

# FOREIGN POLICY

## Republic of Somaliland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation



MFA&IC, Somaliland

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## FOREWORD by the PRESIDENT

I wish to welcome and fully endorse the publication of Somaliland's Foreign Policy Statement which outlines the vision, values and objectives that will inform Somaliland's approach to foreign policy in the coming years.



It is entirely fitting and appropriate that securing international recognition for Somaliland should be at the heart of our foreign policy. The people of Somaliland have overcome tremendous adversity and sacrificed much to deliver the stable, peaceful and secure country we enjoy today. Since 1991 we have clearly demonstrated to the world that not only are we an independent country, but thanks to our collective efforts, a successful one. This is the undeniable political reality and we will press with renewed urgency, sophistication and vigour to ensure our just demand for recognition is accepted by our neighbours and the international community.

However, alongside the pursuit of recognition, our foreign policy also intends to fulfil a number of other needs which face our nation. It will play a role in improving security, creating jobs and economic opportunities, addressing poverty and underdevelopment and building harmonious relations with our neighbours and strategic partners. Investment promotion and the cultivation of commercial links will be supported by the foreign policy and it will also contribute towards our efforts to address challenges and threats ranging from terrorism, piracy, and crime to climate change. Crucially, our foreign policy is in line with the national development plan and should lend additional value and coherence to the efforts of the Somaliland government as a whole.

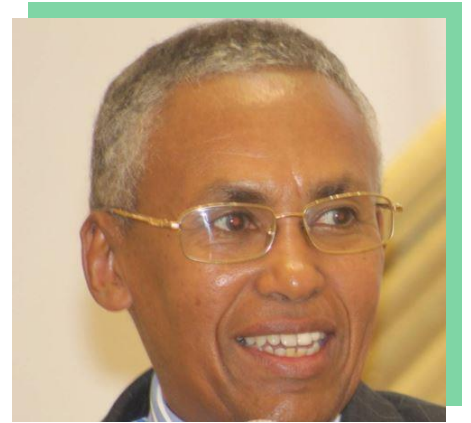
It is absolutely essential that our foreign policy be both inclusive and responsive to change. A key ingredient for Somaliland's present success was due to the fact that our peace was built through a bottom-up process drawing on traditional conflict resolution methods and Islamic wisdom. This process which involved dozens of reconciliation conferences was carried out without outside help and it involved the patient participation of all the regions and communities of Somaliland. Equally, the Constitution which lays the legal and political foundations for our country was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Somaliland public, and that document is rightly viewed as the legacy and property of the people of Somaliland

My wish is that our foreign policy will be viewed in the same way. Not viewed as something set in stone, but rather as a living document that will continue to be responsive to the ideas and suggestions of the people of Somaliland. Achieving the ambitious objectives laid out in our foreign policy will not be easy, but I have no doubt that with the support of Somalilanders from all walks of life including men, women, youth, and the diaspora, we will prevail.

A handwritten signature in red ink, written in a cursive style, positioned above a horizontal line.

H.E Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo

## **INTRODUCTION by THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION MINISTER**



Somaliland's Foreign Policy is guided by the goals of securing international recognition of the Republic of Somaliland as a state; protecting Somaliland's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its 26 June 1960 borders; and promoting foreign direct investment and development assistance in line with Somaliland's National Development Plan (NDP).

The foreign policy document provides the context and objectives of Somaliland's foreign policy, and outlines our approach in areas ranging from recognition, peace and security, international engagement, public diplomacy, economic diplomacy, to diaspora outreach.

Securing international recognition is the primary goal of Somaliland's Foreign Policy. Somaliland will pursue its case for recognition in regional and international political forums and explore all other possible political and legal channels.

Promoting foreign direct investment and development assistance are also key near-term goals, in line with Somaliland's NDP. Somaliland's future prosperity depends upon expanding and diversifying its economic base, increasing exports, and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). A stronger economy will in turn raise Somaliland's political profile. Somaliland's government will proactively seek large-scale inward FDI that provides the infrastructure and resource base for economic growth and job creation.

Somaliland will increase levels of bilateral engagement and multilateral cooperation. This will include a strategic programme of international travel designed to secure recognition, bring jobs and investment to Somaliland and strengthen political relations. We will also welcome a large number of high level visitors to Somaliland and will use the opportunities this affords to promote Somaliland's interests. Somaliland will also seek greater representation at regional and international fora including IGAD and the AU and will expand the number and capacity of its representative offices overseas, in order to engage with international organisations and cultivate political champions in Africa.

Achieving these goals will require Somaliland to call on all its resources, both inside and outside of government, including in the diaspora. Somaliland's Foreign Policy envisages a vibrant, diverse global Somaliland community that is connected to Somaliland and to each other.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Saad Ali Shire', written over a horizontal line.

H.E Dr Saad Ali Shire

## **1. OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW**

Somaliland's Foreign Policy is guided by the goals of securing international recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of Somaliland; protecting Somaliland's statehood and territorial integrity within its 26 June 1960 borders; attracting foreign direct investment and development assistance in line with Somaliland's National Development Plan (NDP), and promoting international cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

Somaliland works in partnership with the international community to strengthen peace and stability within its territory and the region, and participates in international initiatives aimed at combating terrorism, piracy, extremism and organized crime. It aims to strengthen its relationship with regional and multilateral agencies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN) and work together with its neighbours to enhance regional diplomatic and economic integration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation MoFA&IC plays an important role in economic development. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Investment, it encourages private international investment and promotes investment opportunities. The Ministry also promotes development assistance to ensure levels of aid consistent with the needs of continued stability and greater demand for faster economic growth, while ensuring that any international assistance is aligned with Somaliland's NDP.

The Ministry promotes Somaliland's legal case for recognition and raises international awareness of Somaliland's tragic history as part of the former Somali Republic. It endeavours to show the world what Somaliland has achieved since withdrawal from the union, and underpins the case that recognition will allow Somaliland to play an even more valuable role in helping to stabilize the Horn of Africa.

The Ministry supports the Somaliland Diaspora promote closer relations between their new countries and Somaliland, and works with them to help educate the public and policy makers of Somaliland's foreign policy positions and aspirations.

## **2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Somaliland is a former British Protectorate which won its independence on 26 June 1960. As a British Protectorate, Somaliland had a colonial history different from that of the former Italian colony of Somalia. Somaliland was an independent, sovereign state recognized by Britain and other countries before it enter into the failed union with Somalia- on a deeply flawed and dubious legal basis, which fails to meet international standards for treaty formation.

The population of Somaliland suffered systematic discrimination, injustice, destruction and massacre on a grand scale by state, itself, during the union with Somalia, and on May 18, 1991 the people decided to dissolve their failed union with Somalia and reclaimed their independence and affirmed their right to self-determination. The universal referendum of the Somaliland people in 2001 affirmed the decision by the overwhelming majority of the Somaliland citizenry to withdraw from the union.

Since then, Somaliland has established peace by means of a bottom up approach, with little external help; built a democracy in which power changes hands peacefully in elections which are monitored internationally; and put in place a system of governance which provides services to its people, including free primary education for children of both sexes.

However, the challenges Somaliland faces in an interdependent and globalised world require an effective foreign policy to ensure the interests of Somaliland and its people are protected and promoted. The building of peaceful, harmonious and mutually beneficial relations with our neighbours and the rest of the world stands to bring security and prosperity to Somaliland.

### **3. THE CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION**

The primary goal of Somaliland's Foreign Policy is to secure international recognition for Somaliland. Somaliland has an unquestionable case for claiming sovereignty, and 25 years of experience as an independent state, but it suffers from pervasive misunderstanding, and an unfounded anxiety on the part of some that the granting of recognition would entail the opening up a 'Pandora's Box'. However, when Somaliland's unique case for sovereignty and diplomatic recognition is considered objectively, these arguments are quickly dispelled.

Somaliland meets the criteria for statehood as set by the 1933 Montevideo Convention, generally considered a norm of customary international law: a permanent population, a defined territory, effective government, a capacity to enter into relations with other States. Somaliland adheres to the colonial borders of the former British Protectorate of Somaliland and does not violate the OAU Charter or the Consultative Act of the African Union principle which require that former colonial borders should be maintained upon independence. The AU's fact-finding mission of 2005 affirmed as much, noting that Somaliland was a unique case which should be judged "from an objective historical viewpoint and a moral angle vis-à-vis the aspirations of the people".

Despite Somaliland fulfilling all of the criteria for statehood and being praised as an oasis of peace in a volatile region, and in spite of continuing popular support for independence, it is still waiting for the recognition it deserves. The core aim of our foreign policy is to take the necessary steps to address this unjust state of affairs.

The costs to Somaliland from lack of recognition are obviously great, including Somaliland's inability to access bilateral aid, international financial credit and foreign direct investment. Factors, which in turn undermine attempts to create jobs and provide necessary social services; and which make it more likely for young people to join the ranks of pirates, extremists or the flow of illegal migrants to Europe. The denial of recognition is tantamount to collective punishment, imposition of global embargo and impoverishment and, hence, denial of basic human rights to a population. Therefore, the pursuit of recognition represents an attempt to deal with overarching, cross-cutting and mutually reinforcing economic, political, social and security issues with global implications.

### **4. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

The success of Somaliland's Foreign policy is dependent on the actions of many individuals and groups, each of whom play a significant role in shaping Somaliland's international engagement and promoting Somaliland's political and economic interests. It requires a holistic approach that extends from the President, through Ministers and officials, and down to ordinary citizens.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation will lead the quest for independence, but it will not be alone in this endeavour. It will draw on the strengths of a broad coalition of supporters, from political representatives, to civil society groups, business communities, the Diaspora and the public. It is a collective effort and not only the responsibility of the government of the day, but of all Somaliland parties and people. Each group within this broad alliance will bring its own capabilities to bear and can contribute in a unique way. Despite the diversity of the stakeholders, unity of purpose will be kept through dialogue and consultation as well adherence to the same fundamental principles. For this reason the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is committed to ensuring that Somaliland's foreign policy is a living document that is inclusive of many voices, that relevant stakeholders are considered and informed about its implementation, and that the policy is open to adaptation and change.

As part of its foreign policy, Somaliland will continue to pursue its case for recognition in regional and international political forums and explore all other possible political and legal channels. To help with this task a significant new feature of the foreign policy is the creation of recognition committees at national and international levels. The National Recognition Committee is formed of some of the most experienced, insightful and expert figures in Somaliland and draws its membership from individuals with proven record, including former Foreign Ministers and experts from across the political spectrum and Somaliland society. The Committee will support the Ministry and explore all available legal, political and other avenues to pursue and secure recognition.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is set to expand the number and capacity of its representative offices overseas. The government will provide the resources required to establish presence in important locations such as the neighbouring countries and international, regional and diplomatic centres, and use its presence to promote the case for recognition. We will draw on the support of international organizations and experts to bolster the campaign for recognition. Somaliland will also cultivate political champions and friends in Africa and elsewhere to speak in support of Somaliland in international forums where Somaliland is currently unable to access.

Somaliland will back the recognition campaign with more intense public diplomacy channels, including the use of the MoFA&IC and other Government websites, social media, opinion pieces, debates, appeals, petitions, lobbying and public relations firms. Somalilanders holding high profile international positions will be approached and encouraged to lend their support to the cause of recognition.

## **5. PEACE AND SECURITY DIPLOMACY**

The Government of Somaliland is dedicated to upholding and promoting regional and international peace and security, and conducts all its foreign policy in line with the principles of harmony and mutual respect between neighbours and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Somaliland Government seeks to promote regional peace and security through a dual-track approach based on the consolidation of stability and social harmony at home; and cooperation with neighbouring countries, regional partners and the broader international community to spread and deepen peace beyond its borders.

Practical arrangements between neighbours have helped to secure borders and promote collaborative efforts at fighting terrorism and dealing with other threats. On counter-piracy, Somaliland cooperates with neighbouring states to implement the Djibouti Code of Conduct (2009); and works with UN member states and international organizations to address piracy, migration, maritime security, and maritime governance issues. Somaliland is committed to strengthening and expanding these efforts.

At home, Somaliland has been able to deliver a high level of security and stability for its people. A culture of community self-policing is an integral ingredient in Somaliland's stability and peace. The Somaliland Coast Guard, working alongside coastal communities and other governments, helps to ensure that Somaliland's maritime zones are free from piracy, trafficking and other criminal activities allowing the Gulf of Aden to remain the main trade route linking Europe and the Middle East to Asia and Africa.

Obviously, the security threats of the modern age cannot be simply dealt with at a national level alone. Somaliland recognises that its own stability is dependent on peace in the wider region. The threats we now face have an open disregard for borders, and we need to collaborate and work together if we are to successfully deal with them. Somaliland has shown itself to be a reliable and responsible regional partner in tackling issues as varied as terrorism, crime, piracy, extremism, and trafficking. Somaliland is fully committed to working in tandem with its neighbours to collectively face these issues and is supportive of the peace efforts of IGAD, AU and the UN.

By maintaining its status as a peaceful neighbour that properly manages its borders, accepts refugees instead of producing them, denies safe haven to terrorist or piracy groups, credibly adheres to bilateral agreements in line with international norms, and acts as a responsible partner in mediating and resolving issues arising between nations, Somaliland will ensure friendly, positive and productive relations with neighbours. Somaliland will demonstrate through its actions that a stable, strong and independent Somaliland is a necessary and valuable element of the new global order. Somaliland undertakes to abide by the principles of customary and conventional international law in the areas of private investment, refugee treatment, criminal activities and human rights. It subscribes and adheres to all relevant international instruments and legal obligations.

Somaliland's foreign policy is committed to safeguarding Somaliland's independence in a manner that will do no harm to the Somaliland people or its neighbours. Somaliland's effort to guarantee its statehood through peaceful means led to initiating a dialogue with the government in Somalia in 2012. Somaliland is fully committed to the talks, urges the government in Somalia to negotiate in good faith and appeals to the international community to support the process.

## **6. INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY**

### **6.1. Engagement Policy**

Somaliland is intent on taking necessary steps to raise its level of international engagement. It will formalize partnerships with its neighbours through bilateral agreements; expand engagement through multilateral cooperation; secure support from key allies for the reform and functional improvement of domestic institutions; participate in international forums and networks, and undertake joint operations with international partners in an effort to promote an integrated approach to tackle common threats such as terrorism, piracy, organized crime, climate change, and humanitarian disasters.

The President and his Ministers will undertake a strategic programme of international travel designed to secure recognition, bring jobs and investment to Somaliland and strengthen bilateral political and economic relations. The President and Ministries will also invite influential international personalities to Somaliland and will use the opportunity this affords to promote Somaliland's interests and aspirations.



Every Government Department will take its part in maintaining and deepening relationships with international counterparts. The importance of such relationships cannot be overstated as our standing with other countries is greatly enhanced by the depth of the relationships we build at institutional and personal levels. It is especially important that we promote relationships with strategically important partners.

Regional and continental organisations have become more prominent and come to the fore in addressing regional and African challenges. Cooperation between states to deal with common issues has become the norm. Growing economic interdependence has encouraged this trend. Somaliland will seek greater representation, membership and influence at key regional and international political and economic forums including the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the East African Community (EAC). It will also seek to spread the Somaliland model of peace and state-building as an example for current conflict, transitional and post-conflict states.

## **6.2. Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation**

To secure and promote its national interests and agenda at home and abroad Somaliland recognizes the importance of strong bilateral relations, regional cooperation and enhanced multilateral engagement as essential components of its Foreign Policy. As previously noted, Somaliland will further strengthen its bilateral diplomacy by establishing diplomatic missions in countries of strategic importance, welcoming consulates and Embassies to open in Somaliland and exchange high-level delegations

## **6.3. Regional Cooperation**

Somaliland believes in the benefits to be gained from regional economic and political integration and is fully supportive of the efforts of regional organisations to address issues of mutual interest, including greater infrastructural, transport and trade links within the region and recognizes Berbera Port and the Berbera Road Corridor as an essential artery for regional transit and trade.

Somaliland's foreign policy is especially mindful of the need to build close relations with its neighbours. Excellent relations with Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia, with whom Somaliland shares common borders and many other interests, are obviously of paramount importance. Likewise, fostering and managing good relationships with Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan which are part and parcel of the Horn of Africa community is equally important.

Somaliland's capacity to engage in foreign relations was hampered during the early years following independence when it needed to direct its efforts towards peace building and reconstruction of the country. But it is now redoubling its efforts and making tremendous strides in this direction.

Although Somaliland has a complex, and strained relationship with Somalia following Somaliland's unequivocal withdrawal from the failed union, dissolved in 1991, Somaliland is committed to resolving all outstanding matters through the dialogue.

## **6.4. Middle East and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**

As an Islamic country with longstanding historical, economic and cultural ties with countries in the Middle East, including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Egypt, Somaliland considers the development and nurturing of good relationships and partnerships with these countries and other OIC members for both regional security and prosperity as important. The OIC countries have been already prominent in the areas of humanitarian relief and education in Somaliland, but there is the potential for deeper and wider engagement.

## **6.5. Africa**

Somaliland is proud to be an African country, believes in a bright future for Africa and wishes to contribute to the attainment of peace, security and prosperity on the continent. We aspire to see increased cooperation on issues of common interest between African states to foster greater economic integration, and closer security cooperation. To pursue this goal we will seek to gain access, observer status and membership of the African Union and other continental political, economic, security, and cultural multilateral organizations that promote inter-country cooperation and collaboration.

## **6.6. Europe**

European countries, particularly the European Union (EU) and its members have been the biggest donors, and over the years provided generous humanitarian and development assistance to Somaliland. We will continue our engagement and maintenance of good relations with the Europeans. We value the role that the EU and its members played in assisting Somaliland recover and rehabilitate infrastructure, institutions and public services and welcome their support for bringing about peace and stability to the wider Horn of Africa Region. The contributions of UK, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands to the Somaliland Development Fund have been especially invaluable. We are also mindful and grateful to UK and continental Europe for welcoming to their countries people of Somaliland origin when they needed it most. The EU, its members and affiliates play a pivotal role in shaping international opinion and policy and Somaliland will be positive and constructive in engaging Europe in its quest for recognition and involvement in the Somaliland-Somalia dialogue.

## **6.7. Asia**

Somaliland recognises the growing importance of East Asia, especially in global economic terms and will enhance its level of engagement and interaction with countries in this region, including Japan, China, India, and Malaysia. Somaliland welcomes the emergence of economic power houses in Asia, which contribute to global prosperity and economic growth. These countries show the way on how developing countries can grow out of poverty in a relatively short period. Somaliland acknowledges the value of South-South cooperation and is supportive of the 1955 Bandung principles, and the Africa-Asia strategic partnership.

## **6.8. The Americas**

Somaliland Considers the United States of America (USA) and Canada as two important partners in the Western Hemisphere. We recognize, in particular, the centrality of USA due to its position in global politics, security and economics. The USA has been one of the main donors that have contributed to institutional development and the democratic process in Somaliland. We are keen on building on the good relations we already have with the United States by greater engagement and presence to ensure

that Somaliland's voice and perspective is heard in Washington not only on the all-important matter of recognition, but a host of other issues of mutual concern and interest. Canada hosts of the largest Somaliland Diaspora, and despite being one of the biggest international aid donors, has sparse presence in the country in terms of development programs. Hence, greater engagement of the Canadian government and aid agencies constitute one of the challenges of Somaliland's foreign policy.

## **6.9. United Nations**

Although not yet a member state of the United Nations, Article 10 Section 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland declares that the country "recognizes and shall act in conformity with the United Nations Charter and with international law". Somaliland is determined to eventually become a member of the United Nations, but in the interim it will promote the principles of the UN charter and support its efforts to bring about international peace, security and sustainable development.

Somaliland welcomes the vital support the UN has provided to Somaliland through its various agencies in terms of development, humanitarian and technical assistance and looks forward to continuing and closer engagement in these areas. Somaliland also appreciates the UN's contribution to peace and security in the wider Horn of Africa region.

## **7. ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY**

Economic Diplomacy is not only essential to bringing prosperity to the people of Somaliland, but also opens up pathways to political diplomacy. Commercial engagement with international companies often leads to greater awareness of Somaliland history, culture and status in their home countries. The higher is Somaliland's profile in economic forums, the more it will be noticed on the political radar.

Somaliland's future prosperity depends upon expanding and diversifying its economic base, increasing exports, and attracting foreign direct investment. The exchange of goods, capital, ideas and people across borders, provides Somaliland the opportunity to thrive in the global economy. The Somaliland government will proactively seek large-scale foreign direct investment that will provide both the infrastructure and the resource base required for faster economic growth and job creation. It will also seek to secure international assistance from development partners.

It is essential that Economic Diplomacy is not viewed as the preserve of a single Ministry. For this reason Somaliland is committed to effective cross-departmental partnership such as those between Ministry of Trade and Investment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation which ensures synergetic, coordinated and effective economic diplomacy. The Ministry will promote economic development by engaging its missions abroad to attract investment capital to Somaliland. Somaliland representatives, particularly, those in developed countries are expected to maintain wide networks of contacts, and build relations with key business figures and decision makers. The representatives' knowledge of their host countries will enable them to obtain business information and identify potential investors. Equally the MoFA&IC will work closely with the Diaspora to channel investment from Somaliland communities overseas into the economy to achieve sustainable growth.

## **8. DIASPORA DIPLOMACY**

Somaliland's Foreign Policy envisions a vibrant, diverse global Somaliland community that is connected to Somaliland and to each other. The voice of Somaliland is hugely amplified by the hundreds of

thousands around the globe who are Somalilanders by birth or by descent or by affiliation. The Diaspora played an essential role in the war against dictatorship, restoration of peace, rebuilding of the country and reclamation of independence and is an important part of the story of the nation. Somalilanders are bringing their energy and enthusiasm worldwide and making a telling contribution to their communities, but, equally many of those who grew up or spent a considerable time overseas are now playing a pivotal role in Somaliland Government, business and civil society circles.

Despite its contribution, the Diaspora still remains a source of untapped social and economic potential, whose skills can help strengthen local institutions, and whose expertise and resources could be harnessed for national development.

The government will Improve communications and connectivity between Somaliland and its Diaspora, and make sure that such communication is two-way and allows for robust engagement with each other. The overseas missions and the Diaspora agency will ensure outreach and engagement with Somaliland communities and will avail of the new opportunities presented by advances in communication technology, to maintain and deepen connectivity. Somaliland will equally provide consular services and support to its communities overseas and update them of crucial developments at home. Support will be also provided to Somaliland business networks to facilitate the success of Somaliland people at home and abroad

The Somaliland government is committed to a politically stable and prosperous Somaliland and considers an empowered and economically productive Diaspora Community as a vital ingredient in securing such a future. An important step in this direction is the establishment of a well-structured and functional Diaspora Agency with an appropriate strategic framework both in Somaliland and abroad that is geared towards mobilizing, coordinating and integrating Somaliland's Diaspora into Somaliland's national development process.

The experience of other countries has shown that the support of the Diaspora community is a vital resource in the quest for recognition. The Foreign Ministry sees the Diaspora as playing a pivotal role in building coalitions to advocate for Somaliland recognition, and will support them to lobby for the advancement of the political, economic interests of the nation.