

THE CHICAGO CONFERENCE ON SOMALIA

- SUMMARY REPORT -

Chicago Conference on the Establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process for Somalia's Long-Term Social and Economic Development



The Chicago Conference on Somalia held on April 14, 2012 called for a comprehensive strategic planning process for long term social & economic security for Somalia. Led by Somalia Strategy Forum (SSF), supported by The National Strategy Forum (NSF), the World Engagement Institute (WEI) and the Sustainable Capacity International Institute (SCII), the conference laid the foundation for the Somali Diaspora to make a positive and constructive engagement for the rebuilding of Somalia.

Mr. **Yusuf Maalin**, Somalia Strategy Forum Executive Director, Mr. **Richard Friedman**, NSF President, and Gen. **Charles Tucker**, WEI Executive Director introduced the purpose and methods of the forum. Mr. **Arnold Romeo**, Director of African Affairs for the City of Chicago, presented a letter of greetings and support from Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel who expressed his firm commitment to the purpose of the conference.

Dr. **Marco Tavanti**, representing SCII, spoke of the international community (re)engagement and ongoing concerns for Somalia. He said: "We are here because, we want to enhance the commitment expressed last February at the London Conference on Somalia. We are here because we can no longer remain indifferent to famine, bloodshed and some of the worst poverty on earth. We are here because we believe that the negative effects of brain drain can become brain gain with the engagement of the Somali Diaspora.

We are conscious that Somalia is a challenging context, but it also holds some fundamental lessons in humanitarian aid, international development and human security. We are committed to accompany this process; we are engaged to make the world a better place with our Somali brothers and sisters. We know there are no single magic solution and that a long-term strategic plan is necessary to help the Somali people rebuild their country from the bottom up. And most importantly, we recognize that ultimately it will be only Somalis that will find solutions to Somalia. The international community is here with you, to accompany these collective efforts for building human and institutional capacity for the generations to come."

The speakers introduced the current constitutional reforms and the Somalia challenges in relation to **Economic Development, Human security, Governance Capacity, Education, Health, Poverty Eradication and food Security.**

Mr. **Sumit Bisarya**, Lead Legal Officer for the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) explained how the constitutional process does not end with its promulgation and invited the Somali Diaspora to actively contribute to the successful implementation of the constitution, including providing input into policy, legislation and strategic planning. Drawing upon lessons from other constitutional processes in the region, Mr. Bisarya made concrete recommendations to make the process more transparent and participatory.

Prof. **Tom Ginsburg**, Leo Spitz Professor of International Law at the University of Chicago, made focused remarks on the strengths and weaknesses of the current constitution-making efforts in Somalia. In her intervention regarding economic development in Somalia,

Dr. **Hodan Said Isse** challenged the international community to rethink the engagement in Somalia as a positive, constructive and long-term engagement. She mentioned how youth and women, who bear the brunt of war, are at the heart of nation building. The 21 years of war have destroyed Somalia's institutions. Somalia needs rehabilitation, healing and support to go from problems to promise. The blunt reality of Somalia is that its productive capacity of limited resources is many times less than Somalia's needs and wants. The incentives made available to the Somali people by the international community play an important role in either promoting clan division and hatred or clan harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Ms. **Fowsia Abdulkadir** offered some provocative remarks regarding human security and the current constitutional process. "We know the process, but we need to focus on the context"... "People identity has been politicized"... "Religion cannot be discriminatory" ... We risk "constitutionalizing apartheid." Security is essential for governance capacity development and critical for building the justice sector but the concept needs to be broadened into 'human security', which encompasses economic, health, physical, political and social security for any member of the population. Somalia represents a complex and instructive case study for the area of human security as freedom from fear and want.

Mr. **Ibrahim Ayeh** discussed literacy and education in Somalia. He offered some analyses and solutions on the education crises in Somalia. Strong commitment of international community to stabilize Somalia, creating strong advocacy group from the Diaspora to promote the Peace Settlement in & Somalia Empowering the Somali leaders on good and fair governance.

Equitable access to basic education for all children & rising parent and community awareness to the importance of education for all their children

Dr. **Fozia Abrar** presented a view on the limited health services in Somalia. She observed how the Somali women and children have a very limited access to basic health care/primary care and basic secondary health services and made some practical suggestions for community maternal, child health centers and training community health care workers in every village.

Dr. Mohamed Ali Abukar, Founder and President of Somali American United Council of Arizona, concluded the Somalia panel by re-centering our efforts on agricultural development and poverty reduction. Poverty, he said, is a fuel for terror and is a threat to human rights, democracy and peace. Peace, stability and democracy cannot be achieved when there is a hunger and poverty. Our focus, then, must be to fight hunger and eradicate poverty, and if we succeed, this will certainly lead to the creation of peace, democracy and good will among all people and nations.

The breakout sessions included groups of participants reflecting on strategic plans on 22 topics. Some of these topics included the constitution, democracy, government capacity, finance, parliament, independent judiciary and the rule of law, law enforcement, the role of military and Somali Diaspora. They also discussed and reported back to the group about plans for infrastructure, agriculture, health and education including the role of women, youth, seniors and began conceptualizing an effective social welfare system for the vulnerable Somali population. Attendees also discussed the role of religion in relation to education, the country welfare and counter-terrorism. They presented some suggestions regarding communication and the media, along with economic development by attracting foreign investment, improving international relations, increasing local government capacity and overcoming the culture of corruption.

Somalia Conference: Table Discussion Notes--Major Themes

Table #2: Constitution

- Question: who is selecting the elders? It is important to have broad, diverse leadership.
- The role of Somali-Land is important to adopting the new Constitution.
- What will the power balance be like in 5 years? Will it be representative or skewed?
- How can all of the diverse interests of the country be balanced?

Table #3:

- There is a need to define what democracy is: is it the consent of the governed? This idea of consent was a focus of the table discussion.
- Emphasis on the need for Somalis to buy into the new strategy.
- Trust in elected leadership is essential for democratic legitimacy.

Table #5: Budget and Finance

- Prioritize security.
- There should be separate ministers of Finance, Banking, and Currency.
- There needs to be a system of taxation and revenue.

- All of the elements of a good economy come through security. Without security, economic structures will fail.
- Emphasis on fighting corruption.

Table #6: Cabinet/Management

- Somalia's government needs qualified people, not just those with good connections. Emphasis on the "right" people.
- "4.5" is wrong: Somalia's government needs people who know what they are doing.
- Somalia is evolving towards a federal system. This is generally accepted as an essential element of effective governance of Somalia's disparate interests.
- Current cabinet proposal is too large – need a smaller, leaner cabinet with fewer members and more expertise.

Table #7: Parliament

- Every electoral candidate must have basic knowledge of their tribe before they can be elected.
- Parliament should not include warlords, war criminals, or criminals.
- Somalia must adopt a bicameral legislature with a Senate and House of Representatives.
- The Parliament must represent every district of Somalia and be elected on knowledge, not tribal affiliation.

Table #8: Judiciary

- Important function: providing limitation of systemic power
- Somalia needs to build legislative systems to balance the leaders.
- Balance of power can limit corruption.
- The courts are an important pillar of government to provide the checks and balance.

Table #9: Law/DHS

- A stable government is the first step to creating laws.
- Question: why do people follow laws? Is it out of fear? Or is it out of consent/agreement? The goal would be for people to follow laws that they have a stake in supporting.
- Communities should have the ability to define the laws that govern them in a way that makes them feel safe and secure.
- Suggestion: divide law enforcement among different institutional levels: local, regional, national. Each level would have a different law enforcement focus.
- Terrorism should be defined at the national level to avoid finger-pointing at the local level. The definition should be standard and clear.
- The elders must be involved in law-making to establish legitimacy.
- Law enforcement personnel must be educated and trained in the proper enforcement of the laws.

Table #10: Military

- There needs to be an analysis of the orientation and the mission of Somalia's military. Until that happens, we cannot have a discussion about funding.

- Major concerns: countering extremist elements like Al Qaeda and Al-Shabab. Also, countering the possibility of a too-powerful military and a coup. Diverse clan representation in the military. What to do about militias? Weapons control and regulations in a country that is flush with weapons in every household.
- Reasonable military size: 27,000 total men and women
 - 20,000 tanks/artillery soldiers
 - 5,000 navy – emphasis on coastal patrol craft
 - 2,000 air force – emphasis on helicopters and transport aircraft
- Funding: although it will be resisted, funding will need to come initially from the international community. Somalia does not yet have the tax base to be able to support the financial requirements of a military.
- International community's resistance to funding a Somali military will likely be overcome by the continued expense of maintaining a security posture in Somalia necessitated by the current power vacuum.
- A major challenge is how to represent clans in the military hierarchy without increasing the likelihood of a coup or corruption.
- Military legitimacy depends on disarming the militias and the general population.
- The intelligence apparatus must remain distinct from the presidency.

Table #11: Somali Diaspora

- "We are the Diaspora."
- Countering the brain drain: Somalia needs professionals from the Diaspora who are willing to help.
- Women from the Somali Diaspora are particularly good role models.

Table #12: Critical Infrastructure

- Focus on the "base" of a society. How can Somalia achieve the base?
- Without an effective government, there is no base, and thus no critical infrastructure.
- Tribal conflicts result from a lack of government (ie, base).
- There needs to be an agreement on the government/constitution before infrastructure can evolve.
- Adequate infrastructure is a fundamental necessity for government stability.

Table #13: Agriculture

- A prosperous agricultural sector is a "weapon of mass effectiveness." It can provide power over poverty.
- Missing component to improving the agricultural sector: banking and money management. Consequently, there is food shortage.
- Somalia has a diverse food base: fish farming, livestock, and abundant agricultural capabilities. These areas just need to be tapped and developed.
- MAK has a slideshow for more details.

Table #14: Health

- Marketing a public health care system is a cost-effective investment.
- Female genital mutilation, maternal health, and child mortality are major problems.

- Need: new buildings, training, and involvement from the Somali Diaspora.
- Recommend the establishment of an exchange program with the diaspora for medical training.
- Need mental health programs to effectively treat PTSD.

Table #15: Education

- Priority: teacher training. Schools are only as good as their teachers.
- There should be diversification of instruction so that high-skilled students are not impeded by students that need more remedial instruction. Emphasize student-centric approaches to learning rather than teacher-centric models.
- Establish a Ministry of Education to oversee public policy on this issue.
- Partnerships with the international community are a vital resource for educational development in Somalia.
- Curriculum suggestion: teach civic values to the students, and increase the parental/community participation in education.
- An educated and informed population is a necessity for a functioning democracy.

Table #16: Women

- Recognize the status of women in society.
- Young women are the future. They need improved educational opportunities and training, particularly health care training.
- Recognition needed: "Behind every great man is a great woman."

Table #17: Role of Religion

- A constitution that is based on Islam is important. This will have broad support.
- Religion is inherent in all aspects of Somali life.
- There is a challenge to incorporate Islam into the constitution. Some countries, like Turkey and Malaysia, have done this successfully. These countries were viewed as role models.
- An Islamic-based constitution will improve public buy-in.
- Recognition: parents and community are responsible for teaching their children about religions. Goal: avoid religious extremism.
- Key Element: Maintain religious education, but modernize the school curriculum to teach advanced skills for the new global economy.
- The potential for radicalization can be reduced with the engagement of the youth in religious education that teaches the proper interpretation of Islam.

Table #18: Communications and Media

- Most of the country lives on \$1/day. Consequently, there is limited access to internet and phone service, which runs about \$15 a month. Somalia is significantly behind in information technology.
- Suggestion: develop a radio frequency to distribute the news.
- Wanted: unbiased news journalists. Need to develop journalistic professionalism.
- The Diaspora could support Somalia by shipping out things like computers, cell phones, and communications equipment.

- Media can be used to promote a more favorable international image of Somalia.
- Open and free communication is necessary to inform Somalis on their right to free expression.

Table #19: Economic Development

- Identify the market and what its strengths are. For example, the telecommunications sector is strong.
- The core Somali economy is agricultural based.
- Focus on developing a public relations campaign: Somalia as a place of business.
- Somalia has a uniquely strong entrepreneurial culture.
- Main markets for trade are N. Africa and the Middle East.
- Minerals and oil are untapped resources for economic development.

Table #20: International Relations

- Stability should be prioritized. Since Somalia is a fragile country, this makes regional relationships difficult to form.
- Turkey is a positive regional partner.
- International Organizations will be key: Somalia needs consistent participation from IOs to help Somalia transition to a stable country.
- Piracy off Somalia's coast contributes to a negative international image of Somalia. Piracy is rooted in poverty.
- Socioeconomic development is possible if the Diaspora can contribute money and political attention to Somalia.

Table #21: Local Government Practices

- Emphasized bottom-up approach to local government.
- Local government should focus on public services and the education system.
- Encourage Diaspora youth to become politically engaged.
- Open, all-inclusive local government is an effective safeguard against extremism and violence.

Table #22: Corruption

- Need for a justice department that can fight internally and that can cooperate with the international community.
- Tribal issues are a major cause of corruption.
- Anti-corruption efforts should focus on individual offenses, and should not target tribes or clans.

Mr. **Yusuf Maalin**, said **Clearly, Somali security is an issue that must be addressed.** However, there is more to Somalia than violence. Thus, kinetic solutions – standing alone – will not resolve Somalia’s security issues nor alleviate the suffering of the Somali people. Instead, the SSF maintains that Somalia’s future is largely dependent on the state of its infrastructure - including its governance infrastructure – and this infrastructure has been substantially diminished due decades of conflict, instability and neglect. Because of this, the SSF advocates for a

comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and inclusive human security approach; an approach that respects the culture of the Somali people, protects the rights of all Somali citizens, offers greater opportunity for social and economic development, and sets the foundation for societal self-actualization. By undertaking our work in a transparent, inclusive, and non-discriminatory manner, the SSF also strives to increase the International Community's understanding of Somalia's rich culture, history and regional significance.

Yusuf Maalin, during his concluding remarks of the conference observed how crucial it will be to work cooperatively in solving the issues the country has before it - constitutional reform, economic development, women empowerment, security. "These are issues vital to Somalia and the international community. The international community has too often approached Somalia with a state-centric top-down model. But what has been missing is a concerted bottom-up outreach effort to utilize a grass-root Somali-led civil society to help foster long-term social and economic development for Somalia. The conference and the SSF mission offer an alternative process for substantially improving internal Somali governance capacity. With the assistance and support of WEI, NSF, SCII and the Somali Diaspora, we have reached an important milestone towards rebuilding our nation."