

**UN Security Council Meeting with
Somali Civil Society and Non-State Actors
Djibouti - June 3rd, 2008**

Statement by Somali Civil Society and Non-state Actors

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Diplomats,

Good Morning. It is a privilege to address the Security Council member states on behalf of Somali civil society and non-state actors. We regard this as a historical meeting, which comes about at a critical time when the Somali people yearn for peace.

The members of this delegation represent a wide variety of civil society and non-state actor groups. Community leaders, professional association, women's groups, the private sector, and local NGOs from all regions of Somalia are here this morning to share with the Security Council regarding the unfolding humanitarian crisis, the opportunities for a political settlement, and the expectations of the Somali people of the UN's role.

Over the past twenty years, Somali civil society has been an active and significant player in Somalia. Civil society is a platform for intellectuals, professionals and business people to promote a culture of peace and good governance. Their voice and influence have become increasingly pronounced in the social and political arena. During a meeting of over 150 civil society leaders that was held in Uganda in March, Somali civil society and non-state actors developed a more collective voice that, among other things, promoted new ways to address the current political stalemate in Somalia. Today before the Security Council we speak with one voice.

Humanitarian Tragedy

Somalia faces a severe and unparalleled humanitarian crisis, the consequence of prolonged conflict and insecurity, massive displacement and natural disasters. Over a million people are on the move, displaced from their homes, while thousands live in makeshift shacks across the country. The number of IDPs making the dangerous sea-crossing across the Gulf of Aden is testimony to their desperation to flee from Somalia. Despite increased international awareness of the severity of the humanitarian crisis and the response of the international aid agencies, a huge gap remains between the level of need and the corresponding humanitarian and diplomatic response. The suffering continues as we speak.

The global escalation of food prices and the virtual collapse of the Somali economy have been aggravated by the devaluation of the local currency giving rise to hyper-inflation. The Somali Shilling is now at its lowest value in history, and the lack of purchasing power has already generated violence across the country. There are also considerable challenges for aid agencies in reaching the displaced and needy. There have been targeted attacks on agencies and looting of vehicles. The recent killings of MSF staff in Kismayo, the assassinations of prominent members of Somali civil society and attempted

kidnappings of aid personnel are clear illustrations of the difficulties of delivering effective humanitarian assistance to the Somali people. Somali civil society is extremely concerned about this unfolding humanitarian tragedy.

Opportunities

By March 2008 the Somali political situation remained uncertain but was more promising than it had been in some time. A number of factors contributed to this new and more promising environment:

- For the first time there was a sign of significant shifts on all sides to engage in political dialogue. Both the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for Reliberation of Somalia have shown a willingness to take risks in committing to the reconciliation process.
- There were indications that the International Community was now better informed and more engaged in the peace-building process.
- All parties accepted the transitional framework as the best mechanism upon which the parties can negotiate.
- All parties agreed in principle that the current conflict could not be resolved through military means; none of them can achieve outright victory.
- The proximity and cultural ties with Djibouti made this a venue which is perceived to be neutral ground and where the parties feel comfortable.
- Parties also welcomed the active engagement of Somali civil society in the reconciliation process.

Given this unprecedented window of opportunity, Somali civil society and non-state actors:

1. Welcome the practical commitment by the sides in the current Somali context to a genuine and just reconciliation agreement
2. Call on all parties to enable humanitarian access for emergency response by both Somali and international agencies, and the immediate implementation of the May 15 agreement by the parties in Djibouti;
3. Demand that the Transitional Federal Institutions and the armed opposition agree on a comprehensive and lasting cessation of hostilities, and on a road map for the transitional period that restores a democratic and prosperous Somalia within the family of nations;
4. Note that any divisions within and among parties can become a major obstacle to the implementation of agreements reached by the parties in Djibouti. We therefore urge both sides to close ranks and agree on pursuing an inclusive dialogue;

5. Firmly believe that peace cannot be enforced by deploying troops alone, but rather through the political buy-in by all parties as well as the Somali people.

It is imperative that the international community commits to peace in Somalia by supporting a sustained process of inclusive dialogue. ***Somali civil society and non-state actors recommend to the Security Council member states to:***

1. Encourage the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces and the deployment of UN-mandated forces through negotiated phases. The presence of Ethiopian troops is exacerbating the crisis, and their withdrawal will accelerate an inclusive political settlement;
2. Support the establishment of a small ‘Somali support/advisory team’ to work closely with the UN SRSG to undertake the immense task of reconciliation and peace-building. The protracted conflict in Somalia and failures of previous peace processes have generated mistrust between Somalis and international community, so the engagement of such a Somali team would strengthen confidence in the process;
3. Support non-military solutions to the Somali conflict since the current humanitarian situation will deteriorate unless and until a comprehensive political settlement is reached;
4. Continue to support the rebuilding of Somali national institutions through the provision of the necessary financial and technical assistance;
5. Impose targeted sanctions against any Somali leader who foments further violence and who rejects the Somali peace process;
6. Establish a commission of inquiry to investigate violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Somali civil society and non-state actors support the efforts of the International Community and the Special Representative of the Secretary General, A. Ould-Abdallah, to facilitate dialogue. We believe that the SRSG’s office, with the support of the international community, is the most appropriate institution to lead international support for the current peace process. We welcome the proposed relocation of the UNPOS office to Somalia as this will help restore the trust of Somali people in UN institutions.

Mr President, there is an urgent need to take action, and time is of the essence. It is rare that such opportunities open up in the Somali context. We urge the UN Security Council to nurture and support these opportunities for peace. The history of Somalia is a graveyard of missed and lost opportunities. It is our firm belief that the UN Security Council on behalf of the International Community has a moral responsibility to play a central role if there is to be any hope of real and lasting peace in Somalia.

Thank You.