

Rebirth of the Somali State

Policy Options and Programme Opportunities for Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Since 1988, Somalia has experienced a devastating civil war, which has driven millions of people abroad, and killed and maimed hundreds of thousands more. This has led to the socio-economic deterioration and fragmentation of the whole country. Ten years later, economic and social indicators show that Somalis are confronted with greater poverty, poorer health, more unemployment and higher illiteracy. In the political arena, twelve peace and reconciliation conferences have failed and many of the regions are still marked by instability and conflict. The road to stability, decentralization, federalism and democratic government has a long way to go.

Despite the situation, a glimpse of hope emerged when the President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Geulleh, committed his Government to initiate a Somali National Peace Conference led by Somali civil society. The Somali National Peace Conference officially opened on May 2, 2000 in a city called Arte, in the Republic of Djibouti.

It is important to note that this conference lasted for more than six consecutive months. It was a Somali-driven process. The participants were from the various sectors of civil society: clan leaders, community groups, women's associations and representatives from the Somali diaspora, with the exception of some regional leaders and a few warlords. After six months of consultations and discussion, the will, the commitment and the capacity of Somali civil society from across the country led to the rebirth of a new Somali State. A New Transitional Government was formed, with a parliament of 245 members. An interim president, Dr. Abdiqasin Salaad Hassan, and his Prime Minister, Dr Ali Khalif Galaydh, were nominated and democratically elected within this process.

This outcome was a solution from within Somalis, with the Djibouti Government's role being limited to sponsoring the process. It is not an exaggeration, however, to say that regardless of this political achievement, there are more challenges ahead. The New Transitional Government is passing