



Press Statement

Hargeisa, Somaliland
19st July, 2019

Press Statement on the Government of Somalia's Approach to the Dialogue Process

The Government of the Republic of Somaliland would like to respond to the Government of Somalia's recent announcement of what it refers to as 'The National Committee for Reconciliation and the Somaliland Dialogue.' While we welcome all gestures aimed at genuine dialogue between us and our neighbour, this announcement must be seen for what it is; a disingenuous attempt to paper over the Somalia Government's policy of aggression and punishment directly targeting the Somaliland people, simply for seeking to preserve the independence we suffered so hard to achieve over the past three decades.

If the current Government of Somalia was genuinely committed to the Dialogue, it would not seek to obstruct the development support that Somaliland received from the international community through modalities such as the Somaliland Special Arrangement, nor would it attempt to attack and extort the livelihoods of our population, already suffering from recurrent drought, by politicising livestock exports. At the same time, it would not abandon the confidence-building meeting organised by our international partners, and which Somaliland representatives attended in good faith, in Nairobi on 25 June of this year, and it would not forsake past agreements on airspace co-administration, or commitments to refrain from inflammatory behaviour.

In appointing this committee, Somalia has betrayed and sought to re-write the initial terms of the Dialogue: those which were set out in the Communiqué of the London Conference at Lancaster House on 23 February, 2012. These terms, which were mutually agreed upon and subsequently reaffirmed at various subsequent internationalised meetings between 2012 and 2014, was that the purpose of such Dialogue was to 'clarify future relations' between Somaliland and Somalia. The agreed interpretation of such Dialogue was thus that:

1. Somaliland and Somalia are to come to the table as two *separate* and *equal* entities.
2. The two sides involved are those that were separate states in 1960, and who subsequently joined in union: in other words, it is about where the relationship between the two territories stands after decades of Siyad Barre's militarised oppression, and after 29 years of the Somaliland people's democratic decision to legally dissolve that union.
3. This is an internationalised issue, and has nothing to do with Somalia's internal politics



In the wake of the atrocities committed by Siyad Barre, and the lingering impact of such trauma on the lives of both the Somaliland and Somalia people, there is of course a genuine need for reconciliation at many levels. Any discussion between our two sides will off course seek to repair and address lingering grievances, as a way to enable both sides to move on, and to live together as friendly and cooperative neighbours in the future. However, the Government of Somalia's novel inclusion of the term 'reconciliation' in its reformulation of the Dialogue does not seek true reconciliation. If that was its aim, it would not attack us, but would welcome us as true brothers, and would have made use of past opportunities for genuine, good-faith dialogue. The Government would call off this campaign of aggression and isolation, and would not incorporate former war criminals, those who perpetrated massacres against the Somaliland people, in its administration. True reconciliation will only come when the Government of Somalia acknowledges that its up to the people of Somaliland to determine their own future, and that it is the Government of Somaliland alone that represents the Somaliland people.

True reconciliation will only come when the Government of Somalia stops attempting to create enmity and animosity between the people of Somaliland and Somalia by referring to Somaliland's state-building project as a 'secessionist movement,' rather than acknowledging it for what it is: the grassroots and legitimate realisation of democratic self-determination. Through proffering 'your either with us or against us' mentality, the Government of Somalia has sought to negatively politicize relations between our two peoples, thereby closing space for true reconciliation – which, as Somaliland learned through its own successful decade-long process, ultimately only comes about through grassroots peacebuilding.

The Somaliland Government has shown the international community its clear commitment to substantive dialogue, and has presented a clear agenda of what the Dialogue process should look like. Such a process entails:

1. A credible and serious partner to engage with.
2. An explicit commitment to cease and desist from all inflammatory and combative gestures.
3. The commitment to a process that treats Somaliland and Somalia as equal and separate, and which works towards the goal of clarifying future relations.
4. A need to enforce all agreements, past and future, through international mechanisms of accountability and punishment.
5. An internationalised dialogue, mediated by a body neutral foreign governments, in which Somaliland's case for independence can be presented to the world: a case with strong legal standing.



Until the Government of Somalia proves itself ready and willing to meet those fair and just conditions, all other gestures are mere rhetoric, bluster and distraction. The Somaliland Government is confident that, once such conditions are met, and once Somaliland gets its chance to present its full legal and political case, the Government and people of Somalia will be convinced of the legal merit, political reality and moral worthiness of Somaliland's dissolution of its independence in 1991, and its reclamation of independence. However, ultimately, this decision is not for Somalia to make – it is for the Somaliland people to decide, and for the international community to recognise, based on the legal substance of our case. The Somaliland Government agreed to engage with the Government of Somalia in the service of broader regional cooperation and mutual understanding, but we will not be held hostage by its intransigence. We call on the international community finally address the issue of Somaliland's recognition, with or without Somalia's cooperation.

