January 20, 2012 - The President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is on an official visit to the United States this week and his visit has been marked by the decision of the US administration to recognize his government. The visit is his first to the United States since his election as President for Somalia, and he is accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fowzia Yusuf Haji Adan, the Minister of Information and Telecommunications, Abdullahi Ilmoge Hirsi, and other senior officials. A statement from the President's office said his visit was aimed "to boost cooperation on security, humanitarian, and development matters". The visit is seen as an indication of the commitment of the new Somali leadership to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries. Discussions with US officials have covered bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest with particular emphasis on security and development. These are among the most important components in the President's six-pillar policy plan which is aimed to secure and consolidate the security gains made so far, and prevent a possible relapse into conflict. Overcoming the country's various developmental problems is also high on the President's agenda, and as well as meeting senior officials from the US, from USAID and from the World Bank, President Mahmoud also met members of the large Somali Community residing in the US.

On Thursday, following the US decision to formally recognise the new government in Mogadishu, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with President Hassan Sheikh Mohammed at the US State Department. This was their first meeting since he became President though the Secretary of State had a meeting with him during her visit to Africa last year. During the discussion, the President and the Secretary exchanged diplomatic notes attesting to the US's official recognition of the Somali government in Mogadishu for the first time in 20 years.

US Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador Johnnie Carson, said the US decision to formally recognize the new government underscored the progress toward political stability that Somalia has made over the past year, including "breaking the back" of the al-Shabaab insurgency. He said the US believes that "enormous progress has been made [in Somalia]", noting that the US has been "at the very centre of this in its support for AMISOM". As an example of the progress made, over the last few months, the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that the number of attacks on aid workers fell from 13 in October to four and five in November and December. Ambassador Carson also underlined that a great deal more still needed to be done in Somalia. US recognition of the Somali government will allow for additional benefits for Somalia and make it possible for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to do things that they would not have been able to do before, paving the way for more US and international economic aid for Somalia. On Tuesday (January 15th) President Mahmoud met with members of the U.S. Congress. Representative Mike Michaud said the discussion had emphasized the recent security gains and economic development in Mogadishu, and the Somali President had also asked Congress to push for the United States to re-open its embassy in Mogadishu. Ambassador Carson said the US did not have any immediate plan to do this (US policy on Somalia is currently handled by a special envoy, Ambassador James Swan, based in Nairobi) but he indicated that this could eventually follow recognition of the government. The US

never formally cut its diplomatic ties with Somalia, but the country's descent into anarchy was underlined by the 1993 Black Hawk Down incident, when 18 American servicemen were killed after General Aydeed's militia fighters shot two US military helicopters out of the sky. Ambassador Carson said the US was now a long way from where it had been in October1993.

For the past several months, President Hassan has toured the Horn of Africa region and signed several bilateral agreements as means of ensuring transparency and aiming to encourage and expand cooperation with Somalia's neighbors and with the international community. Since his election, President Mahmoud has made a number of visits to neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa, including Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Sudan and to Turkey, signing several bilateral agreements to help build and strengthen bilateral relationships to overcome security and developmental problems. There is a growing consensus by partners of Somalia, including its neighbors, that future international initiatives should specifically aim to assist the Somali Government to deliver effective governance, security, rule of law and basic services. (Source: MoFA)