



Somaliland Non State Actors Forum

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Civil Society Position Paper on New Deal –SSA Implementation

Preamble

On 13 April 2014, the Somaliland Non State Actors Forum (SONSAF) convened a one day briefing and consultation meeting bringing together Civil Society and the Ministry of National Planning and Development (MoNPD) to discuss Somaliland's progress in implementing the New Deal following its endorsement in September 2013. The occasion provided the opportunity for the MoNPD to reinforce the underlying principles of the country's unique development partnership under the New Deal framework (the Somaliland Special Arrangement [SSA]); provide an update on progress made by the government and donors against the milestones and commitments enshrined in the SSA; and outline a way forward for accelerating the implementation of the SSA in both the short and long terms.

Civil society used the opportunity to explore possible avenues for their greater and more meaningful inclusion and participation in project implementation, strategic guidance and overall policy-making under this new development trajectory. Such dialogue marked a continuation of the work SONSAP has been undertaking since January, 2014, through its Aid Effectiveness Thematic Working Group to entrench and institutionalize the role of civil society in promoting Somaliland's development through bottom-up and inclusive cooperation with the Somaliland government and international community.

In recognition of this popular mandate, the Minister of National Planning and Development, H.E. Dr.Sa'ad Ali Shire, commended the part played by SONSAP and other civil society organizations' participation in laying the foundations and providing crucial input and legitimization for what has become the main guiding document for Somaliland's development partnership with the international community, founded on an overarching commitment to the popularly-owned Somaliland National Development Plan (NDP). He went on to note that, without the support of civil society in championing the cause of Somaliland's important role in the region, and without their advocacy in highlighting Somaliland unique and impressive development context, the SSA would not be the powerful, useful and forward-thinking document that it eventually became.

The meeting marked another key milestone in SONSAF's organizational mandate to mobilize civil society for deliberations toward the 'promotion of policy coherence on aid for development to be aligned to the standards and principles agreed among stakeholders.'¹The approach followed at the meeting also reflected the sentiment voiced previously by SONSAF in its advocacy to the international community on the value of building a development partnership on Somaliland's own priorities, coordination schemes and financing mechanisms, as expressed in the following: 'Since 2010 Somaliland has managed, through its national development plan (NDP), to define explicitly what external assistance it requires from the international community and other key stakeholders both domestic and international. This plan reflects the realities in Somaliland and aligns its objective with those of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).'²

Chief among the challenges highlighted by civil society during the presentations and discussion sessions were the inadequate, unequal support and engagement provided by the international community to Somaliland in comparison to Somalia when it comes to the implementation of the New Deal. For civil society, this was seen as not only a disappointing under-appreciation and undervaluation of Somaliland's achievements in democratization and good governance, but a wasted opportunity to use the funds committed to New Deal implementation to create lasting and transformative change in a social context where the return on aid investments is high due to the secure and functional environment in which development takes place. Somaliland's vibrant and well-established civil society acknowledged that it had a major role to play in advocating and holding the international community and Somaliland government accountable to their commitments under the SSA.

In this regard, civil society commended Somaliland's international development partners for endorsing the pragmatic approach to Somaliland's development that the SSA provides, and pledged its cooperation to working with all agencies and donors committed to support this innovative development framework. However, Somaliland's civil society expressed the wish that more could be done to recognize and utilize the comprehensive foreign aid assistance modalities and coherent country systems that Somaliland has already put in place—most preferred of which is the Somaliland Development Fund. It also expressed concern that delays in SSA implementation and the effect this has on public expectations for job creation and institutional reform could weaken faith in the New Deal as an overarching model for development in post-conflict settings.

Lastly, the meeting provided an opportunity to explore ways to operationalize and integrate the SSA's cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender mainstreaming, youth empowerment and citizen-state relations. The discussions and recommendations put forward by civil society at this platform will feed into the action plans and partnership implementation arrangements presented

¹SONSAF Aid Effectiveness and Service Delivery Thematic Working Group position paper (2014)

²Voicing Somaliland's Priorities Official Position of Somaliland's Civil Society Regarding UNSOM's Approach to Somaliland (2013)

by the Government and civil society at the next Somaliland High Level Aid Coordination Forum, which will bring together Somaliland stakeholders and key members of the international community to make good on their commitments to direct development partnership under the SSA.

Recommendations

- Financing of the implementation of priorities for Somaliland's development identified by the SSA is crucial, and, in the spirit of 'do no harm' and the New Deal TRUST commitment to 'timely and predictable aid', must be undertaken without any constraints.
- There is a need for the international community to be more innovative and practical in dealing with Somaliland as a special case on development matters, as was the spirit behind the creation of the SSA.
- Somaliland must receive a fair portion of the international community's New Deal aid allocations, both in recognition and solidarity with its achievements and out of a desire to preserve these achievements as part of the creation of a more stable and secure Horn of Africa.
- Somaliland Civil Society representation should be maximized at international meetings related to the New Deal, in a manner that takes into account the democratic wishes of the population it represents, as a necessary means for promoting inclusive, participatory and bottom-up development in the region.
- The Civil Society of Somaliland, in the spirit of a more equal, engaged and democratic development partnership with its international partners, invites governments, multilateral organizations and international NGOs to a meeting with civil society in Somaliland in advance of the High Level Aid Coordination Forum in early June 2014.
- The Somaliland government should take greater initiative to enhance the grassroots participation of all civil society stakeholders to support New Deal implementation, so as to maximize the benefits and outcome of this new development approach for the people of Somaliland.
- Donor governments, which have earned the deep gratitude of the Somaliland government and civil society for their long-standing support to Somaliland and the fulfilment of its NDP and SSA goals, should enhance or initiate their utilization of Somaliland's preferred financing mechanism under the SSA, the Somaliland Development Fund (SDF).
- The cross-cutting issues of human rights, youth empowerment, gender mainstreaming and citizen-state relations must be integrated into SSA implementation in a concrete and robust manner, based on sectoral policies and action plans, and with the guidance and input of civil society.