we see it as all part of their mandate.

On the China – China's involvement, China I believe was heading – had a very big role on Somalia in the Security Council on the sanctions issues and the arms embargo issues, and we will continue to work with China. We have actually found a lot of constructive interaction with China on the Council. When we pushed for UN Security Council resolution 1725 at the explicit request the African Union and the IGAD countries, President Konaré came to me and said, why are you guys not doing this; we want exemption, so that any forces that come into train the TFG and to protect them can bring their weapons in with them. He pushed me on this issue and so we took it up in the spirit, as I said, of what we had been doing with African countries: working in partnership. We were – as many in the newspaper would have said – isolated.

But China did not – we weren't isolated with the Chinese and we certainly were not isolated with the African members of the UN Security Council. And we went to them, we came up with a common approach, and we brought the others on board to get a – I don't want to say – everyone agreed – a unanimous agreement for 1725. But starting working with African members of the Council, China, and then pushing other members to support this exemption for the IGASOM deployment. Now everybody has rallied behind UN Security Council resolution 1725 as necessary. Thank goodness we pushed against the common view to get that Security Council resolution and certainly two years later than perhaps should have happened.

MR. WOLPE: Let's take three more questions. There's a question in the back. Yes. Back there.

Q: Yes. Thank you. What did Ethiopia get in return for being American's proxy in this particular conflict?

MR. WOLPE: And a question against the wall. Yes.

Q: First of all, my name is Dahir Mirreh Jibreel. I am the permanent secretary in charge of international cooperation for the TFG. And I thank Secretary Frazer for devoting so much time in her capacity to support Somalia. I think what you are doing is exemplary. I think we want the rest of the world and international community to do that.

Your stated goals – three goals to get international support, to get an inclusive dialogue among the Somalis is very important.

My question is, we are 10 days into the process now, and on the ground, two vivid things have happened. One is the security operations going on. The other one is the dialogue and reconciliation which is going on in (villa ?) Somalia that all clan leaders, all groups, different groups are coming daily to solve the problem with dialogue and inclusiveness. Now, we want the 15,000 security force of Somalia, you know, resources to reach them in time. We want that dialogue to be supported so that Mogadishu becomes peaceful. We want the local administrations in Kismayo, in Baidoa, in other places –

MR. WOLPE: Could you –

Q: Finance in time. What we are saying is – this is critically important to do that. One more question.

MR. WOLPE: No, no. That's it. I'm sorry. (Laughter.) I'm sorry. Thank you. Down here in the front.

Q: Elise Labott with CNN. You speak about the capacity building that you're going to help with the Transitional Government, but you also speak about a confidence in this government, and I'm wondering what gives you this confidence in the government, because several months ago members of the administration, including yourself, were while supportive of the government doubtful of their capacity to move the country forward. And beyond international assistance what gives you the confidence that this government indeed has what it takes to move the country forward?

MR. WOLPE: Thank you.

AMB. FRAZER: Thank you. Good questions. First, Ethiopia is a country with its own interests and Ethiopia has acted in its interests given the context that it was faced with. It is not America's proxy. Therefore, it got nothing for acting in its own interests according to its own decision-making process with its own president and parliament and et cetera, so I think that that's a fairly easy question to deal with.

Secondly, on the question of the resources and needing them – he didn't actually ask a question, but I understood your point – laughter – and I agree with it, which is why Secretary Rice provided \$40 million on short notice for us to go to the Contact Group and put a down payment and say to our other partners, please do the same. Immediately, the EU representative to the Contact Group said a statement that I will never forget. He said, a dollar today is more important than \$1 million a year from now. And he's exactly right. We need the resources now and we need the resources – to answer the CNN question – so that we can help the government to have the capacity.

I don't think anything in my remarks suggested that they have the capacity. In fact, I said that we need to help them build the capacity now. As far as confidence, again, my confidence grows as the government reaches out broadly. As I said, they've made positive statements and President Yusuf made a very positive statement of inclusiveness and reconciliation to the Contact Group. We need to see that followed by consistent positive action. And will hold them – where we will hold them in our discussions with the Transitional Federal Government to that standard of their own statements.

MR. WOLPE: Thank you. In the back and sort of two-thirds back here. Over the mikes.

Q: My name is Dale Barnhart and I work with the Somali Trade Mission in Washington. And I wanted to know if the U.S. government would contribute in some way, technically or with financial resources, to enforce Somalia's EEZ considering the fact that it is a huge economic resource and also something that is a profound security interest to the region and to the United States?

MR. WOLPE: Thank you. Microphone here.

Q: My name is Abdul Kedirsalah (ph). I'm a Somali businessman, too. And I would love to congratulate you and the United States government for the support that you have given to Somalia in general. My question is – I have a small comment and a question. My small comment is I believe to help Somalia, Somalia would need a massive infusion of funds – I mean, into the billions. Washington D.C. has a budget that's more than \$5 billion. So I believe Somalia would need – one billion to start with will be very good. (Laughter, applause.) So my question is, is the United States government willing to back up and to support with the financial needs this nation requires? And secondly, what role do you believe the private sector will be able to contribute (in this country?) by private sector? Thank you.

MR. WOLPE: Thank you. And one more question right in the – can't see you. Hand right in the middle there.

Q: Well, thank you very much. (Unintelligible) – Zimmerman from the German embassy here in Washington. I would like to make a comment from the point of view of the European Union on Somalia, and I would like to thank you, Ms. Frazer, that you have given us some numbers on the very important assistance by the international community to Somalia in the last couple of years.

Both the U.S. and the EU are very much engaged in Somalia, and so it is to be underlined that we have not let Somalia alone, and taking into account the recent developments over the Christmas holidays, we have taken up this diplomatic and political challenge very quickly. The president of the Council, Mr. Steinmeyer, has been immediately in contact with Secretary Rice to assess the situation. We have sent a high ranking diplomat to the region over New Year's Eve to assess our options – what we can

do to help consolidate the situation. The European Council is going to gather next week to take hopefully a decision on our position and possible assistance.

I don't want to get into this sort of beauty contest telling numbers and I am not authorized to do so, but it will be a significant contribution. Also under the impression of the discussions from today's morning, I would like to rephrase the window of opportunity that has been quoted a couple of times. I feel that we have a window of opportunity, but also the TFG has a window of opportunity, and I have the feeling that both windows are shutting. Thank you. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. WOLPE: Since we're running out of time, we'll just take two more questions. Okay. One question here, and then one back there.

Q: Thank you very much. (Off mike.)

MR. WOLPE: Use the microphone, please. I'm sorry.

Q: My name is Habib Abi (ph) I'm a long resident in Washington – (off mike). First, I would like to thank you for your very strong engagement in ushering the – (off mike).

MR. WOLPE: Put the microphone right in front of your mouth.

Q: I will be very short, like one question is the timeline for this stabilization force. We've heard from many sources that the window is closing, the ambassador from the EU just said he cannot sustain this level of engagement in Somalia materially, politically, economically. We have to leave. Can you assure those of us who live – also – (unintelligible) – especially the ones in the Diaspora whose hopes have been raised many times over the last 15 years in Djibouti, in Sodere, in Eldoret, in Nairobi, now – is there any way – could you assure us that there will not be a vacuum, we will not fly back into total chaos?

MR. WOLPE: Thank you. And for the last question, right there. Yes. The gentlemen in the light coat. In the blue shirt. (Laughs.)

Q: Thank you. I just had a quick question about –

MR. WOLPE: Identify yourself, please.

Q: E.J. Hokerner (ph) Princeton University. I just had a quick question about the regional dynamics of the problem in Somalia, and in the past, of course, regional rivalries have been unhelpful in resolving the situation in Somalia and I'm wondering if you think that those regional rivalries have been addressed and that the mechanisms are in place to deal with those problems that could occur in the future?

MR. WOLPE: Great. Good questions all.

AMB. FRAZER: Very good questions. Why don't I start with the last and then go forward to the first? On the regional dynamics, I think that there was a divide we all knew in within IGAD. I think that IGAD is coming back together around supporting the Somali people. I think that that's very helpful. Everyone is giving the Transitional Federal Government leadership the same message. That's extremely important.

I don't know about Eritrea at this point. Eritrea did have fighters in there, very senior people as a matter of fact. They were providing arms. Others were as well, but Eritrea most certainly to the Council of Islamic Courts. I dismiss some of the rhetoric that comes from Eritrean spokespersons. That I don't think necessarily reflects their government's assessment of the current dynamic, so the one – everyone else in the region I think is very positive. And I mean the broader region, the Horn, East Africa, and at least on my visit to Yemen – and I had the opportunity earlier today to meet with the ambassador from Arab countries as well.

And I think that they're all seeing the situation fairly the same. I don't want to overstate that, but that's my sense, so other than Eritrea, I think everyone is lined up. We certainly need to engage Eritrea to be constructive moving forward, and I hope that they will be. And what I mean by constructive is that they won't try to undertake to support any insurgency or terror attacks. I know that that's one of the risks of the moment. The military operations are ongoing in Somalia, so who they would be able to support is not at all clear, but we wouldn't want that to happen.

The mechanism – IGAD I hope coming back coming back together. I hope that the IGAD foreign ministers at least will meet. They talk often. So we rely on the regional mechanism as our first entry point into building that constructive regional approach. So that's that Eritrea is an unknown wild card here.

The timeline for stabilization – we really would like – I continue to hold out that this has to happen by the end of January. President Museveni said that it would happen within two weeks of his meetings in Ethiopia when he just was there – a meeting with Prime Minister Meles. Meles has said he wants his forces out within two weeks. It's probably an optimistic timeline, but we have to get them – the Ugandan forces – in as soon as possible. Right now we're working very closely with them on the planning side of this mission looking at how we can help them with airlift. They have to go to the parliament and seek the permission of the parliament. We would expect that that would be positive. So within two weeks or – I'm sorry, by the end of the month to maybe two weeks out, by mid February – within that window is when I see the first forces arriving into Somalia. I'm so keen on this that I feel like we should just hire some planes and pick them up – (laughter) – and take them to Mogadishu airport as a symbol. (Applause.) It's extremely important. It's very, very important.

The window of opportunity – it can close very quickly, there's no doubt about it, but the biggest – and this goes to all of the other issues about infusion of funds, about economic zones, the biggest key to keeping that window open is the leadership of the

Transitional Federal Government itself, and its ability to reach out to the clans and to the subclans and to the civil society groups and to the business leaders.

The business leaders are extremely important. There's an economy in Somalia despite a failed state, and that's because of the vibrancy and entrepreneurship of Somali businesspeople – men and women. And I think that that's key because your support to the Transitional Federal Government and your leverage over them is as great as anybody on the outside in the international community.

And I would say to the Somali women: we all know how strong Somali women are. (Applause.) We all know. They're key. They're absolutely key to the future of the country and holding accountable the leadership of the Transitional Federal Government. And I've seen women in Liberia and other countries, Burundi and other places, demand the end of war, and I know that the Somali women, as strong as they are, can do the exact same thing. And so I'm relying on the window staying open by civil society, the business leaders, and especially the women keeping it open – keeping it open, insisting on the dialogue, going to your clans and your subclans and all of the leadership and saying to them, we're tired, it's enough already. Let's move forward. We've seen what the past can be. Sixteen years of no government. Let's move forward and we will support you. We may not have \$1 billion in U.S. government assistance. (Laughter.)

I don't think we'll have that, but we can do burden sharing. The relationship between the people of Somalia, the diaspora, and all the money that comes from the diaspora and all the expertise that comes in the diaspora certainly working with the U.S. government, the European Union which has more money than all of us. (Laughter.) Although my colleague – I must say, my colleagues in the Contact Group always tell me, no, it's the commission that has the money. (Laughter.) But working with all of us – and the Arab League. In the Arab countries, the Gulf countries, I think that we can mobilize the assistance to try to assist the Somali people, but it's not external money that's going to matter. It's the will of the people that's going to matter more than anything else. I think I've answered all the questions. (Applause.)

MR. WOLPE: I think I speak for everyone here in noting how struck I was by how much your analysis of the situation and your outlines of American policy, priorities, and direction coincided with the kind of analysis and the central themes that emerged in this morning discussion, of particular importance: the primacy of the internal political process. In all post-conflict situations, the biggest challenge is not to put in peacekeeping forces, it's not talking in some abstract way about the setting of institutions, it's trying to create processes that can restore trust and relationships so that people can go forward on some sense of their common interest and that is the tough part. So for recognizing that, I'm very grateful, and for your willingness to engage in this conversation today, many, many thanks. (Applause.)

(END)