

# Peace and Development in Northern Somalia

## Opportunities and Challenges

### Somalia in quarantine

It must appear to much of the world that Somalia has ceased to exist. All diplomatic missions there have been closed and Somalia's seat at the United Nations lies empty. Although limited UN aid programmes are operating, bilateral donors have largely forgotten Somalia. Respected guide books and travel information web sites dispense dire warnings to potential travellers and major airlines no longer include Somalia as a destination. It's not even possible to write to friends and relatives in Somalia, for postal links have been cut. Somalia, it would appear, is a country that much of the international community has placed in quarantine.

*The following report, by the Som-Can Institute for Research and Development and Partnership Africa Canada, two Canada-based NGOs, challenges the assumptions behind these policies (particularly as they relate to northern Somalia) and calls for the quarantine on Somalia to be lifted.*

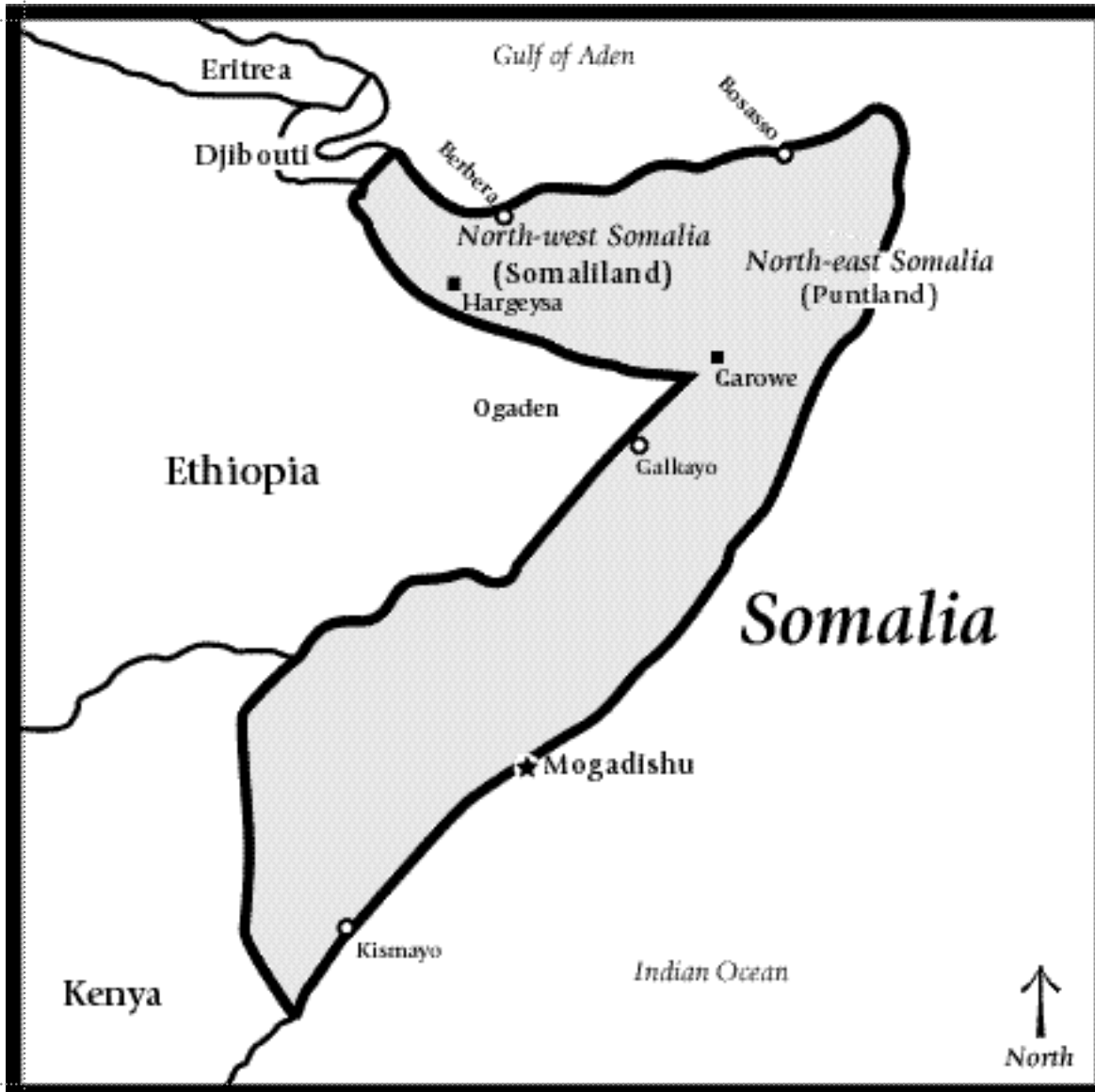
### Somalia's Humanitarian Crisis

Somalia is no longer included in the annual United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report world ranking. If it were to be included, according to a special report on Somalia, it would sit firmly at the bottom in 175th position, below war-afflicted Sierra Leone:

Average life expectancy is estimated at 41-43 years; the mortality rate for children under five exceeds 25%; adult literacy rates range between 14-17%; primary school enrolment is 13-16%; and GNP/capita is between \$176-200...

In almost any other country, any one of these indicators would be considered a national emergency. Yet, Somalia's prolonged humanitarian crisis has raised the threshold for what is considered an emergency there - only outright famine conditions and deadly epidemics generate a humanitarian response. Nonetheless, the chronically low levels of human development in Somalia constitute a long-term emergency for Somali society and, indirectly, for the international community.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report - Somalia*, 1998



## Peace and Conflict - two faces of Somalia

Somalia is a country of stark contrast - between the troubled central and southern regions and the stable and peaceful north. The conflict that affects parts of Somalia today can be linked directly to the 1977 Somali invasion of the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region of Ethiopia. In 1897, Somali-inhabited territories had been divided up among the colonial powers - United Kingdom, France and Italy - and Ethiopia, with a fifth territory becoming part of the future northern Kenya. At Independence in 1960, the British and former Italian protectorates united to form the Somali Republic. In 1974, Somali President Siyad Barre began to build up one of the largest armies in Africa with Soviet support. However, defeat in the Ogaden war with Ethiopia (1977-78) led to the emergence of armed opposition groups in exile and brutal repression by the army of civilian populations in Somalia, particularly in north-western Somalia (Somaliland) and north-eastern Somalia (Puntland). Western aid grew substantially during the 1980s; paradoxically, this helped Siyad Barre maintain his large army and intensify military repression in the northern regions.

The eventual overthrow of the Siyad Barre government in 1991 and the ensuing collapse of the Somali state created intolerable humanitarian conditions including famine, which raged in southern Somalia during 1992. The international relief and security operation that followed brought help to needy populations, but it failed to bring an end to the inter-clan militia conflict. The latter has continued sporadically in parts of the centre and south of Somalia since the withdrawal of UN forces in 1995.

The fighting of 1991 triggered a massive exodus from Somalia of trained Somalis and members of the international community. Government services collapsed and foreign missions and businesses closed. This heralded the start of Somalia's diplomatic and economic isolation. Somalia has been without a central government now for almost a decade, but interestingly this has led to the creation of decentralized, regional governments, supported by traditional leaders and civil society organizations that are helping to rebuild their country from the ground up.

The two regions of northern Somalia, **Somaliland** and, especially, **Puntland**, were spared most of the conflict that affected other parts of the country during the 1990s. Opposition to Siyad Barre developed early in these two regions and both suffered violent repression in the 1980s, Hargeysa (capital of Somaliland) being almost destroyed by the Somali army in 1988. Greater internal social and political coherence led both regions to establish separate administrations during the 1990s. In 1991, Somaliland declared its independence, although it has since failed to gain international recognition. In 1998, the north-east region of Somalia proclaimed itself the autonomous State of

Puntland, a region within Somalia. Almost a decade after the collapse of the centralized Somali state, northern Somalia has become a haven of peace in a conflict-ridden Horn of Africa. But this reality has yet to be recognized by the international community, hindered by an international media that focuses entirely on the inter-clan militia violence in central and southern areas.

## Somalia in recent times

1960	Independence.
1969	Coup d'état led by Siyad Barre.
1972	Nationwide literacy campaign.
1974	Somalia joins the Arab League.
1974	Friendship treaty with USSR (renounced in 1977).
1977	Invasion of Ogaden region of Ethiopia and subsequent defeat of Somali forces.
1978	Creation in northern Somalia of first insurgent movements - SSDF (1978) and SNM (1980).
1980	Closer links with US and West develop.
1988	Armed insurrection by SNM in north-west Somalia. Violent repression by Somali army follows.
1989	Insurrection breaks out in other regions.
1991	Siyad Barre flees Mogadishu. Somaliland declares Independence.
1992	Famine in southern Somalia. UN-led relief and security operation (UNOSOM).
1995	End of UN operation. Siyad Barre dies in exile.
1997	Cairo Peace Accord signed by most faction leaders but not implemented.
1998	Saudi Arabia livestock ban imposed on Somalia. Puntland State created.
1999	Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict develops 'southern Somalia front'.

## Somaliland and Puntland - zones of peace

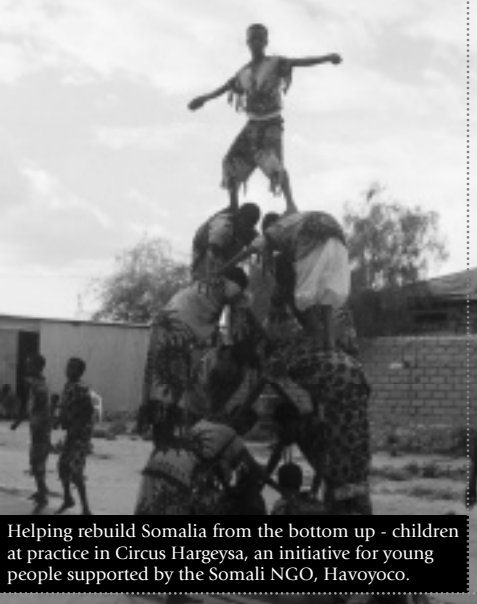
Somaliland and Puntland are peaceful and both regions are being effectively run by a combination of government and traditional authorities. A priority for both regional governments is strengthening the security situation. The demobilization of ex-combatants continues and an emphasis is being placed on

training and equipping the police forces. The resources, however, of both governments are small, being derived mainly from import and export duties. The 18-month Saudi Arabia ban on Somali livestock (which was officially lifted in May 1999), demonstrated the fragility of their fiscal base. It caused Somaliland, for example, to lose some 60% of its revenues during that period. It's a credit to the people and governments in northern Somalia that cohesion has been maintained during a major economic crisis.

There are generally favourable conditions for development in Somaliland and Puntland, which would be the envy of many developing countries. And yet many donor countries are ignoring this reality and are dragging their feet on development assistance, pointing to obstacles such as the fact that Somalia does not have a central government, that there are security risks and that Somaliland has declared its independence. The international community is failing to see that the future of Somalia is being created now through the decentralized, regional administrations. A future uni-

fied Somalia is quite likely to be a federation of states, rather than a centralized state as before. The UN has called on donor countries to come to terms with this reality and help the emerging regional states develop their administrations and economies. Bilateral aid levels to northern Somalia, however, remain very low, with the European Union being the main bilateral donor. Several UN agencies maintain small programmes in both regions.

A major source of frustration for Somaliland and Puntland is that aid coordination takes place in Nairobi, not Somalia. Whilst there are clearly security and logistical reasons why agencies involved in emergency work in central and southern Somalia prefer to be based in Nairobi, there no longer seems to be any valid reason for UN, bilateral or larger international organizations supporting development programmes in northern Somalia to automatically maintain programme staff in Nairobi. In fact, there are strong arguments for placing staff in northern Somalia: office and housing costs are much less and both Hargeysa and Bosaso are far safer than big cities such as Nairobi.



Helping rebuild Somalia from the bottom up - children at practice in Circus Hargeysa, an initiative for young people supported by the Somali NGO, Havoyoco.

Moreover, there seems to be a profound contradiction in the donor community maintaining most of its human resources and its development dialogue outside the recipient country. A clear consequence of this policy is that little consultation can effectively happen with government ministries, local NGOs and communities in northern Somalia, leading to decisions being taken in Nairobi and not Somalia. Such an approach does little to help build Somali capacities in areas such as development programming.

## Development Challenges in Northern Somalia

After two decades of embattled dictatorship, civil war and inter-clan violence, Somalia is faced with huge challenges. It has, for example, some of the worst **health** indicators in the world. It is a high risk area for many illnesses and children and women are particularly vulnerable. Health infrastructure is in poor condition and neither government in the north (Somaliland and Puntland) has the resources to invest in rehabilitation, equipment, medicines or staff. Due to the very limited emergency facilities, many people die from simple accidents or lose limbs unnecessarily.

A recent study for the World Health Organization (WHO) of health infrastructure in Somaliland and Puntland<sup>2</sup> reports that only one hospital out of the ten main ones visited functions adequately. International agencies are providing services in some areas, but the bulk of health care is carried out by the private sector. Poor people are the victims of the limited state services, for they cannot afford to pay for medicines and service fees. Nomadic and rural communities in particular have difficulty accessing health services.

The impact of the civil war on the **education** sector has been equally dramatic. The education system collapsed totally, the majority of schools were damaged, educational records and materials were lost, many teachers left the country. Almost two generations of Somali children that have missed their schooling. A survey of primary schools throughout Somalia conducted by UNICEF in 1997<sup>3</sup> revealed that 773 primary schools existed of which 613 or 80% were operating. Of the operating schools surveyed, 75% did not go beyond grade 4. Only 3% of schools had the full primary cycle of grades 1-8. It has one of the lowest enrolment rates in the world. This situation is compounded by the generally poor conditions and standards in the schools. In addition, there is a significant gender imbalance, with twice as many boys as girls in school. In the upper grades, this gap widens rapidly.

A great effort is now being made to revive the education sector in Somaliland and Puntland. Education is seen as a priority by people, government

<sup>2</sup> Dr Khalid Dik, Assistance to and Physical Rehabilitation of Landmine Victims in Somalia, May 1999

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, Survey of Primary Schools in Somalia, Nairobi, September 1997

and donors alike, but school enrolment remains low and resources are very limited. Schools are being rehabilitated, curriculum being rewritten, and cost-sharing systems are being introduced. The primary system is receiving most attention, although some secondary schools are being reopened. A community-run university (Amoud University) has opened in Boroma, Somaliland.

**Food security** has been a recurrent and increasing challenge in recent decades. Somalia is prone to occasional crop failures, particularly in southern regions where drought, floods and pest infestation are common. In addition, the conflict in southern regions during the 1990s has severely weakened the agricultural economy.

In 1998, Puntland and Somaliland suffered from a prolonged drought which decimated animal herds, particularly in Puntland. Continued drought in 1999 in northern and southern regions of Somalia has contributed to what the FAO is describing as an extremely grim situation, with 400,000 people at risk of starvation, particularly in southern regions.

The **environment** of Somalia has suffered greatly from the absence of a central government. In addition to the perennial problem of overgrazing, a

major concern in certain areas is deforestation related to firewood and charcoal production, an increasing amount of which is being exported to the Gulf States. There have been reports of toxic waste disposal along Somalia's extensive coast, which is a particular threat to coastal communities and marine life. The coast of Puntland has particularly rich fishing grounds, which have attracted predatory fishing vessels from around the world. This illegal fishing threatens one of Puntland's most important resources.

Somalia has an estimated 1-2 million **landmines** and unexploded ordnance (bombs, shells etc.), much of which is in Somaliland and, to a lesser extent, Puntland. Surveying and demining has begun in a few locations with UNDP support, but there seem to be few donors interested in supporting this work in Somalia. How is it that Somalia is receiving only a tiny fraction of the investment in demining that other countries (e.g. Bosnia) have received. Both Puntland and Somaliland have publicly endorsed the Landmines Treaty, but as they are not permitted to sign it their commitment goes unrecognized and, seemingly, unrewarded.



A legacy of conflict in Somalia - unexploded ordnance near Galkayo, where the Somali NGO, Environment and Community Development Organization, has carried out some demining.

**Young people** have been described as Somalia's human landmines. Their basic rights - rights to education, recreational activities and employment - were denied them by the civil war and the collapse of state infrastructure. Many young men joined the militias in areas where fighting took place and demobilization and rehabilitation into the community is urgent. A related issue is the consumption of *khat*, a mild narcotic leaf that is chewed in some regions by more than 90% of male adults. Unemployed youth will naturally turn to chewing khat, but there is a heavy social and economic price to pay. The relative financial cost to families is huge and an unproductive generation sits chewing, waiting.

## Developmental Opportunities in Northern Somalia

Following the collapse of economic activity in the early 1990s, Somaliland and Puntland are leading the economic reconstruction of Somalia. The backbone of the economy in northern Somalia is the **livestock** sector and large numbers of sheep, goats, cattle and camels have traditionally been exported to the Gulf States. In February 1998, Saudi Arabia introduced a ban on the import of Somali livestock on grounds of health, alleging incidences of Rift Valley Fever. The embargo hit herders and traders throughout Somalia severely. It has now been officially lifted, although many fear that competing commercial and political interests in Saudi Arabia may prevent a return to previous export levels from Somalia.

In the light of these events, it seems clear that Somalia needs to develop its livestock industry further. For example, animal health was the official reason for the Saudi Arabia ban. Appropriate facilities are required to ensure that animals can be given a clean bill of health for export. At present, there are few veterinary health projects in northern Somalia. In addition, as well as developing fresh markets for livestock, renewed efforts should be made to develop related industries, e.g. meat processing, hides and leather work.

One potentially promising and largely underdeveloped economic sector is **fisheries**, for although there is some commercial fishing, most fishing is carried out at a subsistence level. Puntland is considered to have one of the richest fisheries zones in the world, but this is currently being plundered by foreign ships operating illegally in Somali waters. The Puntland authorities have little capacity to protect, manage and help develop this important natural resource. Foreign vessels fishing illegally and over fishing are caught only very occasionally. Fines are generally imposed and then the violators are freed. But the fines have little impact and the plundering continues. It is not known what long term effects the current level of illegal fishing will have on the fisheries.

The **ports** of Berbera (Somaliland) and Bosasso (Puntland) are increasingly active. This is partly due to the fact that livestock from central-southern Somalia are no longer exported through Mogadishu and Kismayo because of the instability of these areas. In addition, Berbera has recently become a major seaport for Ethiopia as a result of the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. Bosasso, once a small port, has grown considerably in recent years and is now a thriving trading centre with the Gulf States, serving much of Somalia. The road infrastructure remains reasonably intact throughout Somaliland and Puntland, with good roads leading from Berbera to Ethiopia and from Bosasso down to Galkayo. There is also an extensive network of regional airports that handle some international and inter-regional flights.

The **private sector**, although limited, is thriving in the stable social and political conditions that have been created in most of Somaliland and Puntland. There seems to be no shortage of consumer goods throughout the regions. The absence of a central government, together with much of the infrastructure taken for granted in other countries (such as an official banking, telephone and postal systems), has led to innovation. An example of this is the deregulated satellite-based telecommunications sector. In Somaliland, there are now five telecommunications companies operating out of Hargeysa and this competition has led to the lowest international telephone charges in Africa – US80 cents a minute, some four to five times lower than neighbouring countries. Internet links are expected to be established during 1999.

Cheap and reliable international communications have strengthened the links with the Somali diaspora and greatly facilitated the crucially important system of remittances from abroad. Support from family members in the diaspora has played a key role in helping many urban families cope during the difficult years of the 1990s. Although remittances tend to be used for immediate needs, there are indications now that such resources are increasingly being invested in construction and commerce. Urban centres in both regions are seeing a boom in construction, particularly for housing, shops, restaurants and some hotels. Hargeysa is now largely rebuilt and Bosasso is expanding rapidly.

The inflow of private funds from the Middle East, Europe and North America is substantial, although it is impossible to know the exact amount because of the unofficial nature of the transactions. **Remittances** alone *far* outstrip international development assistance, which amounts to no more than US\$15 million per year at present for northern Somalia. Remittances, estimated at perhaps \$150m per year, have tended not to be saved and there remains a shortage of investment capital, for there is no recognized private banking system. The Somaliland Government has called for donor countries to help provide controlled loan finance as a way of encouraging Somali entrepreneurs.

With the collapse of the repressive central government and the emergency of the early 1990s, there was a mushrooming of **NGOs** in northern Somalia, with a majority of them being concentrated in Hargeysa and Bosasso. Their numbers have seen a natural decline since then, as the majority have had to struggle hard with mostly volunteer staff to carry out projects, for which funding has often been scarce. Too many donors have compounded this situation by concentrating funding in the hands of expatriate NGOs. In spite of these constraints, Somalia NGOs continue to develop and mature and there are now several NGO coalitions. It is imperative that these organizations make links with the many strong NGO networks across Africa.

Outstanding in the NGO sector are women's organizations. Many would argue that **women** are the pioneers for peace and development in Somalia. It is therefore essential that Somali women's NGOs and women politicians and activists be supported by both the local and international communities. There are no women representatives in the Somaliland Parliament at present and, although Puntland has taken a lead in this respect with five women parliamentarians, they remain isolated and their voices are not adequately recognized.



Somali civil society organizations are playing a key role in rebuilding Somalia - members of the women's NGO umbrella group, Negaad

## Role of the Somali Diaspora

A major, but as yet only partially tapped, asset for Somalia is the **Somali diaspora**. Large Somali communities are to be found in the Gulf States, several European countries, the US and Canada. The importance of remittances from abroad to bolster Somali family survival cannot be overestimated. These actions, however, tend to be individual, family-oriented. There are relatively few examples of Somali organizations among the diaspora that have developed strong programmes that can impact on Somali development issues, both in Somalia and internationally. Somalis have had difficulty establishing themselves in their respective adoptive countries, and Canada is no exception, even though the majority of Somalis in Canada have Canadian citizenship.

There are many ways that countries such as Canada could help Somaliland, Puntland and other emerging regions create the building blocks of peace and development and a number of examples are given below. A crucially important, contribution, however, can be made by Somali-Canadians that have skills and experience to share with people in northern Somalia. Human resource development, at the government, NGO and private sector level, is a priority. The recently announced UNDP programme for identifying skilled Somalis abroad for short missions in Somalia is one initiative that deserves serious support.

Canada and the US are two countries that have had some difficulty re-establishing relations with a decentralized Somalia. However, there are signs now that both countries have begun to review their policies, given

the very positive developments in Somaliland and Puntland and the impact this is having on other parts of Somalia. *This report urges that this process be accelerated and that a pro-active and pragmatic approach be taken. Somalia should be treated as a special case. In particular, we call upon civil society organizations to lead the way and establish partnership linkages. The Somalia quarantine must be lifted forthwith.*



A little can go a long way at the community level - Buran women, supported by the Somali NGO, Horn Relief, show their gratitude for Canadian assistance through this welcoming painted sign.

## Some steps to take

The following paragraphs outline a number of key initiatives and sectors that Canada and the international community should support:

- The sustainability of peace and security in the northern regions of Somalia depends on support for both **civil society** organizations and the emerging regional **governments**, so that policies are adopted that promote good governance, human rights and democratic development. Civil society organizations and regional governments should be helped to participate in the search for dialogue and peace throughout Somalia and the Horn. This should be seen as priority. To this end, a special **peace and democratic development fund** for the Horn of Africa should be created by Canada and other donor countries.

- A **regional** vision of peace and development should be promoted and **IGAD** (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) is one potential way of implementing initiatives. An example of such an approach would be in seeking a solution to the questions of land mines and refugees camps along the borders between Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somaliland and Puntland.
- The continuing inflow of arms, particularly into southern regions, is destabilising Somalia further. The UN Security Council should ensure a more effective implementation of the **embargo on arms** to Somalia.
- **Land mines** remain a scourge throughout Somalia. Canada and the international community should take a lead and recognize the commitments made by both the Somaliland and Puntland governments with respect to the Ottawa Convention. Action should be taken to secure funds for an **integrated regional land mines programme**.
- **Capacity building** should be a central objective of all assistance provided. The new Somalia being created in northern regions is one that is decentralized and potentially very democratic. Patterns of external assistance must respect and reinforce the fragile balance and cooperation between traditional leaders, civil society organizations and emerging government institutions. Above all, initiatives should be developed *in* northern Somalia and *with* the region's governments and Somali organizations. External management of such programmes should be located *in* northern Somalia.
- Efforts should be made to strengthen and empower Somali **NGOs**. In particular, **women's NGOs**, groups and activists and NGOs supporting **young people** should be targeted. As part of its assistance to Somali civil society, Canada should increase the size and scope of the Canada Fund operating from the Nairobi High Commission.
- The rights of women, children, elders and children with special needs must be protected. An emphasis should be placed on initiatives to combat **violence against women and girls**, particularly the practice of circumcision.
- **Reintegration of children and young people** who associated with militia should be supported. Training should be given to care givers in order to help children and youth with special needs. This includes orphans, disabled and displaced children.

- Rights to freedom of expression, with an independent press and media should be encouraged and protected. **Training** should be offered to newspaper and radio journalists. Media and human rights organizations should develop links with northern Somalia in order to promote peace and development.
- The renovation of school buildings, teacher training, student counselling and the provision of books and learning materials are priorities in the **education** sector. Institutions of higher learning should explore linkages with emerging Somali institutions.
- Linkages in the **health** sector should be developed with Somali hospitals. Surgical and orthopaedic doctors could make short term visits to provide training to Somali medical staff. Material support is also needed, for there are no regular supplies. Vocational training and community-based rehabilitation for the disabled is required.
- The international community should respond quickly and imaginatively to the appeals for **food assistance** that have been made by UN organizations. Southern regions appear to be the most seriously affected. Given the difficulties in some areas with food relief distribution, a particular effort should be made to involve civil society organizations in the distribution programmes.
- In the livestock sector, a priority is to establish facilities and programmes to assure adequate **animal health**. The development of **water resources** for dry season needs is crucial.
- Initiatives should be supported that can help Puntland and Somaliland protect their environment. Illegal fishing by foreign boats should be condemned by the UN. Canada in particular could help in training/equipping coast guards and in helping to develop the **fishing** industry. Urgent measures are also needed to help prevent land degradation, particularly deforestation for charcoal production.
- Programmes to rehabilitate and modernize public infrastructure - ports, airports, roads, bridges, power and water supplies - should be supported.

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This summary report is also available in French and Somali.

The complete report (in English) may be obtained by contacting:

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