

She briefly presented the background of SCIRD and its role in working for Somalia's peace and development. Ms. Salah also reminded the participants how the Somali community and NGOs in Canada in 1998 mandated SCIRD to co-ordinate the efforts of Somali Canadians to rebuild and nurture Somalia's civil society in peacebuilding.

In addition, Ms. Salah summarized the morning workshop entitled "The Cry of Somali Civil Society for Peace" to the afternoon participants. She pointed out that the importance of this conference is that we have the opportunity to learn at first hand about the experience of the Somali National Peace Process by meeting with those who were involved directly or indirectly.

Ms Salah introduced Mr. Ahmed Hashi "Hashara", a former Ambassador, a lawyer and the chair of the afternoon session. Mr. Hashi then welcomed Mr. Eugene Bellemara, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, who spoke on behalf of the Minister of International Cooperation, Ms. Maria Minna. Mr Bellemara stated, "I know that Hon. Maria Minna has made Africa a real priority for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and she recognizes the importance of long-term peace to human security and sustainable development in countries in conflict, including Somalia."

"This is an important moment," he continued, "in the move towards democracy in Somalia and this conference will help us all further understand how peace and democracy can take hold. Canada has been encouraged by the progress achieved in establishing a Somali parliament and we particularly welcomed the participation of civil society actors and the place given to women in the Assembly during the Arta election process. Currently, Canada continues to work with the donor community and the United Nations to determine what future role the international community can and should play in Somalia. It is through the efforts of people and organizations that are gathered here today, that the people of Somalia will be able to avoid future conflicts and achieve a sustainable peace."

Mr. Bellemara concluded his remarks by saying, "I know that Minister Minna looks forward to hearing from you about your ideas on how Canada can work with the international community and the people of Somalia to help rebuild the country."

The second speaker, Ambassador Roble Olhaye, presented the Djibouti Peace Initiative for Somalia. In his outstanding speech he stated, "There couldn't be more glaring evidence of the combination of tragedy and leadership failure in our time than that of Somalia. **The rebirth of Somalia**, therefore, represents the best birthday present to all Somalis everywhere in this new millennium." The Ambassador shared with the participants the whole process of the Somalia peace initiatives and the role that the Djibouti government played. He concluded in his speech that the international community's commitments to the revival of Somalia's institutions and to the rebuilding of its infrastructure are crucial. He also pointed out that "all countries in the region need to demonstrate that they have a stake in peace in Somalia. It is in the best interest of every country in the region, therefore, to extend a helping hand to the new government, and support it in its endeavour to bring back sanity and stability in Somalia."

Dr Babafemi Badejo, Senior Political Advisor at the UN Political Office for Somalia then presented