



**A Policy Report**

# Somalia's Mandate in the UN Security Council

# 2025-2026

**April 2026**

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## Executive summary

This assessment evaluates Somalia's 2025–2026 non-permanent term on the United Nations Security Council. The seat is both symbolic and strategic: It is Somalia's principal formal platform for defending sovereignty against unprecedented pressures—most notably Israel's recognition of a breakaway administration and Ethiopia's drive for sea access. Somalia therefore faces a sovereign paradox: It must project authority on the UN's most consequential diplomatic stage while its core governing institutions remain under reconstruction.

Somalia has established a credible and visible presence on the Council, confirming its political return. Yet this achievement is constrained by weak institutional architecture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) functions through ad hoc processes and politicized appointments, producing a coordination gap with an overstretched Permanent Mission in New York. The Mission's small, hardworking team lacks specialist capacity (e.g., in international law, sanctions regimes and procedures, maritime law, and economic/legal analysis) and therefore often operates reactively, unable to shape drafting or to set agendas. The result: Sovereignty protection is the defining theme of the term, but Somalia has not converted presence into consistent strategic agency.

Assessment therefore requires two lenses: acknowledge the significance of regained visibility given Somalia's disadvantage and apply an uncompromising analysis of the institutional gaps that prevent visibility from becoming influence. The final year must prioritize rapidly deployable, high-impact fixes: Create an Independent Expert Task Force to produce weekly strategic directives, embed short-term technical advisors into the Mission, enforce merit-based key appointments under the foreign service Law, and adopt a disciplined "Shield of Process" that systematizes statements, formal letters, and briefings to create an immutable UN record. If implemented quickly and coherently, these measures can convert the Council seat from a symbol of recovery into an active instrument of sovereign defense.

# 1. Introduction

## A Seat at the Table amidst Reconstruction

On January 2, 2026 Somalia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Abukar Dahir Osman, assumed the presidency of the United Nations Security Council for the first month of the year, as part of Somalia's 2025–2026 term as a non-permanent member.<sup>1</sup> The moment is historically significant for two reasons. It marks only the second time Somalia has held the Council's presidency, the first being in January 1972 during its 1971–1972 term, and, more importantly, it represents the most visible affirmation of Somalia's return to international diplomacy after three decades of civil war that rendered the state largely absent from global forums.

Yet this renewed visibility unfolded under the shadow of an acute challenge to Somalia's sovereignty. Just days before its Permanent Representative assumed the presidency, Somalia had condemned Israel's announcement recognizing a breakaway northern administration as an independent state, a move immediately rejected by major regional and international actors, including the African Union, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and China.<sup>2</sup> The United States and the European Union also publicly reaffirmed support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The symbolism of Somalia's return to the Council thus coincided with a moment of profound precarity, revealing both the progress the country has made and the fragility that continues to shape its reentry onto the world stage.

Somalia has held a Security Council seat once before, in the early 1970s, but under dramatically different conditions. At that time, the country participated as a young post-colonial state engaged in an ambitious project of state-building. The Somali government standardized a national script, launched nationwide literacy campaigns, built universities and hospitals, and sent the first generation of professional cadres abroad for training. State authority was consolidated, institutional capacity was expanding, and external engagement functioned as an extension of a coherent national project.

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1. "UN Web TV, Press Conference by the President of the Security Council (Somalia)," December 29, 2025, accessed January 17, 2026, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1z/k1zs77b699>.

2. "UN Security Council Members Condemn Israel's Recognition of Somaliland," Al Jazeera, December 30, 2025, accessed January 17, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/30/un-security-council-members-condemn-israels-recognition-of-somaliland>.

Today, Somalia is once again engaged in an ambitious project of state-building: the reconstruction of core institutions after three decades of civil war. Ministries are being reconstituted, civil servants and security forces retrained, and fiscal systems restored. The work is slower and more exacting—the work of reassembling the machinery of governance. Within this context, the Security Council seat performs a different function than it once did. It is less a stage for projecting a rising voice and more an instrument for securing the political space, partnerships, and stability required for internal recovery. This function acquires additional urgency in light of renewed challenges to Somalia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In this environment, Security Council membership assumes a role beyond symbolic reintegration: It becomes one of the few formal arenas through which Somalia can defend its sovereignty using established international processes. The January 2026 presidency therefore carries particular weight, placing Somalia in a position of heightened procedural visibility at a moment when the defense of territorial integrity demands sustained and disciplined diplomatic engagement.

The analysis that follows treats Somalia’s term on the Security Council not as a symbolic milestone, but as a live test of sovereign capacity under conditions of recovery. It examines how far visibility can be converted into agency, where institutional weakness constrains action, and how the Council can function as both a site of exposure and a tool of defense for a state still rebuilding itself. The aim is not to measure Somalia against idealized standards of diplomatic performance, but to assess what this term reveals about the possibilities—and limits—of exercising sovereignty from within an unfinished state.

## 2. The United Nations Security Council: Structure, Power, and Constraints

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), established in 1945, is the international system’s primary body for maintaining peace and security, wielding binding authority under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. For a state like Somalia that is rebuilding core institutions while confronting acute external pressures, understanding the Council’s internal power hierarchy is essential to assessing what its membership can realistically achieve.

The Council’s 15 members include the five permanent members (P5) with veto power—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and ten elected members (E10) serving two-year terms. The veto remains the Council’s central organizing force, allowing any P5 state to block resolutions contrary to its interests; this dynamic has repeatedly immobilized the body on issues from Syria to Ukraine.

For Somalia, this architecture defines both the opportunities and the limits of influence:

### **Informal Consultations**

These closed meetings are where the Council's real negotiations take place. Their opaque and simultaneous nature disadvantages smaller missions such as Somalia's, which lack the staffing required to monitor, analyze, and intervene across parallel discussions.

### **The Penholder System**

Permanent members traditionally control the drafting of resolutions on most files. This centralizes agenda-setting power and requires smaller states to exert influence through amendments and coalition-building—skills Somalia's foreign service has only recently begun to redevelop after years of institutional erosion.

### **The E10 and the African Caucus (A3)**

The elected members seek greater transparency and procedural influence, but their impact depends heavily on internal coordination. For Somalia, effective engagement with the A3 is an essential force multiplier. Weak coordination within this group significantly diminishes Somalia's ability to shape outcomes on issues affecting the Horn of Africa.

The Council's unrepresentative structure has long drawn criticism that is reflected in the African Union's Ezulwini Consensus calling for permanent African representation. Yet sustained P5 resistance has kept reform out of reach.

For Somalia, these imbalances are not theoretical—they shape the very arena in which the country must defend its sovereignty. Confronting challenges such as unilateral recognition of secessionist claims and external interference requires operating within a system whose rules overwhelmingly favor states with vastly greater leverage. Somalia's performance on the Security Council must therefore be assessed with full recognition of the asymmetric environment in which its mission works.

## **3. Methodology**

This report employs a mixed-methods approach to assess Somalia's performance during the first year of its 2025–2026 Security Council term. The analysis is guided by a central question: How has Somalia's ongoing state-building process shaped its engagement on the Council, and what factors determine its operational effectiveness?

### 3.1 Sources and Data

Data were collected between November 2024 and July 2025 through two parallel streams:

- **Documentary Review:** UN primary sources—including verbatim meeting transcripts, resolutions, and Secretary-General reports—were examined alongside analytical reports from research institutions and international organizations, as well as regional and international media coverage.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three individuals possessing direct senior-level knowledge of Somalia’s foreign-policy functioning: two former Ministers of Foreign Affairs and one official from the Ministry. Interviews focused on institutional capacity, internal coordination, and the preparation of national positions. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage candor.

### 3.2 Analytical Framework

Findings were analyzed thematically and interpreted through a state-building lens. This approach evaluates Somalia’s Security Council term as a test of sovereign agency under conditions of institutional reconstruction.

### 3.3 Scope and Limitations

Access to current officials in Mogadishu and at the Permanent Mission was not obtainable—an indicator of the transparency and institutional challenges that are themselves central to this report. Conclusions rely on triangulation between public documents and interviews with informed former officials to ensure analytical rigor.

## 4. Somalia’s First UNSC Term (1971–1972): A Benchmark of Lost Capacity

The current term is not Somalia’s first service on the United Nations Security Council. From 1971 to 1972, a decade after independence, the Somali Democratic Republic held an elected seat.<sup>3</sup> That tenure occurred during a period of centralized state-building.

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3. United Nations Security Council, “Somalia,” accessed January 17, 2026, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/somalia>

The government in Mogadishu possessed clear, national authority over foreign policy. The diplomatic corps was led by Foreign Minister Umar Arteh Qalib, while the Permanent Mission in New York was headed by Ambassador Abdulrahim Abby Farah,<sup>4</sup> a career diplomat with prior experience at the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This structure supported coherent international engagement.

The historical record, primarily from UN archives, shows a state that was an active and substantive participant.<sup>5</sup> Ambassador Farah's inaugural statement set a tone of principled engagement: "While the energies of our government and people are directed primarily to the task of nation-building, we are fully conscious of the fact that we are part of a world community of nations... Our mission here is to work for justice, peace, and equality for all."<sup>6</sup>

## 4.1 Engagements and Activities

Somalia's diplomatic activities during the 1971–1972 term fell into consistent patterns:

- On the African liberation agendas of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Namibia, and apartheid South Africa, Somalia co-sponsored and helped draft resolutions, voted consistently with the OAU position, and, in the case of Southern Rhodesia, saw a resolution it co-proposed vetoed by the United Kingdom.
- On broader global issues, Somalia supported the resolution recognizing the People's Republic of China, articulated positions on the Middle East, and participated in debates on disarmament and the India-Pakistan war.
- A notable logistical and diplomatic achievement was Somalia's role in the Security Council's meeting in Addis Ababa in January 1972; this was the Council's first session in Africa. Somali officials helped organize the meeting and used the platform to link political independence with economic sovereignty.<sup>7</sup>

## 4.2 Institutional Footprint

The mechanics of this engagement reveal a specific operational capacity. The Mission demonstrated the ability to:

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4. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1qjNkKfQ-Y&ab\\_channel=NomadsandNations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1qjNkKfQ-Y&ab_channel=NomadsandNations)

5. United Nations Security Council, Verbatim Record of the 1616th Meeting, S/PV.1616 (December 28, 1971), 4.

6. Ibid.

7. "U.N. Security Council Meets in Adis Ababa" <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/01/28/archives/un-security-council-meets-in-adis-ababa-today-to-discuss-the.html>.

- Draft and negotiate resolution text.
- Maintain consistent voting positions across a wide agenda.
- Participate in high-level multilateral logistics.
- Articulate a foreign policy that blended national interest with broader post-colonial and pan-African solidarity.

### 4.3 Context for the Current Term

This historical precedent provides a concrete point of reference. It illustrates the type of diplomatic machinery, the professional cadres, the strategic coordination, and the bureaucratic support that facilitates full participation in the Council's work. As the analysis now turns to Somalia's current term, this history forms a factual backdrop against which the context, challenges, and strategies of the 2025–2026 tenure can be examined. The following sections explore how a state returns to this arena, not from a position of consolidated authority but as part of a project to rebuild the very capacity exemplified by the earlier period.

## 5. Somalia's Second Term (2025–2026): A Return Forged in Recovery, Not Strength

The paradigm of reconstruction introduced in Section 1 shapes the operational reality of Somalia's Security Council engagement. It produces a defining tension: Somalia exercises the responsibilities of sovereign representation while the institutions that anchor such sovereign authority are being reconstructed. This dual obligation, governing externally while consolidating internally, forms the central condition under which its Council term unfolds.

This section analyzes the state apparatus charged with the task of examining concrete institutional capacities and limitations that influence how effectively Somalia can translate renewed visibility into sustained diplomatic influence. The analysis begins with core governance structures and moves outward to principal diplomatic platforms, tracing the link between institutional development and operational performance.

### 5.1 Performing Sovereignty while Building the State

Somalia's current term is therefore defined by a fundamental paradox: It must project sovereign authority on the world's most powerful stage using a state apparatus that is itself an unfinished project. This is the ultimate test of building while performing.

The election restored Somalia’s visibility.<sup>8</sup> However, in the high-stakes, fast-paced environment of the UNSC, visibility is not synonymous with capacity. Somalia entered the Council without the basic advantages other members take for granted, lacking a resourced foreign-policy bureaucracy and a coherent strategic decision-making architecture.

Therefore, while Somalia’s presence on the Security Council is in itself a significant achievement—a powerful marker of national recovery—it also serves as an indispensable platform for forging the very institutional capacities required for sustained statecraft. The following sections examine the contours of this paradox across the government machinery.

## 5.2 Government by Personality, Not Process

Across the Somali government, ministries are works in progress. The core architecture of modern governance is still under construction. This creates a vacuum with a critical consequence: Performance becomes highly dependent on individual initiative and competence rather than on institutional systems. When a skilled minister is in place, progress can be rapid. However, this makes the government vulnerable to “leadership churn.”

Frequent cabinet reshuffles—exemplified by Ahmed Moallim Fiqi’s move from Foreign Affairs to Defense and his replacement by Abdisalam Abdi Ali in April 2025—reset priorities and erased hard-won knowledge.<sup>9</sup> More broadly, the MFA has seen three different ministers in the last four years under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and experienced five ministers in five years under President Mohamed Farmaajo; these patterns illustrate chronic leadership churn and limited policy continuity. In the context of a two-year UNSC term, this lack of continuity is a significant liability.

## 5.3 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Transition

The MFA perfectly illustrates the tension between progress and constraint. Interviews with current and former officials converge on a single diagnosis: The MFA lacks a fully institutionalized “corporate” architecture.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of a clear, codified chain of command, the Ministry operates through improvised structures as formal procedures have not yet been sufficiently developed or institutionalized.

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8. “Somalia joins UN Security Council after more than 50 years,” Voice of America, June 6, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-joins-un-security-council-after-more-than-50-years-/7646503.html>.

9. “Somalia’s prime minister appoints new defence minister in reshuffle” Reuters, April 27, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somalias-prime-minister-appoints-new-defence-minister-reshuffle-2025-04-27/>.

10. Author interviews with current and former MFA officials, March–July 2025 (INT-01, INT-02, INT-03).

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This forces reliance on personalized networks and ad hoc solutions, creating an under-institutionalized environment that breeds unclear mandates and invites external pressure.

In this context, interviewees highlighted persistent political pressure in diplomatic appointments, including requests from senior officials that often bypass merit-based processes. Some respondents noted that existing legal frameworks, such as the Foreign Service Law, have at times been used to resist unqualified appointments, though enforcement remains inconsistent. Concerns were also raised about the misuse of diplomatic privileges, with estimates suggesting a significant number of diplomatic passports in circulation beyond formal institutional needs which is an indicator of how patronage can undermine the integrity of the system.<sup>11</sup>

The adverse incentives of Somalia's 4.5 power-sharing calculus intensify these problems. Diplomats, including ambassadors, are frequently selected through a power-sharing lens and through dealmaking among key political stakeholders. The result is a diplomatic corps that is often bloated but technically underqualified because it is staffed with political appointees who frequently lack diplomatic training and language fluency. Positive signs exist—new, younger diplomats entering through scholarships and the stabilization of basic human resource functions—but these remain nascent improvements that do not yet constitute a self-sustaining, rules-based system. The transition from a personality-driven organization to a functioning institution remains incomplete.<sup>12</sup>

## 5.4 A Patchwork of Overseas Missions

Somalia's embassies abroad are uneven extensions of this fledgling system. Their performance is highly variable. While some missions function reasonably well, a significant number are plagued by poor resourcing and chronic understaffing or are led by individuals who possess very little actual diplomatic experience; some struggle with basic consular functions.<sup>13</sup> The absence of a merit-based system and the influence of clan power-sharing produce appointments that prioritize political balance over technical competence. Training is increasing but remains sporadic, largely uncoordinated, and often unlinked to a structured career path.<sup>14</sup> Until a professional foreign service cadre is established, Somalia's global diplomacy will hinge on luck rather than design.

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11. Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 2025 (INT-03).

12. Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 2025 (INT-02).

13. Interview with MFA official, June 2025 (INT-03).

14. Ibid.

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## 5.5 The Permanent Mission in New York

The Permanent Mission to the UN in New York operates under the most intense spotlight of this asymmetry between expectations and means. It is consistently praised for its “hardworking, experienced diplomats,” but they are severely hamstrung by a critical lack of resources and expert capacity (e.g., lawyers, economists).<sup>15</sup>

The Mission’s challenges are structural and profound. It operates with a strikingly lean core team, often relying on just a few permanent staff supplemented by temporary advisors. This staffing shortage directly exacerbates the disadvantages inherent in the Council’s structure. The mission’s inability to cover concurrent informal consultations, in which the P5 and penholders shape resolutions, cedes critical opportunities by default and makes its operational presence purely reactive. During negotiations on thematic issues like maritime security or sanctions regimes—files of direct relevance to Somali sovereignty—a mission without a clear mandate or the drafting capacity can do little more than passively review texts crafted by others, forfeiting the initiative to powers with competing regional agendas.<sup>16</sup>

This points to a deeper issue: operational autonomy by necessity. Interviews reveal a mission that, due to the absence of a structured tasking pipeline from Mogadishu, often “must make real-time decisions based on the rhythm of informal consultations.” One official concluded that the Mission functions with a “high degree of autonomy from the Ministry” and with minimal strategic direction or oversight. The structural effects of politicized postings at home are visible: the New York Mission is often staffed or supplemented by political appointees with limited multilateral experience, placing additional burdens on the small professional nucleus and increasing turnover risk. Despite these constraints, the Mission is credited with rapidly acquiring procedural fluency, learning through doing at a breathtaking pace.<sup>17</sup>

## 5.6 A Discussion Framed by State-Building Objectives

Any discussion of Somalia’s Security Council term must begin with two contextual realities. First, the state is participating in the UN’s most powerful body while actively recovering from decades of institutional collapse; its consistent operational presence alone constitutes a significant achievement.

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15. Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs, April 2025 (INT-02).

16. Ibid.

17. Interview with MFA official, June 2025 (INT-03).

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Second, a precise evaluation is inherently constrained by the limited transparency of its diplomatic apparatus. This opacity is less likely a deliberate strategy than a reflection of the state's transitional phase where ad hoc communication often outpaces formal reporting and where institutional processes for generating and disseminating policy positions remain under development.

Given this context, a constructive analysis must measure progress against the term's overarching purpose: to function as an instrument of national reconstruction. Somalia's engagement can be examined through four sequential objectives, each representing a stage in rebuilding diplomatic capacity: Presence (Visibility), Process (Coordination), Agency (Influence), and Sovereignty (Tangible Outcomes). The central observation is that institutional underdevelopment has, thus far, largely confined Somalia's performance to the first foundational stage.

### **5.6.1 Progress on Visibility, Gaps in Systematization**

Somalia has unequivocally succeeded in establishing its Presence. Its transformation from a frequent subject of Council deliberations to a voting member is a profound political achievement, symbolizing regained statehood with every statement. However, this visible performance appears disconnected from a systematic internal Process. The reliance on politicized appointment mechanisms exemplifies a system where the performance of sovereignty on the global stage is not yet fully underpinned by the institutional principles of a professional, meritocratic state. The observable gap between external visibility and internal systematization suggests the primary achievement to date has been rehabilitative visibility, not yet embedded institutional capacity.

### **5.6.2 Contacts Made, Strategy Pending**

The Council provides an unrivaled platform for forced diplomatic engagement, and Somalia's mission has necessarily established a wide range of contacts thereby achieving basic Presence in the diplomatic network. The constraint lies in the transition to strategic Process. The Mission's operational autonomy and the absence of a clear, transmitted strategic doctrine from the capital hinder the development of a coordinated engagement plan. Consequently, relationships appear to be cultivated at the individual-diplomat level rather than leveraged by the state to advance a defined agenda. This pattern suggests a critical opportunity for deeper reintegration into multilateral blocs remains underutilized, stalled between passive contact-making and active partnership-building.

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### 5.6.3 An Ad Hoc Learning Curve

The UNSC serves as a high-stakes diplomatic academy. Somali diplomats are gaining valuable experience in the form of passive Presence and on-the-job learning. However, this apprenticeship appears ad hoc and incidental rather than by design. There is no observable, state-driven Process to proactively use the term as a structured, national capacity-building program. Learning seems concentrated within the small New York team, with no evident system to disseminate acquired knowledge and procedural fluency back to Mogadishu to strengthen the broader foreign service. This indicates a missed opportunity to convert a prestigious posting into a strategic investment in the country's long-term diplomatic capital.

### 5.6.4 The Sovereignty-Dependency Nexus

It is in the pursuit of core national interests that the tension between Presence and the need for Process and Agency becomes most evident. While counterterrorism is a consistent theme, the defense of territorial integrity presents a more complex case study. Engagement on issues touching core sovereignty appears reactive, as in responding to events such as the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU, rather than guided by a proactive, comprehensive strategy to leverage the Council's full toolkit. This reactive posture is compounded by a structural factor: Somalia's profound financial and security dependence on international partners. This dependency creates a visible constraint, shaping voting behavior on non-core issues and complicating the articulation of an independent diplomatic line. The observable pattern is not one of principle versus pragmatism, but of Agency circumscribed by structural realities, making the leap from symbolic Presence to influential Sovereign Outcomes particularly challenging.

## 5.7 Visibility Achieved, Operational Capacity in Development

The available information suggests Somalia has successfully utilized the Council to affirm its political return, achieving the vital first stage of Presence. Measured against the broader objective of using the seat as an engine of state-building, however, progress appears to be limited by underdeveloped internal systems. The lack of observable, robust strategic Processes for coordination, appointment, training, and proactive agenda-setting has prevented the mission from realizing its full potential.

## 6. The Constraints and Levers of a Recovering State

Somalia's capacity to leverage its Security Council seat is shaped not only by its internal institutions but also by the external environment in which it operates. This environment presents a unique set of challenges and considerations—domestic political dynamics, complex regional diplomacy, and a polarized multilateral system—that defines the practical landscape for its engagement. Navigating this landscape requires a clear-eyed assessment of these factors as the fixed parameters within which a pragmatic strategy must be developed.

### 6.1. Domestic Dynamics: Reconciling Internal Rebuilding with External Representation

The unfinished project of national reconstruction directly influences the coherence and authority of Somalia's external voice. The Council term unfolds alongside ongoing internal challenges that can impact diplomatic effectiveness.

#### Political Fragmentation:

- The evolving relationship between the Federal Government and Federal Member States can, at times, create ambiguity in policy formulation. Disputes over governance and resources can complicate the process of defining a unified national position, potentially leading to delayed or inconsistent instructions to the Permanent Mission in New York. This dynamic risks projecting a disjointed diplomatic posture to international partners.

#### The Security Imperative:

- The persistent threat from Al-Shabaab necessarily monopolizes a significant portion of the government's strategic attention and administrative capacity. The primary focus on security and stability can limit the bandwidth available for the long term, proactive planning ideal for influential Council diplomacy. In effect, the Mission represents a state whose day-to-day governance is heavily weighted toward crisis management.

#### A Transitional Political Economy:

- The ongoing development of a merit-based civil service extends to the foreign affairs apparatus. As noted earlier, the politicization of appointments remains a challenge to professionalization. This environment can hinder the development of a cohesive, expert-driven foreign service, making it more difficult to build the durable, trust-based coalitions essential for an E10 member's influence.

In sum, the domestic context complicates the establishment of the robust internal Processes needed to move beyond basic Presence to sustained Agency on the Council.

## 6.2. Regional Diplomacy: Sovereignty as the Core Council Priority

Somalia's most immediate diplomatic challenges emerge from its regional environment, where its sovereignty faces multiple and overlapping pressures. The result is a Council term in which territorial integrity is not merely a policy priority but the diplomatic center of gravity.

- **A New Precedent: Formal Recognition as Escalation**

The December 2025 decision by Israel to recognize a Somali breakaway administration as an independent state represents a qualitatively different type of challenge. Unlike regional interference conducted through proxies or informal arrangements, formal recognition by a UN member state is an attempt to convert a sub-state claim into an international legal fact. The significance lies less with Israel itself than with the precedent such recognition seeks to establish. For Somalia, this elevates the Security Council from a forum of general diplomacy into a necessary procedural shield, one of the few arenas where sovereignty can be defended through formal record, process, and repetition.<sup>18</sup>

- **The UAE's Parallel State Engagement**

The United Arab Emirates has pursued a regional strategy that systematically engages sub-state actors at the expense of central governments. In Somalia, sustained political, financial, and logistical support to the Somaliland administration and select Federal Member States has entrenched parallel authority structures and weakened federal consolidation. The UAE's engagement mirrors patterns observed in Yemen, Sudan, and Libya, where external sponsorship of fragmented authority has prolonged instability while preserving strategic influence. For Somalia, this represents a structural, long-term challenge: the steady normalization of external interaction with internal actors as if they were sovereign counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

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18. "Israel becomes first country to recognise Somaliland." Al Jazeera. December 26, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/26/israel-becomes-first-country-to-recognise-somaliland>. (Accessed January 18, 2026)

19. Andreas Krieg, "How Abu Dhabi Built an Axis of Secessionists across the Region," Middle East Eye, March 28, 2025, last updated November 2024. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/abu-dhabi-built-axis-secessionists-across-region-how>. (accessed December 15, 2024),

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- **Ethiopia’s Pursuit of Sea Access**

Ethiopia’s strategic objective of securing access to the sea is long-standing, and its January 2024 Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland formalized this ambition into a direct challenge to Somalia’s territorial integrity. Given Addis Ababa’s historical record of political and military intervention in Somalia, any such agreement constitutes a profound threat—one that carries both symbolic and operational implications. For Somalia, this translates into a diplomatic imperative: to ensure that every international forum, including the UNSC, reaffirms the legal inviolability of its borders and raises the political cost to any state attempting to undermine them.<sup>20</sup>

- **The Maritime Dispute with Kenya**

Despite the binding 2021 ICJ judgment in Somalia’s favor, Kenya’s continued assertion of maritime claims sustains a fundamental diplomatic dispute. Nairobi’s ongoing political and security involvement in Jubaland further complicates this relationship, introducing both territorial and governance tensions. For Somalia, this matter requires continuous diplomatic vigilance to defend its legal victory and prevent incremental erosion of sovereignty through de facto practices.<sup>21</sup>

Collectively, these regional dynamics make sovereignty the defining theme of Somalia’s 2025–2027 term. Success is measured not by initiating new agendas but by ensuring that violations of territorial integrity—whether diplomatic, political, or military—are consistently acknowledged, recorded, and countered within the international system.

### 6.3. The Global Arena: Navigating Asymmetry and Polarization

At the global level, Somalia operates within two overlapping systemic realities: its structural relationships with international partners, and a Security Council often hampered by major power divisions.

- **The Dynamics of Partnership:** Somalia’s government and security sector receive substantial support from international partners. This creates a relationship of inherent asymmetry. While this support is vital for stability, it can introduce a layer of complexity into foreign-policy decision-making, potentially influencing positions on non-core issues to maintain alignment with key donors. This structural reality is a defining condition of Somalia’s diplomatic freedom.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Afyare Elmi and Yusuf Hassan, “The Coming War between Ethiopia and Somalia,” *The New York Times*, August 26, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/26/opinion/ethiopia-somalia-conflict.html>.

21. International Court of Justice, “Maritime Delimitation in the Indian Ocean (Somalia v. Kenya),” Case No. 161. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/161>. (Accessed December 15, 2024)

22. Although there are no official documents detailing this dynamic, it is generally acknowledged among policy practitioners that Somalia’s foreign policy positions at the United Nations are significantly constrained by its reliance on external partners, particularly the United States. This reflects a long-standing structural reality for many post-independence African states serving as non-permanent members of the Security Council because economic dependency, security assistance, and institutional fragility often limit the scope for independent decision-making.

• **A Polarized Council:** The profound divisions among the P5 on issues like Ukraine and Palestine have reduced the Council’s capacity for collective action. For a state like Somalia, this polarization is a strategic complication. It weakens the very institution whose rules-based order offers a recourse against regional challenges. Furthermore, it forces careful navigation between competing blocs, requiring pragmatic calculations with minimal margin for error.

This global environment necessitates a posture of pragmatic realism. Somalia’s approach, which is inevitably procedural and interest-based, seeks specific openings within a constrained system.

## 7. Recommendations

### Translating Diagnosis into Statecraft

To convert its hard-won presence on the Security Council into tangible, diplomatic agency, Somalia must execute a focused strategy for its final year. The following proposals prioritize rapid, high-impact interventions that build minimal viable capacity, defend core sovereign interests, and forge essential coalitions within the constrained time and political reality of the term’s conclusion.

#### 7.1. Professionalizing Foreign Service: Building a Professional Presence

To transition from reactive engagement to proactive diplomacy, the Federal Government must prioritize building a skilled and credible cadre of diplomats capable of advancing Somalia’s strategic interests on the UN Security Council.

##### 7.1.1. Professionalize Key Appointments Under the Foreign Service Law

Appointments to Somalia’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York should be treated as high-level professional assignments, governed by clear, merit-based criteria. Selection must emphasize relevant expertise, demonstrated performance, and adherence to foreign service standards.

The current ad hoc, politically driven appointment system severely limits Somalia’s capacity to influence Council deliberations. Transitioning to a meritocratic model will foster consistency, professionalism, and institutional memory—qualities essential for managing complex negotiations and shaping Council outcomes.

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**Action steps:**

- Implement transparent competitive recruitment for key diplomatic posts in New York.
- Establish a rotational system for junior diplomats to gain Council experience before serving in leadership roles.
- Create a permanent training track on negotiation, Security Council procedure, and international law tailored for Somali diplomats.

### **7.1.2. Embed Specialized Thematic and Strategic Advisers**

The Mission should embed short-term (6–9 month) contracted experts specializing in international law, sanctions regimes, Security Council procedures, conflict analysis, and bilateral diplomacy. These experts would mentor Mission staff, guide Somalia's positions on resolutions, and strengthen analytical capacity without disrupting existing operations.

**Action steps:**

- Develop a roster of vetted national and diaspora experts available for surge deployment to the Mission.
- Establish partnerships with think tanks and academic institutions to provide technical backstopping.
- Use secondments from Somalia's ministries (Foreign Affairs, Justice, Planning, Finance) to link domestic policy expertise with multilateral advocacy.

## **7.2. Strengthening Coordination: Creating a Unified Expert-Driven Core**

Enhanced strategic coordination between Mogadishu and the Permanent Mission in New York is essential for consistency, speed, and impact in Council engagement.

### **7.2.1. Establish a “Somalia-UNSC Engagement Task Force”**

Create a high-level interagency task force chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and composed of representatives from key ministries, the Federal Parliament, and leading policy experts. This body would:

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- Synthesize policy positions across government.
  - Prepare briefing materials and policy guidance for the Mission.
  - Coordinate national inputs into draft resolutions, statements, and votes.

By functioning as a rapid-response coordination hub, this task force will ensure messages from Mogadishu align with real-time developments in New York.

### **7.2.2. Build a Knowledge Repository and Partner Network**

Develop a digital knowledge hub—managed jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission—to record Somalia’s positions, negotiation experiences, lessons learned, and thematic analyses on Security Council issues (e.g., peacekeeping reform, sanctions flexibility, maritime security).

#### **Action steps:**

- Maintain a secure online repository accessible to Somali embassies and ministries.
- Formalize partnerships with African and Arab Group missions to strengthen caucus coordination.
- Launch an annual “Somalia-UNSC Strategy Week” to review progress, simulate negotiations, and train successors.

### **7.3. Long-Term Goal: Building Institutional Diplomacy and Continuity**

Somalia’s influence at the UN depends on sustained institutional presence, not individual diplomacy. To that end, the Federal Government should work toward formalizing diplomatic career pathways and establishing centers of excellence in multilateral strategy.

#### **Recommended measures:**

- Strengthen the Diplomatic Training Institute in Mogadishu as a center of excellence by recruiting subject-matter experts and establishing accredited certification programs in international negotiation, Security Council diplomacy, and advanced policy analysis.

- Introduce a Multilateral Diplomacy Fellowship Program for top graduates, linking training in Mogadishu and New York through short-term placements.
- Create a Permanent Council Policy Desk in Mogadishu to track global trends, anticipate agenda shifts, and prepare advance policy scenarios.

With less than a year remaining, success depends on immediate and sequenced action. These steps should have implementation priority for the final year:

1. **First Priority:** Stand up the Independent Expert Task Force (7.2.1) to fix the broken strategic pipeline.
2. **Parallel Action:** Begin deploying Embedded Advisors (7.1.2) and execute the “Shield of Process” (7.3) to immediately enhance defensive diplomacy.
3. **Ongoing Discipline:** Use the systems created above to drive the remaining recommendations with coherence, ensuring that Somalia’s final year is defined by strategic agency, not just presence.

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