

UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL OFFICE FOR SOMALIA
UNPOS

Letter addressed to the Women of Somalia by the Special Representative of the Secretary General

Dear Mothers and Sisters,

Today, 8 March 2011 is the International Day of Women which the United Nations has designated to mark and celebrate the role and status of women in the world, in every society and community. Somali women wherever they are, must stand up and rally to join their fellow women on this important day. Men must also express solidarity with women as they assert and claim their power and rights in society on this special day.

For Somali women who for twenty years have been victims of immense suffering brought by violent conflicts, this is the day to rededicate yourselves to the course of peace in Somalia and to gender equality in Somali society. It is the occasion to demonstrate, as you have done many times, your determination to fight warlordism clanism and ideological extremism. We recall with respect and admiration when Somali women have braced bullets and violent intimidation in the streets of Mogadishu and other towns to demand peace, safety and livelihoods for their families. Women continue to bear the brunt of displacements, and human rights violations from the on going conflicts and now as victims of the devastating drought and famine currently hitting Somalia. We should all stand up to alleviate and stop this suffering which can only come if we secure enduring peace in Somalia.

Women in your collective strength and disarming passion for peace, you must strive to be an indispensable factor in conflict resolution and peace making at all levels. I salute the scores grass-root women organizations in the South Central, Puntland and, Somaliland whose struggle to survive has become synonymous with the struggle for peace in Somalia. Gender equality and women empowerment is expressed in your daily actions and, decisions you make for all of us to survive through this raging conflict. Your resourcefulness has been most evident in times of adversity. Let us give women more opportunities to lead and decide on and deliver peace.

Mothers and sisters, I encourage and count on you to use this Day to unleash your power and potential to make a positive difference to the Somalia peace process. Let 2011 be a decisive milestone championed by women. You deserve our full support.

With my highest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Mahiga".

Dr. Augustine Mahiga