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**PUNTLAND STATE OF  
SOMALIA**

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**Speech of the President of Puntland State of Somalia  
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**Presented at the U.N. Security Council Meeting on Somalia  
Nairobi, Kenya  
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## **Reinforcing Stability and Advancing Reconciliation to End the Evolving Conflict in Somalia**

**Mr. President; Permanent Representatives of the U.N. Security Council; the SRSG to Somalia; leaders of Somali administrations; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**Good afternoon Your Excellencies,**

It is a great honor for me to address the U.N. Security Council Mission to Africa, to discuss issues on Somalia and to exchange views and share information. This is a historic occasion that once again underlines the commitment of the international community to find a lasting and peaceful settlement to the Somali conflict.

At the onset, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the community of nations, who have contributed humanitarian assistance to aid the plight of the Somali people during the past two decades of instability.

Your Excellencies,

Allow me to portray a true picture of Somalia, which has been fragmented by a protracted civil war. I wish to focus on the following three main points: 1) a brief account of Puntland; 2) our experiences in the fight against terrorism and piracy; and 3) our position regarding the end of the transitional period.

Allow me to start with a brief background of Puntland State of Somalia.

### **Brief account on Puntland**

Discouraged by the preceding eight years of in vain attempts to restore a national government in Somalia, Puntland was established in 1998 by a constitutional conference. It is the first state in a future federal structure for Somalia; the Transitional Federal Charter later sanctioned federalism in 2004.

More than 3 million people live in Puntland. This includes over one million Puntland natives who fled clan fighting in major towns of southern Somalia, mainly Mogadishu and Kismayo. Further, Puntland hosts upwards of 300,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who are natives of southern regions. Hosting the IDP communities is a major burden to Puntland, as they share with the host community access to our meager resources. Puntland respects the human rights of all people. However, there are subversive elements disguising as IDPs who are involved in activities to destabilize Puntland, including acts of terrorism. Puntland does not receive international contributions to help ease the economic burden.

While some parts of the country are deeply embroiled in incessant chaos and human rights abuses, other parts of the country are law-abiding, peaceful, stable and are in need of security support and eager to be endowed with peace-building development projects.

### **Evolving Conflict**

Since the Mogadishu rampage of 1991, which spread to all southern regions, the nature of the conflict in southern Somalia has been evolving from stage to stage. Major towns, such as Kismayo and Baidoa, suffered a similar fate. This area marked the epicenter of the Somali conflict for control of land and resources.

During the 30-year (1960-1990) history of governance in Somalia, successive governments invested heavily in Mogadishu and surrounding regions, in terms of concentration of socio-economic development infrastructures. Warlord militias pursuing narrow clan agendas violently misappropriated private and community-owned lands and properties in Mogadishu and the southern Shabelle and Jubba river areas.

The violence and injustice continued to evolve the conflict in south-central Somalia, in a metamorphosis from clan-based warlords militia, shifting to Islamic Courts Union (ICU) insurgents, which later mutated into more radical forms, such as Al Shabaab extremists linked to Al Qaeda. In essence, the fleeing warlords surrendered their weapons and their militias to clan-cousin members of the ICU in the south.

Sadly, it can be said that today's extremism and terrorism in Somalia originates from the violence and subjugation perpetuated by clan warlords, victimizing entire communities, and creating an environment conducive for extremists to exploit community grievances.

### **Golis Mountains: Somalia's Tora Bora**

Puntland is target number one for Al Shabaab operations because of its strategic location. It is a buffer zone for the whole region. Stability in Puntland contributes to stability in other regions of Somalia and eastern Ethiopia, and across the Arabian Peninsula.

The Golis Mountain Range is a unique landscape consisting of mountains, valleys, caves, bushy land, abundant water-springs, livestock and quick access to and from the coastline. The extremists identified this landscape as an ideal hideout for local and international terrorists, similar to Afghanistan's Tora Bora. In 1992, Islamist militant group Al-Itihad Al-Islami attempted to take over Puntland, but was defeated by community militias.

Since then, Al Shabaab has continuously targeted Puntland, its government officials and its institutions. Puntland passed a Counterterrorism Law to fight the terrorists. In August 2010, Puntland launched an unassisted military campaign to dismantle Al Shabaab hideouts in the Golis

Mountains, particularly Galgala area southwest of the Puntland commercial port of Bossaso. This does not mean the end of Al Shabaab operations in the Golis Mountains, as they continue to operate in the south and have a safe passage in Somaliland-controlled areas. Puntland liberated the area and transferred over to community militia, who were ambushed by Al Shabaab on May 11<sup>th</sup>. Today, our government forces are in full-scale preparation to confront terrorists in the mountains.

Your Excellencies,

I wish to reiterate that Puntland is a peace-loving entity, which calls upon all legitimate parties to put aside political differences and work towards a lasting peace in Somalia. Furthermore, I call upon Somaliland to cooperate with our government in efforts to fight terrorists by preventing safe passage for Al Shabaab in the area under Somaliland control. Las-Anod has become a tinderbox of extremist activity, as Al Shabaab exploits anti-Somaliland sentiment. Secondly, the fighting in Buhodle district earlier this year is a typical example of community grievances turning to open conflict with the potential of escalating into civil war.

A British delegation led by Mr. Matt Baugh, the UK Special Representative to Somalia, visited Puntland in March 2011 and met with the community leaders of Sool and Sanaag regions, who bluntly declared their Puntland affiliation and their opposition to Somaliland occupation. I take this opportunity to urge the Security Council to recognize the will of the people and to send a fact-finding mission to the regions. Secondly, I call for the Somali reconciliation process to be extended to northern Somalia, if we are to avoid spreading instability to Puntland and Somaliland. Puntland firmly stands for dialogue and peaceful resolution to all Somalia problems.

### **Piracy Phenomenon in Somalia**

The problem of piracy is a new phenomenon in Somalia. It is a product of the Somali civil war following the political collapse of 1991 and the disappearance of the Somali Marine Forces. Piracy and terrorism complement each other, as both are organized crimes against humanity. Piracy has contributed to the overall insecurity in Somalia and has aggravated economic hardship for Somali communities, especially the livelihoods of the coastal people.

Initially, the Illegal Unregulated Unreported Fishing (IUUF) in Somali territorial waters triggered the piracy problem. It was foreign trawlers that destroyed the fishing boats and gears of Somali coastal communities. This created armed resistance by Somali fishermen against foreign trawlers, which led eventually to ransom payments and escalation of pirate attacks against commercial vessels and innocent seafarers. The strategic geographic location of Puntland makes it vulnerable to be the pirates' hunting area.

At the moment, piracy is an international problem, which needs to be addressed comprehensively worldwide. However, the security and socio-economic impact of piracy on Puntland has been tremendous. Firstly, piracy has impacted our security as the ransom payments have led to the proliferation of arms and increased the recruitment of criminal gangs; secondly, piracy has disrupted our once vibrant fishing economy and created inflation in the area where they operate; thirdly, piracy has introduced new social problems, such as drugs and alcohol, transmittable diseases and spoiled our traditional and cultural values.

Puntland has fought against and remains strongly committed to fight against the piracy menace. In 2010, the Puntland Parliament debated and passed Somalia's first and only Anti-Piracy Law, which specifically deals with piracy crimes. At this moment, there are 305 convicted pirates and

suspected pirates who are awaiting trial in Puntland jails. This marks the largest concentration of jailed Somali pirates in over 20 countries.

Anti-piracy operations and prison services is a big burden on our limited financial resources. This high concentration of imprisoned pirates has constrained our prison space, thereby transforming police stations into jails for criminals. This has created a backlog of piracy and other cases congesting the workload of our judiciary system.

My administration has consistently and strongly opposed ransom payments, because ransom payment is the number one fuel factor of pirate attacks and attracts new recruits. As we look at solutions, we need to strengthen the security and judiciary capacity of Puntland and to revitalize the livelihood of coastal communities by creating development projects.

### **Proposed Piracy Solutions**

- 1. To institute and equip anti-piracy forces with bases inland and along the Puntland's northern and eastern coasts to deter, detect, prevent and eradicate piracy, illegal fishing and other coastal crimes, such as human smuggling, and to protect Puntland's marine resources;*
- 2. To deploy community leaders on an educational and public awareness campaign aiming to discourage new recruits and to help rehabilitate reformed pirates;*
- 3. To rehabilitate and train reformed pirates in employable skills; and*
- 4. To reinstitute abandoned fishing industry activities in Puntland to create sustainable livelihoods for the coastal communities.*

In this regard, Puntland has sought international support to establish a Coastal Marine Force tasked with fighting against piracy crimes and restoring the economic activities of coastal communities. Private security firm Saracen International, which had relations with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), approached us to train the much-needed Puntland Marine Force (PMF). The United Arab Emirates (UAE), motivated to rid off the piracy menace in the region, which threatens vital trade routes, funds the training program.

The intention of this PMF training was to create a professional coastal force to fight piracy and also protect marine resources. Despite the criticism and propaganda, the intended role of the land-based PMF is merely to fight against piracy by establishing bases along the northern and eastern coasts of Puntland. We have also invited the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group to visit the training base. It is also important to note that U.S. Senator Mark Kirk visited the PMF training base on 30 April 2011. The base was also visited by officers from the UNODC Counter-Piracy Program based in Nairobi, who issued a report on the training, conduct and project goals of PMF.

I wish to reiterate that the PMF training is in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1976 (11 April 2011) that “*requests States, UNODC, UNDP, UNPOS and regional organizations to assist the TFG and regional authorities in Somalia...where land-based activities related to piracy are taking place and also requests the TFG and regional authorities in Somalia to increase their own efforts in this regard.*”

### **Ending the Transition**

Puntland is not an enemy to the TFG per se. On the contrary, Puntland is the number one pillar of TFG institutions and has invested massively in terms of manpower, material and financial support since 2004. Similarly, Puntland has proposed, on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2011, a peace and reconciliation roadmap to end the transition in Somalia, by August 20, 2011, and calling to reform the

Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP), by reducing the current 550 MPs to 185 MPs, selected on constituency criteria instead of the unfair and divisive clan-based 4.5 Formula.

Despite the unilateral term-extension rejected by all stakeholders, the UN-organized High-Level Consultative Meeting on Somalia in Nairobi in April 2011, chaired by Amb. Mahiga, concluded with a statement proposing a two-year extension for the TFP and elections for President and Speaker of Parliament, before August 20, 2011. This was merely intended to save the basic institution, which is the TFP, conditional to a major reform of the TFP size and selection criteria.

As detailed in our roadmap, the reconciliation and election process for the next government should be held inside the country, in a peaceful and stable part of Somalia.

The TFG executive branch must not get a term extension. Somalia and the international community cannot afford another costly mistake by repeating past failures. The leadership of this institution has failed to accomplish any of the key transitional tasks mandated under the terms of the 2008-2009 Djibouti Peace Process, namely: security, reconciliation, formation of other federal states according to the 2004 Transitional Federal Charter, and completion of the Draft Federal Constitution in an inclusive process, as well as delivery of basic services.

Although the Djibouti Peace Process that led to the TFG leadership currently in office excluded Puntland, my Administration worked hard to maintain cordial working relationship with the TFG for the sake of Somalia. For example, the TFG leadership failed to implement the Galkayo Agreement, signed in Puntland on 23 August 2009, addressing a comprehensive cooperation on the major issues relating to lasting peace in Somalia, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Security Cooperation, signed in Nairobi on 12 April 2010. In this regard, it is worth to mention that the two TFG leaders who inked the agreements, namely former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake and former TFG Defense Minister Abdalla Boss, were both subsequently dismissed from the government. Also, the TFG leadership is opposed to the formation of new states, as is the case of the Jubaland regions of southern Somalia.

Puntland and other regions interested in a lasting peace for Somalia do not have any nostalgia of returning to the same status of 30 years experience of unitary government, when all power and institutions were highly centralized in the capital, thereby neglecting other regions.

Thank you all for listening and God bless.