



NORTHERN SOMALIS for PEACE & UNITY (NSPU)

NSPU Conference on Peace and Somali Unity

Held in Washington DC, USA, at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)
December 1-2, 2006

Final Communiqué

For Immediate Release

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The 2006 Conference on Peace and Unity was successfully concluded in Washington D.C. on December 2, 2006 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The conference was sponsored by the Northern Somalis for Peace & Unity (NSPU), a pro-unity advocacy civic society group with membership mostly from the Northern Regions (“Former British Somaliland”) of the Somali Republic.

The NSPU gathering was an inclusive “Conference’ where participants of diverse backgrounds from across North America, Europe, Africa, and the Somali Republic got together to discuss issues of national interests, especially secession, which is opposed by the overwhelming majority of the Somali people. These participants exchanged ideas and information and soberly analyzed and reflected on pressing issues and their likely impacts on the whole country.



The conference brought together prominent Somali scholars from around the globe, Diplomats, Intellectuals, Social Activists, Traditional Leaders, and ordinary Somalis from across the Somali regional and clan spectrum. Also attending were representatives from NSPU fraternal civic society organizations, namely Unionists of Northern Somalia (UNS), Pan-Somali Council for Peace & Unity (ISRAACA), and Southern Somali Union (SSU).

The meeting was opened on behalf of NSPU by Faisal Roble and Gamal Hassan who respectively outlined the objectives of the conference and the procedures in place for the ensuing conference program.

They were followed by the Conference Keynote Speaker, Dr. Ali Abdirahman Hersi, a renowned authority on Somali history, former President of the Somali Academy of Art and Sciences and currently a leading political and social commentator based in Mogadishu. Unfortunately the other designated Keynote Speaker, General Mohamed Jama Ghalib, was unable to arrive in time to address the conference due to technical difficulties associated with his travel plans. We hope he will make it for our next conference on Somali Unity and Peace, which will be held next year, Insha Allah.

In his Keynote Speech to the Conference, Dr. Hersi, reminded the audience that the only way we can survive as a nation is to promote peace and solidify our unity in that corner of Africa. Secession is a un-Somali phenomenon that flies on the face of the noble struggle of our forefathers to free themselves from colonial bondage and unite as a nation under a modern state.

As a historian, Dr Hersi pointed out that the 'Somaliland' secessionists' legal claim to separate from the rest of the Somali Republic is based on fallacies and fabricated facts. As an example, he mentioned that the Burco Conference of May 1991 that brought together traditional leaders from the northern clans, immediately following the collapse of the central government, was staged and manipulated by the Somali National Movement (SNM), a one clan entity which for several years waged guerilla warfare against the central government from their bases in neighbouring Ethiopia. The Traditional Leaders as well as the Political Wing of the SNM came together in good faith to restore peace and normalcy to their regions. "But the SNM Military Wing had another plan," Dr. Hersi added. On the last day of the conference armed SNM guerilla bands in a state of frenzy surrounded the conference venue on May 14, 1991 and demanded that the SNM politicians and the clan elders in attendance declare the northern regions as a separate nation."

Such was born 'the Somaliland Project'; a project not motivated by progressive social ideals but by a primordial raw reaction driven by revenge and clan chauvinism.

The rest of the Conference was consumed by four sessions in which prominent Somali academicians, intellectuals, and social activists with roots from across the Somali Republic participated:

- Territorial Integrity and Challenges to Unity
- Unity vs. Secession: The case of the Northern Somalia
- Governance and Institutional Building
- Current Affairs: The rise of The Islamic Courts

Resolutions and Themes

After prolonged debate, discussion, and questions from the floor, the following themes and resolutions emerged from this historical gathering:

- The conference re-affirmed the Unity, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of the Somali State;
- The conference condemned past and present atrocities committed by the Siad Barre regime, the armed opposition movements to the regime, and the Warlords, against innocent Somali citizens. On that note the Conference calls on the formation of Reconciliation Commission modeled after South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission to bring closure to the victim's pursuit of justice. Separation will not bring closure to them;
- The conference strongly deplored the continuation of the occupation and subjugation of



un-armed communities in the country, especially in the Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba regions, where ruthless businessmen and junior Warlords from outside these regions continue to cut trees for charcoal export, thus causing major environmental and economical devastation;

- While applauding the relative peace prevalent in the northern regions and the undeniable kinship and brotherly and sisterly ties binding these communities, the conference strongly condemned the secessionists' movement of "Somaliland" as a misguided and dangerous movement, borne, not from lofty social ideals, but from narrow chauvinistic clan-based special interests: a recipe for further strife and instability in the country and beyond;
- Contrary to "Somaliland" secessionist movement's loud propaganda, the Conference concurred with the undeniable fact not all clans of the Northern Regions ("Former British Somaliland") are supporters of their separatist agenda. As a matter of fact the overwhelming majority of three (Sool, Sanaag, and Awdal) out of the five regions comprising ("Former British Somaliland") are against secession and are strong supporters of Somali Unity. Any future referendum conducted and supervised by a competent neutral body, will attest to this assertion. It is no accident also that the majority of the conference attendees are from these three regions;
- The conference was unanimous in asserting that Somali social, economical, and political problems stem from the same root causes and, therefore, is subject to the same solutions. Relative stability in one part of Somalia is not sustainable. One has to look at the political earthquake in 'Somaliland' and "Puntland" resulting from the sudden rise of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) in Mogadishu; and
- The conference, as a starter, called on the proponents of secession and the pro-unity communities in the Diasporas to immediately engage in a constructive dialogue. Pretending that there is no opposition to the secession project in the Northern Regions is a useless exercise in escapism and is far detached from the reality on the ground.

And finally the Conference adopted the following resolutions to address the current national political crisis, stemming from the rise of the United Islamic Courts (UIC) and its conflict with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG):

- The Conference, while applauding the UIC for restoring semblance of peace in Mogadishu and surrounding districts, registered its reservations and apprehension about the frantic power grab antics of the UIC, which resulted in the death of many innocent civilians, the cold killing of war prisoners, suicide bombings, and more dangerously the prospect of our country turning to a theatre, where proxy wars are fought and other countries feuds are settled. Borrowing from an old African adage: when two elephants fight it is the soil (Somali soil and Somali people in this case) that suffers;
- The conference called for the immediate cession of self-serving partisan foreign interference in the affair of our country;
- The conference's participants, in so many different words, passionately pointed to the fact that our people back home have had enough of fifteen years of turmoil and torment. It is time that the UIC and the TFG seek a compromise for the sake of the bleeding nation. Our Prophet, SAW, preach us to always endeavour for the middle ground (*KHAYRI-IL-UMUURI-AWSADUHAA*); and
- Finally, the conference acknowledging the inter-dependency, commonality and interlinking of the fate of the Somali people and noting the potential for a looming tragedy, strongly called upon the Traditional as well as the non-political Religious Leadership to convene and host, in collaboration with the Diasporas communities, a national 'Save Somalia' emergency conference; to be held, not in Nairobi, Khartoum, Cairo, Addis, or



Djibouti, but in a small town somewhere in the country, preferably in the North West region.

The conference's Panels detailed proceedings will be compiled and published in the next few weeks.

The conference ended in a jovial celebratory mood and a call for holding another Somali Unity and Peace conference next year. An exploratory committee, with representation from several progressive organizations that share NSPU'S vision of peace and unity among the Somali people, was formed to follow up on this recommendation.

The participants, in a moment of a spiritual reflection on what was discussed and concluded for the day, pleaded with Almighty Allah (God) to open the Somali people's hearts to each other and to guide their nation to the path of forgiveness, peace, and unity.

The conference was the focus of extensive media coverage, both at home and in the Diasporas. To sample some of these, you may click on the following links:

BBC (Somali Section):

http://www.markacadeey.com/radiomarkacadeey/radio_marka.asp?src_table=http://www.markacadeey.com/wareysi/somali_union_bbc.rm

VOA:

<http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2006-12-04-voa9.cfm>

Wardheernews:

http://www.wardheernews.com/NSPU_Conference/05_NSPU_Conf.html

Hiiraan:

http://www.hiiraan.com/op2/2006/dec/nspu_conference_stirs_up_a_hornet%e2%80%99s_nest.aspx

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NORTHERN SOMALIS FOR PEACE & UNITY (NSPU) is a grass-roots Somali advocacy organization with Branches in Somalia, United Arab Emirates, Canada, USA, UK, Sweden, and South Africa. We are dedicated to the promotion of peace and unity among the long suffering people of Somalia. We believe the 'Somalia problem' can only be dealt with within the framework of a holistic strategic approach aimed at the empowerment of a central government to rebuild national democratic governance institutions and restore law and order throughout the country. NSPU believes the balkanization of Somalia is a recipe for future conflicts and a bleak future for the Somali people, who are bonded by ethnicity, language, religion, and shared centuries-old culture and traditions.

