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**Statement at the High-Level Consultative Meeting on Somalia
Puntland's Experience in Peace-building and State-building
Nairobi, Kenya**

April 12, 2011

United Nations officials and staff led by the SRSG Amb. Augustine Mahiga; the Speaker of TFG Parliament; Officials and representatives of Somali administrations; International Community Diplomats and Representatives; Other Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning everyone.

It is a pleasure this morning for me and my delegation to be here and to participate at this historic convention on the way forward in Somalia. I would like to extend special thanks to Amb. Mahiga for organizing this consultative meeting on Somalia, and for his leadership to help steer Somalia towards the direction of peace, stability, democracy, and prosperity.

Also, I would like to express my appreciation to the international community's support to Somalia over the past 20 years and it is our hope that the international community will strongly support the outcome of this High-Level Consultative Meeting among the Somali stakeholders.

I would like to stress that we are not here today for power-sharing, but we are here today to find a way forward for the Somalis who have been victimized, those who are suffering in refugee and IDP camps and the victims of human smuggling. We are here today to set clear principles to be followed as guidelines for lasting solution to the plight of the Somali people during this critical juncture of our history.

It is unfortunate that the TFG executive leadership could not join us today, as this development once again demonstrates the fact that the TFG leadership remains a major obstacle to peace in Somalia.

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Before commencing my remarks, I would like to remind all parties that Somalia as a whole is currently undergoing a devastating drought that has impacted the livelihoods of nomadic and rural families, due to the failure of last season's expected rains. As we all know, livestock trade remains the backbone of economic activity in Somalia and I call upon all parties, Somalis and non-Somalis alike, to rush to the aid of drought victims.

Now, let me start my remarks with a brief background of Puntland State in the context of Somalia as a whole. I would especially like to highlight the experiences of Puntland in terms of peace-building and state-building.

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUNTLAND IN 1998 |

The Government of Puntland was established on 1st August, 1998, after a three-month-long preparatory constitutional conference held in Garowe among Puntland's political elite, traditional elders known as *Issims*, intellectuals, members of the business community, and other civil society representatives.

The idea was to establish a self-governing state entity that can deliver much-needed public services to the state's growing population and demands. It must be underlined that, during the prior eight years of state collapse in Mogadishu, a major demographic shift had taken place in Somalia. Puntland had grown tremendously in terms of population and trade, thereby requiring a stronger regulatory authority that unites the region under a single state government to ensure peace and security, to regulate trade, and to relate with neighbors and international partners, among the government's other functions.

The Garowe Constitutional Conference was a homegrown process that ultimately led to the establishment of a functional administration. I believe that the people of Puntland were committed to lessening the pains of state collapse and had waited for eight years in vain for the rest of Somalia to come together and to form a national government. Under such conditions, the people of Puntland adopted a federal system of government and decided that federalism is the only viable option for lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

2. PEACE-BUILDING IN PUNTLAND |

The Government of Puntland came into being not through the use of force, but through the successful conclusion of public discourse via a constitutional conference regarding the state's future in the context of worsening instability in Somalia.

The suffering in Somalia as a whole was a great lesson for Puntland. There was commitment to peace-building in Puntland, as the people had suffered greatly under the tyranny of anarchy and the endless threats emerging from southern Somalia.

As such, the foundation for any peace-building in Somalia is the unity of purpose among the people. The public's commitment to peace-building is a cornerstone for the success of such a grand idea. The rise of outlaws across Somalia immediately following the state collapse of 1991 presented the greatest threat to peace and security in Somalia. But with public support, the first Puntland Government successfully established a functional security force and was robust in dismantling illegal checkpoints, regulating trade, enforcing tax laws, resolving internal disputes, promoting good relations with all neighbors, and presenting federalism as the only viable option to end the anarchy and misery in Somalia.

It is without a doubt that Puntland's experiences in peace-building is deeply ingrained in empowering cultural traditions, especially insofar as it concerns keeping peace among the local clans. As we all know, the conflict in Somalia is deeply rooted in clan hostilities, hatreds and resentment. The people of Puntland recognized this factor and were brilliant in empowering cultural traditions to resolve local disputes which sometimes erupt in violence and lead to instability.

Indeed, it is Puntland's rich traditional values that allowed the state to emerge as a peace-promoting entity within Somalia. The bottom-up approach of institution and state-building is the key to success of the Puntland model. Prior to Puntland, there existed regional-level and district-level administrations that had united to form a single state government under the Puntland name.

3. STATE-BUILDING IN PUNTLAND CONTEXT |

The conclusion of the Garowe Constitutional Conference in August, 1998, led to the drafting of a Provisional State Charter that formed the basis for the emerging state government of Puntland.

It is the Charter that clearly divided the powers of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The emerging state government did not lessen the influence of cultural traditions, insofar as peace-building was concerned. However, the state government had jurisdiction and discretion in all matters of state, including security, taxes, regulating trade, and managing external relations.

It is remarkable that the election of Puntland's first president in 1998 by the newly appointed Puntland Parliament concluded in a smooth and orderly fashion. By then, a political powerhouse within Somalia had emerged and its influence would be heard and felt over the coming years. In subsequent years, for example in 2005 and in 2009,

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presidential elections in Puntland were democratic, transparent and competitive. In each case, the incumbent leader lost the election and an opposition candidate became president.

Indeed, Puntland sees itself as a role model state and as the mother of federalism in Somalia. As the country's first state government, Puntland feels that it is vitally important to behave like a responsible government and to perform by delivering public goods.

In terms of democratizing the state, Puntland has taken major steps towards establishing a multi-party political system. For example, District Councils have been established; the Puntland Constitution was reviewed, and then ratified by the Parliament in mid-2009; the constitution was presented for public discussion via university debates and media presentations for dissemination purposes; the Electoral Commission Law was passed by Parliament; and presently, my Administration is actively engaged in appointing members of the Puntland Electoral Commission to advance the state towards a multi-party political system in the very near future.

It is equally important to note that security is the basis for the democratization of Puntland. As the public remains armed, and conflict and anarchy continues to rage in southern Somalia, maintaining security is a key factor of any democratic advances. This is to say that there can be no democracy without security first, and this is the unequivocal position of my Administration.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS |

Somalia must be saved from itself. The greatest threats and dangers to Somalia have emerged from within the war-torn country. Indeed, 20 years of conflict has produced unimaginable outcomes for local populations in Somalia, in terms of human suffering from poverty, and living under the continuous terror of illegal militia and other outlaws.

Terror groups, pirate gangs, war profiteers, and other criminals who have operated in Somalia for a long time do not see any benefit in the establishment of a strong national government. The narrow vision of such outlaws cannot and must not justify neglect nor failure, as the destiny of the Somali people hangs in the balance.

It is important to note that Puntland still strongly opposes term-extension for the TFG institutions, as the overall performance of these institutions over the last two years has been a catastrophic failure.

Puntland wants to see major reform of the TFG Parliament, as 550 MPs selected on the basis of the divisive and clan-based 4.5 Formula do not represent the Somali people and

will not deliver positive outcome. It is equally important to reduce the MPs to a reasonable number, as it is to enforce a legitimate selection criteria based on constituency.

Puntland has prepared a roadmap for peace, a strategy for reforming the TFG Parliament, and has even offered to host a Somali national reconciliation conference to chart the country's future.

Once again, I offer Puntland's readiness and willingness to host a Somali national conference to steer the country out of the present crises.

In conclusion, I believe that Somalia needs a strong and effective government that can overwhelm the entrenched criminal networks who have benefited from anarchy and who pose grave threats to peace, security and stability in Somalia, in the Horn of Africa region, and the world as a whole.

In studying and learning from the Puntland example, there is a light of hope that Puntland provides a model for the future of a Somalia that is united, federal, democratic, and a responsible member of the community of nations.

Thank you and God bless.