

Peacebuilding Organisations' Joint Statement on the UK Conference on Somalia, 11 May 2017

The anticipated 11 May 2017 London Conference on Somalia has the opportunity to bolster international support for the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). The recent transfer of power that brought about a new parliament and President has instilled a renewed vigour and energy for addressing national challenges and bringing both peace and development to the country.

The conference planners should set an agenda that allows participating policy makers to address pressing peacebuilding and statebuilding concerns that greatly impact the security and stability of Somalia. We the undersigned peacebuilders, both Somalia-based and international, recommend the following:

- **Conflict sensitive democratisation will be essential:** The Somali population continues to demand greater democracy and voting rights, and although the 2016/17 process expanded the electorate from 135 to 14,025 people, this falls far short of the one-person-one-vote elections to which successive governments have aspired. As Somalia's federal government embarks on planning for the 2020/21 elections, it needs to carefully consider how to deploy an appropriate electoral model that satisfies the need for progress toward universal suffrage while also preserving the gains made by the "4.5" clan power-sharing model in stabilizing Somali politics. Further expanding the electorate is an essential goal for Somalia's political development. However, lifting the "lid" of the 4.5 model to enable a one-person-one-vote approach may create substantial changes to the political representation levels of various major clans, which could lead to a resurgence of conflict if not carefully managed. Conference participants should thoughtfully balance democratisation with conflict sensitivity when considering electoral models and their implications on peace and security.
- **Meaningful citizen engagement and contribution is essential in the finalisation of the constitution:** Completing the constitutional review is a necessary precursor to popular elections and will establish the separation of powers between branches of government as well as between FMS and FGS. Clarity on these roles, responsibilities and relationships is indispensable to enabling government to function efficiently and avoid instituting conflict within the system, thus facilitating democratisation, statebuilding and peacebuilding. The new constitution must be relevant to communities and not merely a political pact among elites if it is to be the basis for long-term stability and democracy. Similarly, a popular referendum would build national unity and acceptance of the new constitution. The conference should identify mechanisms and commit to citizen engagement in the review and finalisation of the constitution.
- **Meaningful reconciliation requires truth and justice.** If gains in democratisation, governance and stability are to be entrenched, the federal government must prioritise truth, justice and reconciliation. It must also build structures and frameworks for undertaking truth justice and reconciliation initiatives that are consistent across the country as well as mechanisms to enforce the decisions that come from such efforts. Whilst there have been significant efforts at reconciliation in recent years, including the Wadajir framework developed by the federal government, these efforts are inadequate for the purpose of meaningful national reconciliation. To date, reconciliation has been conducted through a lens of high-level political accommodation at the expense of localised social reconciliation needs. Identifying mechanisms for truth, justice and reconciliation will take substantial effort and political will. Looking towards the examples set by countries such as Colombia, South Africa, Rwanda and beyond would support this work. The conference should recognise meaningful reconciliation as a necessary accompaniment to political reform and governance if lasting peace and stability is to be achieved.
- **Emerging federal member states need support to become legitimate and accountable governance units.** Somalia's federalisation was intended to bring governance closer to the people and provide a means to share power and resources as a basis for democratisation. Remarkable progress has been made toward the implementation and popular acceptance of federalisation, and FMSs are becoming the primary institutions through which governance and service delivery is provided. However, for many FMSs political stability remains elusive, and they have struggled to establish effective governance and popular representation. In order to deepen statebuilding, the conference should consider how to strengthen and legitimise state-level governance structures that fairly and accountably support citizen needs. This is essential to ensuring national-level stability and avoiding Somalia's Balkanisation into clan fiefdoms and further instability. Furthermore,

democratic reforms at the national level should not just create a veneer of democracy that obscures unelected and unaccountable governance at the FMS level.

- **In resolving the conflict with al Shabaab, all available tools should be considered, including negotiation.** In the past, the conflict with Al Shabaab has been approached primarily through a hard security, counter-terror lens. Recently, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approaches have been widely employed to weaken recruitment by the insurgent group, even though such approaches often fail to address deficiencies in governance, justice, security and employment that drive support for Shabaab. It is unlikely that such approaches will ever fully defeat the group or bring the conflict to a satisfactory end state. In order to build sustainable peace and resolve a conflict that threatens Somalia's pursuit of stability and democracy, it is imperative that Somalia and the international community explore the use of all available tools to resolve the conflict, including the possibility of dialogue and negotiated settlements. Removing these options, especially while a drawdown of international military forces looms on the horizon, is not constructive to reaching a meaningful conclusion to the conflict.
- **International support is essential, but Somalis should set the agenda.** The role of international actors needs to be carefully considered and managed. Somali statebuilding and peacebuilding should be Somali-led, with international actors in a supporting role. Much of the work conducted in Somalia whether humanitarian, development or statebuilding, would be impossible without substantial financial and technical investment by an array of international actors. However, the strategic objectives of external actors involved in Somali politics, security and development should be secondary to the aspirations and needs of the Somali population. Conference participants should be cognisant of this and ensure that support is provided with Somali priorities firmly in mind.
- **Decision making on governance, peace and security must include women at all levels.** The Somali federal government should be applauded for achieving a dramatic increase in women's representation in parliament as a result of the 2016/17 process, from 14 to 24 percent of total seats. However, this result still falls short of the constitutionally-mandated 30 percent quota for women, let alone the equal participation of women in political life. The conference should identify how to deepen women's meaningful participation not only in the area of political representation, but also in decision-making at the local, state and national levels on issues of peacebuilding, statebuilding and political and social reconciliation.
- **Improving security must include the security of women:** Somali women continue to face grave harms in the course of their lives, including domestic violence, sexual assault and forceful retaliation for promoting women's rights or participating politically. Greater investments are needed to ensure that all sectors of Somali society recognise the rights of women and the political, social and intellectual value that they bring. Greater justice and security is similarly required to protect women, and to ensure that perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence no longer benefit from the impunity conferred by inadequate justice and policing systems. As the conference prioritises security needs, it is important that this includes ensuring that women are safe and secure in their day-to-day lives.
- **Security of the state is predicated on security and justice for the people.** Justice and policing continue to require heavy investment, with a need to deepen principles of justice, fairness and equality in all dispute resolution systems, whether statutory or traditional. The conference should recognise that justice, fairness and equality together with effective enforcement of decisions are central pillars of peace and a means to avoid and mitigate future grievance and conflict. Capacity building of police and instituting police accountability together with accountability and oversight of justice institutions should be first steps.
- **International aid flows must be attached to accountability mechanisms.** Somalia continues to languish at the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Efforts are increasing to address deficiencies in public financial management, in a context where international aid is a major source of public funds. These aid transfers should have accountability mechanisms attached, including meaningful and applicable sanctions for misuse or misappropriation of funds. The conference, in establishing new partnership mechanisms, should consider how to balance support with accountability to ensure aid brings meaningful benefits to the population.

In addition to the aforementioned points, the London conference should ensure the meaningful participation of Somali civil society in policy-making forums both in advance of and during the conference. Only through broader civic engagement in policy-making on issues of peace, security and

governance can the results of the conference enjoy popular support within Somalia. This would in turn deepen confidence in the government and strengthen popular collaboration in achieving results. Conference conveners and participants should engage with Somali civil society in advance of the conference with a view to understanding the priorities and concerns of the Somali people.

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