

# **Meeting of the Leaders of the Somalia Business Community and Civil Society**

## **OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUÉ**

More than 500 leaders of the Somalia business community and members of civil society convened on 19 March 2016 to discuss the United Nations Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea (“SEMG”) and its detrimental impact on the development and growth of Somalia. The meeting was sponsored by the Somali Religious Council, the Somalia Council of Traditional Elders, Somali women’s groups, Somali business community led by the Chamber of Commerce of Somalia, and SOCENSA, with support from members of the media and the youth.

With regard to the SEMG, the participants:

1. NOTE, with great concern, recent reports of the SEMG in which the SEMG regularly targets high-ranking Somali government officials, business leaders, and members of civil society with accusations of wrongdoing that are not substantiated by competent evidence.
2. NOTE that the SEMG’s false accusations seek to implicate high profile Somali individuals in corruption and terrorism as a way to destroy their reputations and derail their efforts to build a functioning state in Somalia.
3. OBSERVE that the original mandate of the SEMG was to monitor compliance with the UN arms embargo but has since been expanded dramatically by SEMG members to encompass monitoring of virtually all aspects of political, business, and civic life in Somalia. The SEMG has become a self-appointed roving watchdog seeking to criticize the activities of Somalis who are leading the way in the efforts to rebuild a functioning state.
4. OBSERVE that the SEMG uses illegal and otherwise highly questionable methods in working to achieve its objectives, which include the use of threats and extortion to obtain information, fabricating evidence, hacking electronic systems, and selective leaking of false and defamatory information to discredit key individuals and institutions of government and private enterprise.
5. OBSERVE that the current role of the SEMG is an affront to the sovereignty of the people and government of Somalia, who are justifiably concerned that the SEMG has become a mechanism to restrain the development of functioning state institutions in Somalia.
6. OBSERVE that although the official original mandate of the SEMG was to promote peace and security in Somalia, the SEMG has become, through the highly questionable methods of its members, a grave threat to the peace and security of Somalia.
7. APPRECIATE the commitment of other UN agencies and the international community to improving the lives of Somalis and encourage their continuing efforts to assist Somalis in Somali-owned and Somali-led state-building activities.
8. AFFIRM they are in favor of a culture of transparency and efforts to prevent corruption and abuse of power within Somalia, but argue the current methodology and conduct of the SEMG is instead stifling the efforts to rebuild trust between Somalia and the international community.
9. URGE the International Community, in particular the United Nations Security Council, to heed the concerns outlined by the Somali civil society, which strongly considers the SEMG a black mark on an otherwise commendable record of support for Somalia.
10. DEMAND that the Somali government vigorously objects to the continuing existence of the SEMG in its current form and use all its political and diplomatic resources to ensure that the SEMG is promptly dismantled.

**Mogadishu - 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2016**