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(Somali Catastrophe and
Intellectuals' Succor)

A Conference/Congress of Somali Intellectuals

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I. Preamble

In the wake of over three decades of mixed political morbidity and internecine violence, an evaporation of civic belonging, and many “peace conferences,” we have come to this conclusion: the old approaches have failed miserably and, thus, it is high time for a deeper and more disciplined ventilation of some of the critical components of the Somali condition. There is no denial that, as a consequence, the Somali situation is still *catastrophic*. That is, the status of the crippled (if not cadaver) state, the acute paucity of able leadership, and the evaporation of political goodness continue unabated. Thus, it is urgent to radically and wisely change course. The fundamental objective, as articulated in various pages of the document, is, then, to set a new *momentum* towards a peaceful and just order and a competent reconstruction of national institutions.

An organized Somali intellectual camp has been absent from the Somali scene for a very long time. Because Somalia’s current human and political circumstances are dire, they demand the formation of united and civic elements of the nation’s intellectuals. The creation of such a progressive thinking is imminently essential for collective renewal and effective self-governance.

A workshop, which was held in Djibouti in early October, was the critical first step in a three-stage process. The second stage was the summoning of a national conference attended by many intellectuals that advanced the agenda set by the previous meeting. For the third and final step, a national congress of more than 100 civic-minded Somalis were invited to deliberate on and carry forward the recommendations from the second stage.

II. Specific Purpose

- A. To set the foundation for a new and daring paradigm of peace (internal/external), competence, and reconstruction;
- B. To identify some critical elements of the Somali condition (e.g., careful diagnosis, form of state and type of leadership, role of Islam, security, relations with regional/international communities, and role of the diaspora) and offer compact analysis and precise recommendations;
- C. To clarify items for short-term and long-term actions;
- D. To invite the Somali people (inside and outside the country) to become familiar with these ideas and take ownership of their dissemination and implementation; and

E. To press the relevant regional and global actors to take these ideas seriously and mount unprecedented solidarity with the Somali people to put the recommendations into immediate action.

III. Difference from Previous Conferences

- A. For the first time a representative cohort of Somali intellectuals have come together to:
1. Offer written reflections/policy analysis on key slices of the catastrophe;
 2. Deduce from the examinations a set of actionable recommendations; and
 3. Underscore the pivotal factor of *leadership* as one deserving the most urgent and concentrated attention.

IV. Interest of the Republic of Djibouti

- A. Durable, rational, *strategic* concern about the ramifications (i.e., contagion effect) of the catastrophe.
- B. Deep primordial *affinity* that sustains the persistence to not give up on the Somali people, the decades of dashed hopes notwithstanding.
- C. Since this cohort of Somali intellectuals has decided to mount this new initiative, the Republic of Djibouti has offered *facilities* and a gracious welcome.

V. Recommendations By the Conference/Congress

A. State and leadership: Discussion Paper written by Professor Ahmed I. Samatar, “ The Somali Interregnum: What State? What Leadership?”

The Somali people are in desperate need of a strong and democratic state and legitimate, ethical, and competent leadership. The latter is where the effort should begin: It is the appearance of a determined cluster of individuals capable of demonstrating a range of imaginative ways to bring together enabling-cum-ennobling ideas, resources, and strategic actions that could finally mobilize the Somali people to redeem themselves, their country and their national state, and afford them opportunities to re-enter the

international community with new dignity and sense of purposiveness. More specifically, the new cohort should:

1. Imagine and spread deep emotional bonding among the Somali people for the revival of their national unity. This means joining the Somali people to bring forth their best intelligence, energy, and solidarity, as well as a visionary prefiguration of the new politics of citizenship and effective governance.
2. Act on the conviction, and convey to their compatriots, that 4.5 as a formula for reshaping national institutional reconstruction is deleterious and, therefore, must be jettisoned.
3. Articulate a paradigm of peace that informs internal reconstruction and external engagement.
4. Advise strongly all concerned to respect the agreed terms and timetable for political change.
5. Propose that the 1960 Constitution (with modification as seen fit) as the starting point for the reconstructive national project.
6. Pay particular attention to the concerns of the people of “Somaliland.” This could take the form of:
 - The creation of a genuine forum to hear their grievances and address those that are found to be legitimate.
 - Facilitate the participation of “Somaliland” in the making of the top leadership of the reconstructive state.
 - Remind the communities of “Somaliland” of their own obligation to the re-knitting and the strengthening of national unity.
7. Propose that the reconstructive state should have the following structural traits:
 - An unambiguous separation of powers between the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial organs of the state.
 - An Executive President and a Vice-President.
 - The following strategic ministerial portfolios, led by the most qualified and experienced:
 - a. Interior and National Security
 - b. Economy and Natural Resources
 - c. Justice and Religion

- d. Education
- e. Health
- f. Foreign Affairs
- g. Information and Culture
- h. Public Works, Communication, and Transport
- i. Defense

- An independent Constitutional Commission (seven members)
- An independent Supreme Court (seven members)
- An independent Electoral Commission (seven members)
- An independent Civic Service Commission
- An independent National Research Institute
- Strategic Embassies that will be justified by *at least one* of the following criteria:
 - a. Weighty and historic matters that link Somalia to that particular country
 - b. Significant Somali diaspora who are becoming stakeholders in that country
 - c. The potential to make significant material and intellectual contributions to the reconstructive project.

Criteria for diplomats:

- i. Technically and educationally qualified
 - ii. Proven track record of distinction in relevant field and commitment to national renewal
 - iii. Demonstrated ethics and moral values.
- A national reconstructive *Parliament*: **150 members**, a minimum of 25% to be allocated to qualified (as will be expected also of their male compatriots) Somali women.
- Staffing of the reconstruction of the state and its apparatuses should set a quota of 25% of qualified women employed.

8. Criteria for Leadership:

Three attributes critical to a leader (ship):

- A public record with NO evidence of committed crime against the nation
- Ethical conduct in which justice, fairness, trustworthiness, and absence of corruption are discernable
- Competence—qualifications and the experience to carry out the task. His/her *CV* should be made public.

9. Type of State

Decentralized Unitary State system:

This type of state has the potential to be an effective mechanism to speak on behalf of the Somali nation and immediately undertake the urgently needed projects of reconciliation, law and order, rehabilitation of the national infrastructure, and new developmental agenda in partnership with legitimate private enterprise. However, there are large questions to be confronted if this version of the unitary state is to be introduced. First, how far will the authority of the decentralized institutions go? Second, will the provinces have the constitutional mandate to rein in case of a dictatorial central leadership? Third, what liberties must be sought *through* the structure of governance? Fourth, what liberties must be promoted *within*? Fifth, what liberties must be protected *from* the reach of political authority?

B. Role of Islam: Discussion Paper written by Farah Abdulkadir, “The Role of Islam in National Renewal”

Islam has been an integral part of the way of life of the Somali people since the early days of its emergence, from the first century of the *Hijirya* calendar. Historically, there is no indication of any armed campaigns and/or *Jihad* that took place in the Horn of Africa region for spreading and propagating Islam. Instead, Islam was willingly and widely accepted and embraced by the people in the region. Since the collapse, Islamic awakening (*Sahwa Islamiya*) in Somalia has played a big role in the social services sector, especially in the humanitarian, education, health, and business. While these services saved major portions of the Somali society, particularly those in need, Islam has also been used and abused as a cover up for the pursuit of naked power and other political interests—actions mainly linked to imported foreign views and cultures. These have thrust the country into the center of international political and ideological conflicts which Somalia has no interest in at all. In reclaiming the positive values of their religion, the reconstructive project should:

1. Establish Islamic *Sharia* as the foundation of the laws of Somalia.

2. Use of Islamic religion to rebuild the country and the society and to restore brotherhood/sisterhood and trust among the people in the peace building, conflict resolution, and the delivery of humanitarian aid.
3. Set up independent, competent, and highly qualified Islamic Council with a research/reference center NOT affiliated with any political or ideological group.
4. Explore the establishment of Islamic educational centers that produce well-versed scholars, based on the doctrine that the society is already familiar with.
5. Open a free dialogue among the Somali public on the relationship between Islam and the society in order to resolve issues that lead to sectarianism. This could be spearheaded by a national conference for Islamic scholars in order to thoroughly discuss and transcend sectarian perspectives, as well as avoid propagating issues and programs that internationalize the Somali conflict and, therefore, contaminate the genuine Somali cause.
7. Stress that extremism in Islam is a very grave threat to the faith, unity, and national security of Somalia. Thus, such a mindset or actions are unacceptable.

C. Security: Discussion Paper written by General Ahmed Jama, “Re-making National Security and the Forces of Order.”

On 21 October 1969, the Somali national army took over the country, and co-opted the police and custodial corps as junior partners in order to broaden its base. This was the first time the army leadership decided that the police and the custodial corps share with them the name of “armed forces.” Prior to that, the national army maintained vehemently that the name of the armed forces could only belong to their branches: army, air force, and navy. The Somali armed forces have experienced a devastating fall from grace; they took over a country with all institutions in tact and, after 22 years of rule, left country with no institutions and the society as most vulnerable.

The reconstructive Somali state would need a credible professional, highly disciplined security forces, trained in the maintenance of law and order, capable of combating insurgency and criminality, and adequately schooled in the strict observance of the law and respect for human rights. Such a force needs to be properly vetted and competently led, initially by former members of the armed forces, who are physically fit and have not been implicated in the death, destruction, displacement, and abuse of human rights in the last twenty years. This force should be properly housed, paid, equipped, and provided with adequate welfare. The Somali security forces at the initial stage will have to be paid by the international community. The reconstructive project should:

1. Establish the National Security Forces (NSFs) of the country, which should be unified
2. Have its NSFs under one command
3. Have the commanders of the different branches of the NSFs recruited, appointed, and promoted on the basis of professional merit
4. Make sure that the command of the NSFs come under the civilian authorities
5. Establish that the basic training of the new recruits be conducted domestically
6. Establish a highly qualified Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights and environmental violations by Somalis and non-Somali actors
7. The international force in the country should inform the Somali people and the world about their mandate and exit strategy
8. Call on those warring groups who are spilling the blood of the Somali people to establish an unconditional ceasefire
9. Stress that any indiscriminate shelling of civilians must STOP immediately
10. Protect natural resources as part of the security of the country. Therefore, neither national nor regional authorities nor private individuals have the right to grant foreigners illegal access to Somali natural resources. Moreover, any current or ongoing negotiations of that kind should be aborted.
11. Terminate any presence of foreign security companies in Somalia. This is a severe threat to the reconciliation, rebuilding of the state, security, and general welfare.

D. External Relations: “Role of International and Regional Actors in Rebuilding the Somali State,” Discussion Paper written by Professor Hussein Ahmed Warsame

Somalia has received billions of dollars of foreign aid since independence in 1960. Nonetheless, due to incompetence, corruption, and mismatch of donor and recipient objectives, that aid has not achieved most of its stated objectives. Consequently, an aid paradigm shift is necessary. Specifically, a program that includes the development of rule of law, property rights, and legal empowerment of the poor would yield better results

than traditional approaches to development aid provision. The channeling of foreign aid to affect legal empowerment of the poor has the potential to increase the tax base for the reconstructive state. Since legal empowerment decreases extra-legality and brings poor people closer to the state, it has the potential to improve security. Legal empowerment, therefore, is smart politics; rejuvenating dead capital is smart economics. If legal empowerment is supplemented with carefully chosen but open trading policies toward the neighboring countries, the tax base may reach a level where revenues from taxation will be enough to finance most government operations. Foreign aid, beyond the major reconstruction of the government apparatus may, therefore, diminish a great deal in the long haul. In a nutshell, an injection of foreign aid capital to rebuild the state institutions and to empower the poor could put Somalia on the path towards self-reliance and sustainable development. The reconstructive project should:

1. Secure strategic support from the international community to rebuild national institutions and develop its natural wealth.
2. Aim that a main focus of foreign aid be on legal empowerment of the poor and the absorption of their extra-legal assets, businesses, and labor to the country's formal economy.
3. Ensure that initial international aid must include funds for setting up viable taxation systems and projects that create employment and business activities, thus improving the taxable base.
4. Encourage individuals and institutions to invest in the country but insist that they respect the rule of law and refrain from activities that are harmful to the state and the well being of the people.
5. The delivery of foreign aid for the reconstructive state must be based on specific programs approved by the parliament and the executive branches.
6. Messages to the world:

a. Djibouti

The Somali people are indebted to the continued support from the Djibouti government and its people for their sympathy and generosity. It is the wish of the Somali people that this fraternal relationship continues into the deep future. When the Somali people return to the stage of history on the Horn of Africa, they will never forget those who stood by them in their hours of dire need.

b. Kenya

Kenya is commended for its assistance to the Somali refugees in their country. Nonetheless, we are urging the Kenyan authorities to rigorously investigate any violations of the Somali refugees' rights and ensure that if such violations are taking place, they should stop immediately.

c. Ethiopia

Somalia and Ethiopia are two neighboring countries and must respect each other's sovereignty. Moreover, the reconstructive Somali state and its leaders should reassure Ethiopia and its people that our fate is linked together, and bring forth ideas that address standing mutual issues and problems, as well as build new pan-Africanist practical solidarities.

d. The United States of America (USA)

The sympathetic acts of the United States at various moments in the Somali catastrophe are recognized and appreciated. However, the United States ought to engage Somalia with a greater degree of serious attention and offer concrete contributions to the reconstructive project. Furthermore, the United States should avoid the reduction of its relationship to Somalia to the single issue of counter-terrorism. The two countries should engage each other directly—that is, without going through a third party.

e. African Union (AU)

The AU's advocacy for and support to the Somali is acknowledged. However the AU must re-tune its strategy towards a partnership in rebuilding the country's institutions. Such a rethinking is likely to have a positive impact on the security on the ground and the success of the reconstructive project.

f. European Union (EU)

The Somali people are cognizant of the EU's precious contributions to address the Somali conundrum. When the Somali people are able to present to the world at once a new politics that will accent self-reliance and competent remaking of national institutions, the hope is that the EU will become a greater partner in such a project.

g. Arab League/Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The members of the Arab League/OIC and the Somali people share a deep historical affinity. The hope and expectation is that the Arab League/OIC will make meaningful contributions to the reconstruction, reconciliation, and security of the Somali state.

h. The United Nations Organization (UNO)

The Somali people are grateful to the good gestures and efforts of the UNO in these difficult times. Nonetheless, the UNO must move its office for Somalia to inside the country. In addition, the UNO is expected to bring forth resources that will enable the reconstructive state and its citizens to embark on the journey of renewal. Moreover, the UNO ought to review, right away, the mandate of the Somali Monitoring Group.

i. Other States

We request that other states consider extending positive and concrete contributions to the key priorities of the reconstructive project.

E. The Role of the Diaspora: Collective Explorations during the Conference

The destruction of the Somali national state in 1991 and the subsequent continuing civil violence have caused an unprecedented exodus of Somali people. Perhaps as much as a million are now spread across all continents. Many represent some of the most precious of Somali human capital. Moreover, a new generation of the diaspora is forming. Already, these communities have a palpable impact on both their new countries as well as Somalia. Since this dual nature of these lives will only become more pronounced, it is imperative to underscore their role in the revival of the national spirit, associational life and the reconstructive ambition. The diaspora should:

1. Avoid any actions that could damage the search for peace and the progress of the reconstructive project.
2. Take part in current and potential activities to retrieve Somali nationhood and a capable state.
3. Work hard to be virtuous and honorable within their host communities. An important indicator of such profile is successful integration.
4. Create a database for the Somali diaspora, especially for the educated and professionals.
5. Return, when possible, to their native country and invest their knowledge and resources. Those unable to return should consider any other means of facilitating the transfer of their knowledge to the homeland.
6. Establish a trust fund that sponsors the establishment of a National Research Institute.
7. Lobby within their respective local and national governments for supporting the establishment and success of the reconstructive state and spirit.
8. Preserve the Somali dimension of the identity of their children through an appropriate propagation of the Somali language and culture.

VI. Implementation

- A. Process and Mission: Spread the recommendations around strategic states, regional and global organizations, and Somali communities inside and outside of the country.

B. Subcommittee (elected by the Conference/Congress):
* 21 individuals (8 internal and 13 external).

C. Tenure:

- One year.
- Progress reports at reasonable intervals.