

Mombassa Conference: 'Bringing the Somali Civil Society Voices of Peace to the Forefront' ends

Mombassa conference, 7-11 December 2009

11th December 2009 - Over 180 representatives from Somali civil society met for an intensive five day conference in Mombasa, Kenya, between 7th and 11th December 2009.

The aim of the conference was to bring to the forefront the voice of civil society in the quest for peace in Somalia and to support the roles of the Somali civil society and diaspora as catalysts for positive social and economic change.

This gathering was a follow-up to the "Entebbe I" conference in March 2008 of Somali non-state actors and the diaspora, representing another significant step in a sustained process of civil society dialogue. [Click here to download the "Entebbe I" conference report and communiqué.](#)

Participants from within the Somali region, the Horn of Africa, and beyond. Participants included traditional leaders, representatives of the business community, women's groups, youth groups, religious leaders, professional associations and the media. Diaspora intellectuals and opinion makers were also involved reflecting the important socio-economic role of the diaspora.

From the outset, the serious tone of the gathering reflected deep concern and outrage over the tragic suicide bomb attack at the graduation ceremony for medical doctors at Shaamo Hotel in Mogadishu on 3rd December, 2009.

Subjects discussed during the conference

- The role of Somali civil society, diaspora, women, youth and the business community in peacebuilding

- Empowering Non-State Actors: challenges and opportunities
- How Somalis make peace (a Peace Mapping research study by Interpeace and its Somali partner institutions) and policy issues addressed in the ACCORD publication (launched 15 December)
- Community security and safety, and the stabilization of Mogadishu
- Islamic principles and values
- Local governance and decentralisation
- Constitution making process
- Challenges for institution building to move beyond a state of permanent transition
- Economic recovery and the role of the business community in peace building
- Public fund management
- Regional dynamics in the Horn and the Somali crisis, including piracy issues and the role of AMISOM
- Human rights violations and the culture of impunity
- The severe humanitarian and livelihoods crisis, the suffering of the Somali people, and obstacles to humanitarian aid delivery
- The role of online media in peacebuilding
- A roundtable discussion on culture, media and peace, featuring prominent cultural figures

During the conference, important messages were received and delivered to the plenary from the President of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh; the Somali Transitional Federal Government President, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed; the President of the Puntland State, Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamoud & Farole; and a number of Somali organizations. A statement by the UN SRSG, Ahmed Ould-Abdallah, and a Somali translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were distributed on International Human Rights Day. The armed opposition groups, such as Al Shabaab and Hisbul Islam, made mild comments about the conference, reflecting the collective weight of the conference participants and the strong united voice emerging from the proceedings.

The venue also provided an opportunity for a number of side meetings for reconciliation in the Somali regions.

Somali participants were joined in the plenary session on the final day by representatives of the international community. International representatives of the UN and the donor community, led by the Swedish Ambassador Joran Bjallerstedt, joined the conference on the final day to hear the outcome of the proceedings and respond to questions.

Internet and media coverage extended the reach. Live internet streaming of the plenary sessions and other discussions enabled participation via chatrooms, generating over 23,500 hits at its peak and reflecting the intense interest in the content of the conference. Extended media coverage by Somali TV channels and websites was further enhanced by a one hour Q & A session after the conclusion of the conference, broadcast live by the BBC Somali Service and chaired by its head, Yusuf Garad.

The Outcomes

- Mombasa Declaration of the Principles of Peace by Somali civil society. Download Somali document and English document.
- A Communiqué summarizing key points from the discussions. Download Somali document and English document.
- Agreement to form a committee comprising conference participants to sustain community mobilization and networking in the Somali region and diaspora in support of the Mombasa conference outcomes in the quest for peace

The meeting was co-organized by the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD), based in Mogadishu with regional offices in South-Central Somalia, and Interpeace. It was made possible by the committed engagement of participants and the generous contribution of donors.

The forthcoming International Contact Group on Somalia to be held in Saudi Arabia on 17 December is due to be briefed on the proceedings. However the Mombasa conference recognized that its most important outcome is for participants to take responsibility for briefing and mobilizing their respective constituencies – in the Somali region and beyond – in order to build and sustain the momentum for peaceful change in Somalia.

A full conference report will be available in due course.