

Introductory remarks from Patrick Terrien of the Columbus Council on World Affairs:

IT GIVES ME GREAT HONOR TO INTRODUCE HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF SOMALIA. AFTER NEARLY TWO DECADES OF CIVIL WAR, SOMALIA'S TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT FACES A COUNTRY CHALLENGED BY SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES: POVERTY, FAMINE, DISEASE, RIVALLING WARLORDS, AND TERRORISTS, NOT TO MENTION PIRACY. THE PRESIDENT WORKS TO BRING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY TO HIS HOMETLAND.

IN AUGUST, SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON MET THE PRESIDENT IN NAIROBI AND DESCRIBED HIM AS, QUOTE, STANDING UP FOR THE PEOPLE OF SOMALIA AND AGAINST AL SHABAB. ON JANUARY 31ST, 2009, HE CURRENTLY OVERSEES THE TRANSITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA, WHICH IS THE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT COALITION FORMED WITH THE BACKING OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS.

PRIOR TO BECOMING PRESIDENT, HE WAS THE LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE FOR RELIBERATION OF SOMALIA AND FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ISLAMIC COURTS UNION. PRESIDENT AHMED IS A LEARNED MAN, EDUCATED IN LIBYA AND THE SUDAN, THEN TO TEACH IN SECONDARY SCHOOL, GEOGRAPHY, ARABIC, AND HE SPEAKS ARABIC AND SOMALI. PLEASE JOIN ME IN WELCOMING PRESIDENT SHARIF SHEIK AHMED.

(APPLAUSE.)

Begin President's remarks from Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed:

THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST MERCIFUL, THE MOST GRACIOUS, GENTLEMEN AND LADIES, DISTINGUISHED LEADERS, I AM HONORED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EVENT THAT IS VERY IMPORTANT AND VERY VALUABLE. IT REALLY GIVES US A GOOD SENSE OF SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGES US TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS. OUR VISIT TO AMERICA WAS A VERY FRUITFUL ONE, AND IT SHOWED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA ARE READY TO HELP SOMALIA. LIKEWISE, IT GAVE US OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE SOMALIS WHO ARE HOSTED AND GIVEN GOOD RECEPTION IN THIS COUNTRY. THEREFORE, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, ESPECIALLY THIS STATE, THAT WELCOMED US VERY WELL YESTEDAY AND WHO ORGANIZED THIS EVENT.

AS YOU KNOW, SOMALIA WAS IN A CRISIS FOR A VERY LONG TIME, FOR 18 YEARS, MANY PROBLEMS. THE SOMALI PEOPLE WERE FACING CIVIL WAR, WHICH BENEFITED A FEW PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL INTERESTS. AS YOU KNOW, SOMALIS ARE PEOPLE WHO SPEAK ONE LANGUAGE, HAVE ONE RELIGION WHO DO NOT HAVE ANY APPARENT DIFFERENCES.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE DIFFERENT POLICIES AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS CAUSED A CIVIL WAR IN SOMALIA. THE STAGE AT WHICH THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT COLLAPSED WAS A VERY CRITICAL ONE IN 1991. AND WE CAN ASSERT THAT THE WORLD DID NOT PAY THE NECESSARY ATTENTION TO SOMALIA. AND THAT CAUSED THE WAR TO PROLONG AND GO ON FOR A LONG TIME.

THE LAND OF SOMALIA IS SAID TO BE VERY NICE, NATURALLY, WITH A VERY GOOD CLIMATE AND IT IS RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES. IT HAS 3,333 KILOMETERS OF

COASTLINE. IT ALSO HAS MANY LIVESTOCK, CAMELS, CATTLE, AND GOATS, AND IT ALSO HAS VERY FERTILE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND VARIOUS OTHER RESOURCES.

THE SOMALI PEOPLE ARE VERY INDUSTRIOUS AND VERY BUSINESS-ORIENTED. IN THEIR HISTORY, THEY NEVER RECEIVED THE FOCUS OR SUPPORT IN PRODUCTION.

SINCE THE WAR STARTED, THE SOMALIS WERE BUSY TO DEVELOP THEIR COUNTRY AND PROMOTE BUSINESS IN THE COUNTRY. ONE REMARKABLE TRADE IS THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR, WHERE THEY REACHED NEW HEIGHTS AND ARE THE FIRST IN THE THIRD WORLD. BUSINESS IN EAST AFRICA IS CENTERED AROUND IMPORT. THE MAJOR SOURCE OF IMPORT TO EAST AFRICA IS SOMALIA, DESPITE ALL THE PROBLEMS.

LIKewise, SOMALIS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES HAVE PROMOTED THEIR BUSINESS FROM KENYA TO SOUTH AFRICA. THERE ARE SOMALI BUSINESSMEN AND WOMEN, AND THEY TOOK THEIR BUSINESSES EVERYWHERE. AND THEY CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT THEY JOINED MANY PRODUCTIVE THINGS THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES.

LIKewise, IN THE ARAB WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN THE EMERITES, THEY WERE THE FIRST TO START BUSINESS. EDUCATION-WISE, AT THE TIME OF MOHAMMED SIAD BARRE'S GOVERNMENT, ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO ERADICATE ILLITERACY AND IGNORANCE, AND A LITERACY LEVEL OF 75% WAS ACHIEVED. BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE LATER STAGES OF THE CIVIL WAR INFLICTED HUGE DAMAGE TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. SINCE THEN, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE LIMITED EFFORTS TARGETED AT RE-ESTABLISHING THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION, THIS WAS PRIVATE EDUCATION THAT JUST ENABLED THOSE WHO CAN PAY, WHICH WAS NOT THE CASE IN SOMALIA

IN THE PAST WHEN EDUCATION WAS FREE FOR ALL, THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES IN DIFFERENT TOWNS IN SOMALIA HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THE FIGHT AGAINST IGNORANCE AND ILLITERACY, AND THEY PROMOTED PEACE. I REMEMBER DURING THE ISLAMIC UNION OF COURTS IN 2006, OR 2005 THE CIVIL SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY THE EDUCATION SECTOR, WERE VERY IMPORTANT IN BUILDING PEACE. THEREFORE, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT EDUCATION IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SOMALI PEOPLE, AND I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT CAN TAKE A HUGE ROLE IN RESTORING PEACE IN SOMALIA.

AS YOU KNOW, MOST OF FIGHTERS ARE YOUNG PEOPLE, MOST OF WHO NEVER RECEIVED GOOD FORMAL EDUCATION THAT CAN LEAD THEM TO A LEVEL WHERE THEY CAN DIFFERENTIATE THINGS AND UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY ARE IN. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO GOOD LIVING. BECAUSE OF THAT, THEY WERE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY PEOPLE WHO ARE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT WHO BELIEVE IN EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES, WHO HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE TERRORIST AL-QAEDA, AND NOW THEY ARE HOLDING THE COUNTRY AT RANSOM AND THEY ARE USING SOMALI YOUTH WHO DO NOT KNOW MORE ABOUT THE ISLAMIC RELIGION AND DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THE REST OF LIFE.

EDUCATION, I BELIEVE, SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED, AND IT CAN LEAD TO THE ATTAINMENT OF AN IMMEDIATE SOLUTION, TO THE SOMALIAN PROBLEM. I MEAN, WHEN SOMEONE IS EDUCATED, HE CAN EVALUATE AND HE CAN MAKE GOOD CHOICES AND GOOD DECISIONS AND CAN ASPIRE FOR GOOD LIFE. I BELIEVE STRENGTHENING EDUCATION CAN CREATE HOPE IN THE LIVES OF SOMALI PEOPLE, AND I THINK THAT CAN BE THE MOST IMPORTANT BASE FOR SOMALI SOLUTION. THERE ARE MANY YOUTH WHO FINISHED HIGH WHO NEVER WENT TO COLLEGE, WHO ARE DIVERTED TO THE WRONG WAY, WHICH IS NOT GOOD. I WOULD LIKE TO POINT

OUT THAT PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, WAS LOW IN SOMALIA ALL ALONG, AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS WERE FEW. THEREFORE, PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PEOPLE'S LIVES AND THE PRODUCTIVITY IN SOMALIA.

AND I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES IN AMERICA, AND AMERICA CAN LEND US A SUPPORTING HAND IN THOSE ASPECTS, ESPECIALLY THIS STATE THAT HOSTED OUR PEOPLE WHICH WE THINK CAN DO A LOT ABOUT THESE.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO MENTION HEALTHCARE, WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT, WHICH IS RELATED TO EDUCATION IN SOME WAY. THE CIVIL WAR CAUSED THE DOCTORS TO FLEE THE COUNTRY. AND THAT CAUSED A HUGE VACUUM IN TERMS OF HEALTH CARE.

SO RESTORATION OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HEALTH WOULD BE PART OF THE WORK OF RAISING THE STANDARDS OF LIVING FOR SOMALI PEOPLE. AS WE MENTIONED BEFORE, SOMALI PEOPLE HAVE LOTS OF LIVESTOCK RESOURCES. THEIR ANIMALS ARE ABUNDANT AND YOU KNOW, THE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES ARE STILL THE NOMADIC WAY, AND IT IS POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE MODERN AND MORE BENEFICIAL AND MORE PROFITABLE WAYS THAT ARE EASIER. THE COUNTRY IS SUFFICIENTLY LARGE AND THERE ARE OTHER METHODS OF RAISING ANIMALS SO THAT SOMALI PEOPLE CAN EXPORT THEIR PRODUCTS TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.

ANIMALS AND LIVESTOCK IN SOMALIA ARE SAID TO HAVE THE BEST TASTE BECAUSE OF THE GOOD ENVIRONMENT. IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, FARMING, HAS NEVER RECEIVED GOOD ATTENTION AND DUE TO MANY PROBLEMS IN ADDITION TO INSECURITY.

PROBABLY, EVERYONE MAY ASK HIMSELF, HOW CAN SOMALIA BE HELPED? EVERYONE MAY HAVE RESERVATIONS ON WHETHER ANY INITIATIVE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN SOMALIA. WE BELIEVE AN INITIATIVE IN SOMALIA CAN BE SUCCESSFUL AND SOMALI PEOPLE ARE READY FOR IT, AND THEY HAVE A RIGHT, JUST LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD, TO LIVE IN PEACE AND RECEIVE EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE.

SOMALIS COULD POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD, AS I BELIEVE BUT THEY HAVE TO BE GIVEN PROPER ATTENTION THAT CAN LEAD THEM TO THESE CONDITIONS. AND MY GOVERNMENT THAT I LEAD IS READY TO FACILITATE EVERY EFFORT TO SAVE THE SOMALI PEOPLE. AND I AM SURE YOU ALL KNOW THE PROBLEMS THAT SOMALI PEOPLE FACE, WHICH IS TAKING LONGER, AND WE ARE ALL EAGER TO SEE A DAY WHEN THAT COMES TO AN END.

I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT SOMALI PEOPLE WHO LEFT THEIR COUNTRY DO NOT RECEIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUING THEIR EDUCATION. ONLY A FEW PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO GO TO COLLEGES AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, IT IS THEREFORE AN HONOR FOR ME TO REQUEST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO GIVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION AND FACILITATE ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SOMALI PEOPLE.

AND SOMALIS ARE DESCRIBED AS VERY ACTIVE PEOPLE. AND IF THEY GO FOR EDUCATION, THEY CAN SUCCEED.

(APPLAUSE.)

I HOPE WE CAN LEAD A BETTER WORLD THAT GOES TOGETHER, THAT IS BETTER EDUCATED, THAT ENJOYS PEACE, LOVE AND COOPERATION, AND I HOPE A SOLUTION FOR THE SOMALI ISSUE. AND I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION TO SOMALIA. THANK YOU

(APPLAUSE.)

Begin Q&A period, with moderation from Patrick Terrien of CCWA. Questions from audience members were submitted on index cards:

Q: MR. PRESIDENT, THE CITY OF COLUMBUS HAS HOSTS OF SOMALI REFUGEES HERE, AS YOU KNOW. DO YOU ANTICIPATE THESE REFUGEES RETURNING TO SOMALIA? AND IF SO, WHAT KINDS OF SKILLS WOULD BE OF GREATEST VALUE FOR THEM TO ASSIST WITH NATION-BUILDING EFFORTS?

A: I'M SURE THE SOMALI PEOPLE, WHEN THEY COME HERE, THEY UTILIZE THE OPPORTUNITY THEY HAVE BEEN AFFORDED TO. SOMALIS HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF AVAILABLE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES. WHEN WE MET THEM, THEY ARE WILLING TO TAKE PART IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY. AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT WHEN THIS CRISIS SITUATION IN SOMALIA CHANGES, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO WILL HAVE STAKE AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE RECONSTRUCTION. THANK YOU.

Q: MR. PRESIDENT, YOU ARE A SHEIK AND A MUSLIM MAN, AN ISLAMIC SCHOLAR. WE HAVE TWO QUESTIONS THAT RELATE TO [RELIGION]: IN THE U.S., WE RECOGNIZE THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. PERHAPS YOU COULD ADDRESS HOW YOU PLAN TO OR NOT PLAN TO INTEGRATE OR NOT INTEGRATE RELIGION INTO YOUR GOVERNMENT, AND PART 2 -- THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL THAT YOU FORESEE.

A: FIRST, THE QUESTION ABOUT THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. ISLAM WAS THE LAST RELIGION FROM GOD, ACCORDING TO THE BOOKS THAT WE HAVE. AND THE PROPHETS THAT WERE SENT BY GOD TO MANKIND WERE MEANT TO RESOLVE SOCIAL PROBLEMS. AND EVERY SINGLE PROPHET WAS INSTRUCTED TO BELIEVE IN AND RESPECT THE PREVIOUS PROPHET. THE MISSION OF ALL PROPHETS WAS TO CALL PEOPLE TO JUSTICE -- COMING BACK TO ISLAM, ONE CANNOT BE A MUSLIM WITHOUT BELIEVING IN THE RELIGIONS OF OTHER PROPHETS. THEY ALSO USED THE WORDS MUSLIM AND MOMIN. MOMIN IS THE BELIEVER. AND GOD GAVE US PRINCIPLES, BUT GAVE US FREEDOMS TO CHOOSE OUR COURSE AND OUR ACTIONS. THINGS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH WORSHIP ARE DICTATED TO US, BUT THE REST OF LIFE, WE ARE GIVEN SOME FREEDOMS. MANY THINGS ARE UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL TO BELIEVE AND PRACTICE WHAT IS THAT IN RELIGION.

POLITICALIZATION AND MISUSE OF RELIGION IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. BUT WE ALL KNOW THAT ALL KNOWLEDGE IN THIS WORLD ORIGINATED FROM RELIGION. IT'S THEREFORE IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT THE HISTORIES OF ALL PEOPLE. FOR EXAMPLE, GOING BACK TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE HISTORY OF ISLAM, THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO TRY TO INTERPRET WHAT THE RELIGIONS SAY, AND THEY MAY HAVE MISINTERPRETED MANY OF THE ASPECTS OF THE RELIGION. AS AN EXAMPLE, I CAN TAKE THE EXAMPLE OF THE SOMALI PEOPLE HERE -- MUSLIMS, AN EXAMPLE OF THE MUSLIMS. PEOPLE WHO DO SUICIDE BOMBINGS, AND PEOPLE WHO KILL PEOPLE, THAT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WAS ACCEPTABLE IN ISLAM. ISLAM INSTRUCTIONS ARE AGAINST KILLING ONE'S LIFE AND OTHERS, AND SUCH THINGS ARE NOT ALLOWED. AND I BELIEVE ALL RELIGIONS HAVE THOSE KINDS OF INSTRUCTIONS AND THEN I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE EXAMPLE FROM THE KORAN THAT TALKS ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. IN HIS SPEECH, PRESIDENT OBAMA RECITED THAT VERSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO. IT SAYS WHOEVER KILLS ONE PERSON IS LIKE HE KILLED ALL MANKIND, AND WHO SAVES ONE LIFE IS EQUIVALENT TO SAVING ALL MANKIND. AND THAT WAS PART OF THE RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. IT WAS PART OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS, AND

IT'S PART OF THE RELIGION OF MOHAMMED NOW. AND I UNDERSTAND THAT UNDERSTANDING RELIGION CORRECTLY CAN SAVE US FROM MANY ILLS.

NOW, RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS STATE THAT THERE IS NO PROBLEM COMBINING RELIGION AND STATE. AND IN MAJOR BOOKS THAT WERE WRITTEN BY ISLAMIC SCHOLARS, THEY STATE THAT THE CONDITION OF THE STATES CANNOT BE BLAMED ON RELIGION. RELIGION CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE. NOW, IN THE WEST, WHEN THE DECISION TO SEPARATE RELIGION AND THE STATE WAS REACHED, THERE WERE MANY DISPUTES. AND THERE WAS MAJOR DEBATE BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS AND THE REST OF THE SCHOLARS WHO DECIDED HOW TO LIVE LIFE IN THE WORLD.

AND, FINALLY, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THEY SHOULD BE SEPARATED. LET ME FINISH THAT QUESTION THERE.

THE ISRAELI ISSUE IS MENTIONED IN THE KORAN, BUT THE ISSUE NOW IS THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GAZA AND PALESTINE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

(APPLAUSE.)

WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT IDEAS, BUT THERE SHOULD BE A RECITATION THAT STOPS PEOPLE FROM ACTING AGGRESSIVELY. THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE DESERVE PEACE AND THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, AND THAT SHOULD NOT POSE ANY PROBLEMS FOR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. AND COMING TO A SOLUTION OR A SETTLEMENT FOR THE ISRAELI ISSUE IS SOMETHING THAT IS ATTAINABLE. AND MANY ASPECTS OF THAT DEPENDS ON THE LEADERSHIP OF ISRAEL. IT ALSO DEPENDS ON THE ACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, WHICH IS A POWER, WHICH IS A MAJOR GOVERNMENT, THAT'S EXPECTED TO DO A LOT ABOUT THOSE ISSUES.

AND IN THIS WORLD, NO ONE CAN FORCE SOMEONE ELSE ON THEIR RELIGION, BUT WE HAVE TO SHARE THE WORLD PEACEFULLY. THANK YOU.

(APPLAUSE.)

Q: MR. PRESIDENT, ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF EDUCATION FOR WOMEN? AND WHAT IS THE ROLE THEY WILL PLAY IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT?

A: EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IS VERY IMPORTANT, AND IT DOES NOT START WITH ME. SOMALIS ARE USED TO THAT. WE MAY HAVE MANY SOMALI WOMEN WHO HAVE DOCTORATES, BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR and COLLAPSE OF SOMALIA SYSTEM, WOMEN WERE EDUCATED. AND THERE ARE MORE INSTITUTIONS IN SOMALIA.THEY ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE SEARCH FOR LIBERATION IN SOMALIA. WE ENCOURAGE EDUCATION FOR WOMEN, ANDWE BELIEVE THAT EDUCATING WOMEN CAN PRODUCE MANYGREAT GENERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. THANK YOU.

(APPLAUSE.)

Q: OUR NEXT QUESTION IS WRITTEN IN SOMALI, WILL BE ASKED IN SOMALI AND INTERPRETED. IT SAYS, "IF MOGADISHU AND SOMALIA IS UNSTABLE, WHY DON'T YOU MOVE THE GOVERNMENT TO MORE STABLE PLACES UNTIL MOGADISHU BECOMES STABLE AGAIN?"

A: I THINK MOVING THE GOVERNMENT TOANOTHER LOCATION IS NOT THE SOLUTION, BECAUSE THOSE WHO ARE CAUSING PROBLEMS WILL MOVE WITH IT. SO I THINK WE SHOULD NOT MOVE THE PROBLEM TO SOMEWHERE THAT DOES NOT HAVE ANY PROBLEMS AT

THE TIME. WE WANT TO STRENGTHEN THE PEACE IN THOSE LOCATIONS THAT HAVE PEACE. AND WE WANT TO BRING PEACE WHERE THERE'S NO PEACE. AND WE DONOT WANT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH PROBLEMS. THANK YOU.

(APPLAUSE.)

Q: WHAT IS YOUR GOVERNMENT DOING TO COUNTERACT PIRACY ALONG YOUR COAST?

A: PIRACY CAME FROM A VACUUM IN SECURITY. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE THE PIRATES LIVE IN THE LAND. WE HAVE A TWO-SIDED EFFORT. ON THE ONE SIDE, WE ARE INSTITUTING THE MARINE FORCES. ON THE OTHER SIDE, WE ARE TALKING WITH THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN PIRACY ACTIVITIES, AND WE'RE TELLING THEM THAT THEIR ACTIONS ARE HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE REPUTATION OF ALL SOMALIS EVERYWHERE, AND IT'S NOT ACCEPTABLE. AND WE HOPE IT WILL COME TO AN END.

Q: IN THE U.S. AND ESPECIALLY IN THE COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER SOMALI POPULATIONS, WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT RECRUITMENT OF SOMALIS TO COME BACK TO SOMALIA OR TO FIGHT FOR AL SHABAB. WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THIS, AND HOW WILL YOU HELP END AL SHABAB'S POWER IN SOMALIA?

A: NOW, THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUTH FROM AMERICA TO SOMALIA IS A VERY BAD THING, AND THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE ARE HERE TO SPEAK TO THE COMMUNITIES. NOW, THE PEOPLE WHO ARE HERE ARE THE ONES WE WANT TO GET EDUCATED AND WHO WE WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY. WHAT IS HAPPENING IS THE OPPOSITE OF THAT. WE SAT DOWN WITH PARENTS, WITH RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS, AND WITH INTELLECTUALS FROM THE COMMUNITIES, AND WE AGREED THAT THE PARENTS THAT WE MET, THE RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS, THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ALL WORK TOGETHER ON THAT. AND I BELIEVE THAT COOPERATION WILL BE VERY SUCCESSFUL.

(APPLAUSE.)

Q: IF THERE IS ONE SIMPLE MESSAGE YOU WOULD LIKE FOR EVERY AMERICAN TO KNOW ABOUT SOMALIA, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A: I WILL SAY SOMALI PEOPLE ARE READY FOR PEACE AND GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, AND ON BEHALF OF MYSELF AND ON BEHALF OF MY PEOPLE, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK FOR THE SUPPORT OF EACH ONE OF YOU.

Closing remarks and expression of gratitude.