



Embassy of the United States of America Bujumbura, Burundi

Speech by U.S. Ambassador Dawn Liberi 20th Graduation of the African Union Mission to Somalia March 8, 2013

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to represent the American people and the U.S. Government at today's graduation of Burundi's 20th African Union Mission to Somalia battalion that will soon be deployed to Somalia.

The American government appreciates the efforts of the Government of Burundi and its extraordinary contribution of peacekeeping forces to Somalia.

It is with much admiration that we have observed recent advances by AMISOM and SNA forces against al Shabaab as well as the Government of Burundi's commitment to the mission despite the challenges of maintaining security throughout the territory liberated from al Shabaab.

Burundi plays a very important role in contributing to the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia, an impressive feat when one considers the challenges that Burundi has had to overcome in the consolidation of its own peace and reconstruction after a decade of internal conflict.

I would like to personally congratulate each soldier for the time and energy that you have dedicated to developing and refining your peacekeeping skills. Your comrades in Mogadishu work tirelessly to bring peace and stability to Somalia, and we are confident that your efforts will contribute to the future successes of the mission.

I would like to thank each member of the ACOTA team here today for their work and their commitment to our partnership with Burundi. The ACOTA trainers bring a unique combination of civilian and military experience to peacekeeping training.

I would also like to thank the military mentors from Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) as well as the Dutch military mentors for contributing the latest operational information to the training, ensuring that Burundi peacekeepers will be prepared to face the terrorist enemy in Somalia.

As the President's personal representative in Burundi, I would also like to mention the importance of the contribution of our partners in the efforts to train and equip the Burundian National Defense Forces to deploy to Somalia. I would especially like to recognize the peacekeeping training provided by France, the financial support provided by the European Union, and the logistic support provided by the United Nations to the African Union Mission to Somalia.

Despite the international community's support of AMISOM, it is important to mention that the most difficult work is accomplished by the soldiers themselves who, day by day, endure without hesitation the most difficult conditions in order to return peace and stability to Somalia.

Today, this graduation ceremony affirms the determination of the United States to support the development of capabilities that will allow African Countries to find African solutions to the continent's challenges. For this reason, the United States Government is proud of its partnership with the African Union and its mission to Somalia of which Burundi is a member.

We actively support Burundi's objective to achieve full training capacity by 2014. Burundi's goal to develop its own capacity to train peacekeeping soldiers is indicative of its commitment to be a prominent and long term African peacekeeping partners.

Thank you.