



World Chronicle

UNITED NATIONS

PROGRAMME: No. 969 recorded 09 March 2005

GUEST: Winston A. Tubman
UN Representative to Somalia

JOURNALISTS: Edith Lederer, Associated Press

Bill Reilly, UPI

MODERATOR: Mary Alice Williams

The Prospects for Somalia

For more than a decade the East African nation of Somalia has been a prime example of the world's "failed states": lawless, violent, and desperately poor.

Can Somalia recover from its pariah status as a lawless land? Will the international community help its new government gain control of security in a nation ruled by warlords? How realistic is it to expect a regional solution involving such neighboring states as Djibouti and Ethiopia?

Those are some of the questions discussed in this episode of World Chronicle with the United Nations Representative to Somalia, Winston Tubman.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the News & Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:00"
Executive Producer: Michele Zaccheo
Director: Dave Woodie
Production Assistant: Sheila Poinessette

ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

WILLIAMS: Hello, I am Mary Alice Williams. Some countries are so chaotic, so desperately poor, so violent and lawless that the rest of the world refers to them as “failed states”. Over the last 13 years, no country would fit that description better than the East African nation of Somalia. Can Somalia recover from its pariah status as a lawless land? Will the international community help its new government gain control of a nation ruled by warlords? Those are just some of the questions we’ll be discussing today with Winston Tubman, the United Nations Representative to Somalia. Thank you for being with us Mr. Tubman. In the United States, the image most Americans have of Somalia is the bodies of US troops being desecrated in the streets of Mogadishu. Just last month, a BBC reporter was shot dead there. Is the Somalia of today really any better than it was in the nineties?

TUBMAN: I think the big difference now is that Somalia has a government; a government that was chosen, elected in Nairobi. When you go back to the period you referred to, they didn’t have a government, the government had vanished and the international community was coming in trying to put a government back. This time, the Somali’s have elected a government and the question now and the challenge is that the government is going back into the country and governing it from there.

WILLIAMS: Joining us today in the studio are Edith Lederer of The Associated Press and Bill Reilly of UPI. Bill

REILLY: Mr. Tubman what’s happening with Somalia as far as Puntland and Somaliland goes?

TUBMAN: Well there has been for some time clashes between Somaliland and Puntland and a couple of months ago, troops moved in and war was threatened. But then the elections came and Abdullahi Yusef, the president of Puntland then, became the president of Somalia. So, tensions rose and it was feared that it would actually start fighting. But many members of the international community principally the British, urged restraint, and that tension has gone down now.

REILLY: They both still belong to Somalia but one of them has declared independence, hasn’t it?

TUBMAN: Well that’s the problem because Somalia is the whole country that was a member and is a member of the United Nations, and it included Somaliland – it still includes it. But Somaliand has said that they are an independent state now and although no one has recognized them, they continue to hold that position.

LEDERER: Mr. Tubman, one of the big issues of course, and I say this as someone who was in Somalia in the early nineteen nineties during those lawless days where you needed arm guards to go around, which you still do today. Nobody has been able to really get a handle on the country. You still have warlords with their own armies. What makes you think that a government that's been unable to go back to Somalia and is forced to stay out of the country, that it's going to be able to go and reign in these forces who have been basically running a muck and doing what they've wanted for fourteen years?

TUBMAN: Well as I said earlier, when we go back to the nineties that you refer to, there was no government. This time the international community tried to learn lessons from that fact, that before going in you should have a government. And for almost three years we've had a conference going in Kenya and a government has now been elected. So we have a government that the Somalis have chosen. The test now is to get that government back into Somalia.

WILLIAMS: Right, it's basically a government in exile because it's based in Nairobi, Kenya. Do you see that government moving in? Does it have to be in Mogadishu? Could it be in another part of the country?

TUBMAN: I see it going back. And recently the president and prime minister were in the country for ten days and everywhere they went, they were very well received - large crowds. And the president said to me after they had come back that the Somali people were anxious to have their government back, and everywhere he went, he was warmly received. Now somebody who thinks this doesn't mean very much, will say ah! But he only went to friendly places. Yes, but he went to most of the country. So most of the country is ready to receive the government back - Mogadishu is where the real problem is - and Mogadishu of course, is the capital.

WILLIAMS: Or was [all laugh]

TUBMAN: Well it's still the capital.

REILLY: And going back to my fondness for talking about Somaliland and Puntland, doesn't Somaliland President Dahir Riyale Kahin call the president of the new transitional government an outlaw, bandit. He does not want to recognize him at all, how is that going to make a cohesive country?

TUBMAN: Well I think the way the peace process has gone, the concentration has been on the south, and Solmailanders have said let our brothers in the south get their act together and when they have done that, we will be in position to talk with them. And we've made progress in that regard. The brothers in the south have made big progress and the time

is coming soon when the Somalis sitting down together will have to talk. Both sides have said they want dialogue. The wrinkle that has yet to be dealt with is that the Somalianders have said they will sit down as two independent states - and that's where the problem is. Because the people in the south have not recognized them as an independent state nor has anybody else, so the question is how will they do this dialogue? Who will propel them into it?

LESSING: Let's talk about another problem which is security. Security in the country, security for the new government going back; the African Union is supposed to be putting together a new force. What numbers do you expect this force to come up to? And is it going to be sufficient to disarm these militias who have been running their own armies?

TUBMAN: The question of security is key in Mogadishu, the capital; and the president would like to go back to the capital. Of course, it would be the best thing if the president went back to his capital rather than continuing to be in Nairobi. So he has said that in order to get back and to operate from there, he needs a protection force, a force that would protect the government basically. What the force will do initially, will not be to do disarming, he has tried to tackle this problem in several ways. In the cabinet that has been formed a lot of the warlords of Mogadishu – in fact the major ones – have been brought into the government, so they are ministers. So you would think and you would expect that ministers would be supportive of the government, and this is the aim. But, whether to have troops in is the question that Somalis still are debating.

WILLIAMS: Estimates have been that they need between five and seven thousand troops to maintain security, but they put constraints on them, and let me go through them: they don't want foreign troops; they don't want non-Muslim foreign troops; they don't want troops from Ethiopia, that's very controversial. Where are they going to get the troops?

TUBMAN: But I mean, when you say they now, who are they?

WILLIAMS: The new Somali government.

TUBMAN: No, the soldiers. The new Somali government hadn't said that. The new Somali government headed by Abdullahi Yusef has said he wants troops as IGAD had agreed, from the front line states to be included. So he says he's not going to exclude any of his neighbors, that's his position. But that's not the totally accepted position, there are many of them who do not want troops from the front line states, and so the debate, the issue now at discussion, is whether these troops will include troops from the front line states, primarily the concern here is whether there will be Ethiopian troops allowed in.

REILLY: Perhaps you should explain IGAD, it's not an explicative...

TUBMAN: It's the International Governmental Authority on Development, consisting of the states of the region: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan.

LESSING: And they're the ones who basically helped nurture this whole governmental peace process...

TUBMAN: Exactly, this whole peace process has been under their leadership. We the United Nations, has been there, but the real lead has been taken by IGAD. Just like in West Africa, ECOWAS was the lead organ that lead to the peace process there.

WILLIAMS: And the United Nations always prefers a regional solution. Is it realistic to expect a regional solution to Somalia's problems with Djibouti and Ethiopia?

TUBMAN: Well I think you're right. If the region doesn't buy it it's difficult for the wider international community to come in in an effective way. When you get the regional powers involved, it's not always easy to do that. But if they are involved, then it's possible for the wider international community to come in after that.

REILLY: What kind of time frame are you looking at for getting the African Union troops in, if you can get African Union troops in?

TUBMAN: Well I think it will be months, you know. Two, three months, and in fact, because it's likely to take that time, that is why it was decided that the IGAD states should come up with troops pending the time when the African Union will be ready to send in their troops.

REILLY: It would be more of an IGAD force than an AU.

TUBMAN: Yes, initially yes, that's what being prepared.

LESSING: Could I go back to the whole question of why has it taken so long to get Somalia back on track? And we're not even sure it is. I mean this is a great failure of the international community. Why did it happen?

TUBMAN: Well, I think you know, when you go back to the nineties when you had the incidents that produced Black Hawk Down, the Americans who had taken a very important role in that effort, were feed up with this process and they withdrew and shortly after they did, the rest of the international community withdrew. So there was no government there, and when there is a situation where there is no government, how do you engage? With whom do you engage? That has been the problem and that's why it has taken so long. But after all these years, after so many attempts to have a peace process that the people would buy into, finally we have a government that Somali's themselves freely chose. It may be that you can say the process, the way that they picked the people who sat in the Parliament leaves much to be desired, but the fact remains that this was the process followed; the President who has

emerged is the guy who got most of the votes. I was there that night when the voting took place and it was clear that he had the commanding lead and nobody has challenged that, and it remains the case that he is the accepted leader of the country. The problem is when will he be able to go back and take his seat in the capital and rule the country from there?

LESSING: And what's your best guess?

TUBMAN: My best guess and talking to him and watching the situation, is that this could be within the next two or three months this could happen – yes.

WILLIAMS: And when he gets there, and when the government gets back, they will need transitional financing for other institutions: relocation, rebuilding facilities, salaries, police training....Salaries....I think of the president and prime minister having come into the country and being stopped at the airport and held there because the workers hadn't been paid and they were waiting for some warlord to come and pay them. So, where does the financing come from?

TUBMAN: It's coming from the international community, the whole peace process – those two years of conferences. Largely, the money came from the Europeans, European Community and they are still coming up, either collectively or independently. Like Norway has offered sums of money – helping to train people, helping to repair the government premises so that the government can go back.

WILLIAMS: But how do you convince potential donor countries like the United States to invest in a land that has so many political problems?

TUBMAN: Well I mean it's a chicken and egg thing you know. It will continue to have these political problems unless the international community focuses and gives them some assistance. And happily, although people have been frustrated for a long time, the international community has been there. They have been skeptical, but I think their skepticism has been less than their commitment. They're continuing to support the process and they're willing now, and we have in Nairobi the formation of groupings that will assist the government to relocate. And money is being pledged and the process is moving.

REILLY: What's it like in Mogadishu now these days? Are we seeing these pickup trucks with filled with armed men roaming about? Does the electricity work? Is there running water? What would the government find once they get in?

TUBMAN: They would find a very battered city. When I was last there, you still had the technicals and the young men with guns. Although I was going there as the Representative of the Secretary-General, in order to move from one area to another I would say, take the warlords of "A" area would then escort me down to the frontier to where "B" area began and

turn me over to the technicals and the people from that area, who would take me to the boss. And we ourselves the UN, would have our own pickup full of our people with guns to protect us. So it's still very much that way. But I think one should not forget that we're only here talking of Mogadishu. Somalia is a much bigger country than just Mogadishu. In most of the country life is not like that and things are proceeding normally. If and when the government gets back into Mogadishu, and these guns are eventually taken away - and they will not be taken away - the idea is not that they will be taken away by these IGAD troops were talking about, they will be taken away after Somalia has itself reconstituted its own security forces, and then they will be the ones largely doing that.

WILLIAMS: This is World Chronicle our guest is Winston Tubman, the United Nations Representative to Somalia. Edi.

LEDERER: One of the other big issues that's been raised about Somalia is terrorism. Certainly in the wake of the September eleventh terrorist attacks in the United States; the administration here started looking at countries where terrorists could find haven, and Somalia was one of those because it's lawless. What's your take on the terrorist's activity in Somalia?

TUBMAN: I don't know how much, if there is any much in that way in regard to terrorism. But the principle that... you have an area, there's no government, there's no law and authority, there's nobody that you can deal with in terms of responsibility for the territory. Just by definition like that, you know it's a kind of place that terrorists would seek to operate from. At one point, it was felt or thought that the Americans would make strikes against Somalia in order to pre-empt that kind of activity developing there. In the end, that wasn't done. They decided to have based in Djibouti a kind of reconnaissance capability that enables them to see what's going on in the territory and having the capacity to deal with it if it begins - seems to be threatening. That's what's in force now. Some people feel that the better way to do with the terrorism thing is to help the government to be established, so that there is a responsible government in Mogadishu that could be the center and the basis for law and order to prevail in that country.

WILLIAMS: Many African countries have internal conflicts that are fueled by ethnic strife or inter-ethnic strife if you will. Somalia by contrast is ethnically cohesive, so what accounts for the deep divisions within the country?

TUBMAN: Well yes, everyone....that's the big question about Somalia. They are unlike many African countries where you have so many divisions, you have different languages, different religions, in Somalia, where all the things points toward a cohesiveness of the country, yet you have this. This happened when the government collapsed. We've had

nothing else resembling what has happened in Somalia. There is no instance of all these problematic countries, failed states, even in my own country, Liberia. We never had a situation where we never had a government. There was always the Executive Mansion. Every person who was fighting, wanted to get to the Executive Mansion [all laugh], and that's where basically the fight was all about.

WILLIAMS: So the Executive Mansion is the common goal?

TUBMAN: That's right. But in Somalia, when the government collapsed, there was nobody in the Executive Mansion, in fact. So the fighting just went on, caused and fueled by these warlords and young people with guns. But there was no government functioning until now, we have the chance finally of having back in place, a government of the country that will be functional and be able to take care of things there.

REILLY: Why with such a mess didn't it just completely collapse? What held it together?

TUBMAN: Well you could say it completely collapsed but I mean you know...what is completely collapsed?

REILLY: Well famine....

TUBMAN: We've had that...we've had roaming gangs with guns. So in terms of place of law and order and authority, it did collapse, it has collapsed.

LEDERER: Looking at the future, which is what we're all hoping to do. What do you see as the economic prospects for the country? And you talk about the areas outside Mogadishu which is their big agricultural regions – certainly being much calmer. Is any economic activity actually going on now?

TUBMAN: The trouble is it's going on in an unregulated way...it's not answerable to any governmental authority. People who are able to take power and operate in those areas are able to do so, and therefore what is missing is that you need some government that will control and bring on some order these areas. It's more peaceful in Mogadishu, the humanitarian agencies of the UN are able to operate there, so when we have problems like drought or famine or some epidemic of some sort, yes humanitarian assistance can go in there. But in terms of who's responsible? Who is the government? That is still the problem. When we recently had the tsunami problem, compounding it was the fact that there was no recognized government that could give the international community the ability to reach those who became victims of that disaster.

LEDERER: On the economy, what do you see if you were going to go to an economic meeting with businessmen, what would you tell them – you know – here's what Somalia could produce, or here's what it could be?

TUBMAN: Well I think the key that needs to happen is to have an authority - a recognized authority. We here, I don't now how true this is, that Somalia has offshore deposits, they have a very long sea coast, there's good fisheries that they have, they themselves don't eat much fish, so you could do a lot of exports of fish there. There are good agriculture areas that could be developed. I think once there's peace and stability in Somalia, there would be a lot there that economically could make the country viable.

WILLIAMS: You mentioned the tsunami. Did that humanitarian catastrophe affect the political situation? You've explained how the political situation or lack thereof affected the humanitarian aid for tsunami victims, but what about the other way around?

TUBMAN: Well it gave the government another thing to use in seeking to get support from the international community. It also was able to show the international community the neglect Somalia suffers from. And lately, in addition to the question of people who were killed, the whole question of toxic wastes coming and washing up on the shores, brings to a focus the fact that this has been going on in a period when there was no government in charge – who knows whether these companies that were dumping the waste, Who they were...

WILLIAMS: ...and it's not toxic waste, it's nuclear waste...

TUBMAN: Including! Yes, yes, it's pretty bad. So the Somali government has now appealed to the international community to help look into this problem and see what can be done.

LEDERER: Has anybody responded?

TUBMAN: I haven't heard of that. But I think given the dangerous nature of these wastes, I think there would be people who will see that it will not be to anybody's advantage to allow this to go unchecked, and to spread new diseases and new problems.

WILLIAMS: I want to talk about the guns for another moment. There's an arms embargo against Somalia. Where are these guns coming from?

TUBMAN: Well they are certainly are coming from all the neighbouring areas. There is a UN panel that has been studying this problem repeatedly, in fact I think just a few days back they made a report – there have been several - on where the arms are coming from the neighbouring areas. And the Security Council has been studying this problem but so far yet, they have not taken any position beyond saying there is an embargo and it should be respected. In terms of penalizing people, this has yet to happen.

REILLY: You're about to end your tenure or you have ended your tenure, what is your status now?

TUBMAN: I'm still representing the Secretary-General for Somalia. My contract goes on until the end of March and by that time, I will then step away. But as I speak to you now, I still have responsibility for Somalia with the Secretary-General.

REILLY: But your future is in Liberia, your eyes are on Liberia?

TUBMAN: Right, the reason I am stepping down, and this is a choice I made because I want to go back to Liberia, my home country, and offer myself as a candidate in the presidential election that will take place in October.

REILLY: How many candidates are you facing other than yourself?

TUBMAN: I don't like to count. I mean [all laugh]

WILLIAMS: Not as many as Iraq [still laughing]

TUBMAN: Or even Somalia, where we had quite a lot of candidates, and as the election grew and the date came nearer, they said well, each person would have to deposit two thousand dollars – non refundable – and the number of candidates dropped from sixty to thirty – maybe the election commission in Liberia maybe the sum wouldn't be two thousand dollars but they could find some kind of test like that.

LEDERER: Is there anything else going back to Somalia, is there anything else that the international community should do, can do to try and promote the re-establishment of a cohesive country where you would have all the warlords, the Somalilands, the Puntlands, everybody back in one country. What should they be doing?

TUBMAN: I think we have a beginning there because the beginning is the government that the Somalis themselves freely chose. It's not perfect but it's a beginning, and it's something that the Somalis themselves have come up with. If we go back to the early nineties, what the international community was trying to do was to impose something. This time, the Somalis have come up with something so the test is and the challenge is, for the international community to support what the Somalis have done. Don't just jump in and give it total blanket support, but follow it. Do what the Somalis themselves have begun – help them. If the international community stays that course and does that, I think the Somalis will be able to take it from there.

WILLIAMS: You said there's an arms embargo in place – it's not being enforced, we know there is toxic and nuclear waste floating up off shore, nobody is doing anything about it. It's been said that the United Nations abandoned Somalia for more than a decade, is that a fair assessment?

TUBMAN: Well I think it's one side of the picture that you could paint. But when UNOSOM failed, everybody including – I would say particularly the Somalis – were glad to see the back of the UN. They wanted the UN out. So to say the UN abandoned Somalia is over stretching it. The UN decided that they would not do that although there was all these incidents that went on, you couldn't blame the ordinary Somali people and therefore, Boutros Ghali, who was the Secretary-General then; felt that the international community could not turn its back on the Somali people. That's when my office was set up, as it were, be a watching instrument by which events in Somalia would be watched. And as time went by, the Somalis no longer had that same anger but that doesn't mean they don't remember what happened, so in engaging, re-engaging with the Somalis, we have to learn the lessons that took place in the nineties. That we don't go ahead of ourselves, go ahead of the Somalis – help them, but do not seek to impose international prescriptions on them.

WILLIAMS: Thank you, very much for being with us Mr. Ambassador. Our guest has been Winston Tubman whose been heading the United Nations Political Office for Somalia and a presidential candidate in the West African nation of Liberia. He was interviewed by Edith Lederer of the Associated Press and Bill Reilly of UPI. I'm Mary Alice Williams inviting you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

ANNOUNCER: Electronic transcripts of this programme may be obtained free of charge by contacting World Chronicle at the address on your screen:

World Chronicle
United Nations, Room S-827
New York, N.Y., 10017.
Or by email at: poinessette@un.org

This programme is a Public Affairs Presentation from United Nations Television.

The views and opinions expressed on this programme are those of the participants, and do not necessarily reflect the official statements or views of the United Nations.