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Thousands of Somali-Americans packed into the Minneapolis Convention Center to greet the newly-elected president of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. This past September, Mohamud became the first democratically elected leader of the war-torn nation in 43 years. In another positive sign of stability for the African nation, this past week the United States announced it would officially recognize the government – something that has not happened in the past 21 years.

"This is the beginning of a new foundation," said Mohamud to the overflow audience during his Friday evening speech. His quote was one of the few words he spoke in English as most of the program was conducted in Somali.

Mohamud spoke to the visibly excited crowd for nearly one hour. Joined by his entire cabinet, Mohamud asked the Somali-Minnesotans for their support and asked that they forget about the atrocities of the past and focus on the present.

"You have to forget what happened yesterday and we have to forgive each other," said Mohamud, according to Abshir Adan, who assisted reporters in translating. Mohamud then said in English, "There is a price to pay in order to get a good Somalia."

Mohamud and his cabinet were in the United States to meet with U.S. officials, including President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The newly-elected Somali president said Obama offered to host Mohamud during Obama's second inauguration but Mohamud said he declined, telling the U.S. president he had much work ahead of him in Somalia and needed to return as soon as possible.

5th Dist. Rep. Keith Ellison said he is excited for Somalia and the many Somali-Americans he represents. The congressman told the crowd – many waving the Somali flag, and several waving both Somali and U.S. flags – that though Congress is deeply divided on many issues, it was in agreement when it came to supporting the new Somalia government.

"We (Congress) can't come together over the budget, but we can come together over Somalia," said Ellison to thunderous applause. "Somalia is not alone. Somalia has many friends in America."

Ellison then told the crowd that they have a right to call on the U.S. government to continue to support the newly-elected Somali government.

"You are United States citizens and you have a right to ask our government to support Somalia," said Ellison. "If it's OK for an American who is Irish to stand up for a U.S., Ireland relationship; if it's OK for an American who is Jewish to stand up for a U.S., Israel relationship, then it's OK for you to stand up and demand a strong U.S., Somalia relationship."

In a sign of the changing times in Somalia – a country that has lagged in women's rights – the nation's new deputy prime minister and secretary of state, Fowsiyo Yusuf Haji Aden, is a woman.

"We have to show the international community that we are progressing," said translator Adan.

Adan said he is filled with pride for his homeland and would relish returning one day.

"Everybody is excited," said Adan. "We killed each other and now we're tired of the killing. We're excited and we're missing home. We're homesick."

Mohamud had a message for those of Somali nationality living in Minnesota.

According to the translator, Adan, Mohamud joked, "It's very cold here. If you get tired of the winters here in Minnesota, you can always come home."

The crowd, many clad in powder blue – the primary color of the Somali flag – erupted in laughter and applause.

Zara Ali Amith, who lives in the Twin Cities and who said her brother, Ibrahim Sheik Ahmed, is a member of the new Somali cabinet, said she's proud of her brother, but has no plans to return to Somalia.