



Center for Policy Analysis & Research (CfPAR)

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Policy Review: the Somali Conference in London

The leading countries of the International Community, international NGOs, regional organizations and frontline countries with interests in Somalia gathered in London on Tuesday, May 7th, 2013 for a one day conference on Somalia. This is a sign that the international community wants Somalia to rebuild. Even though progress toward peace and stability in Somalia lies on the shoulders of Somalis, it must be noted that the interest shown in Somalia has a deep impact on how Somalia can overcome the two decades of civil war it has suffered. The conference has underlined the progress made so far in Somalia: transition ended last year; a parliament established, and a president elected.

One of the main points that deserves our attention is that the international community came together to agree on practical measures to support the Federal Government's plan in three key areas. These three key areas are: security, justice and public financial management. However, the conference emphasized the political issues that are currently "outstanding." Though the international community supported the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, and expressed its support for local elections in Puntland, it is equally important to note that the Federal Government needs to effectively engage regional authorities and solve any internal political differences that may exist. Just as importantly, regional authorities need to engage the Federal Government, and not to be obstacle to the political progress that the country needs to achieve. It is of the utmost importance that all sides have a will to compromise, and that the major domestic actors include actors within their territories that have issues of their own.

The machinery that can settle internal political crises is the judicial branch and the Somali Parliament, and it is very important that these two institutions fully take their responsibilities to settle disputes on the Provisional Constitution. As it happens in every international gathering, the international community agreed to create a partnership with Somalia, and they promised "a commitment to provide coordinated and sustained support for implementation of the Federal Government's plans." The Somali actors

cannot assume that international support will be forthcoming unless they move quickly to resolve their differences and conflicts.

On Security

Even though there are still challenges, there are improvements on security. AMISOM and Somali forces have pushed al-Shabaab back from many places in Somalia. The conference welcomed the extension of the mandate of AMISOM troops, and commended the partial lifting of the arms embargo by the UN Security Council. Piracy has been contained for multiple reasons, and the international community commended the Federal Government's Maritime Resources and Security Strategy. Also, the international community underlined its "redetermination to work with Somalia to eradicate piracy and other maritime crimes." AMISOM's support is always acknowledged, but the main task for the Somali Government is to rebuild Somalia's security institutions. Militias must be formalized and disciplined.

On Justice

This is the nucleus for any progress or lack thereof in every society. Because of lack of justice, Somalia has collapsed, and the only way that it can come back is by upholding the rule of law. It is the responsibility of the Somali Government to be a model for justice. This can be done by rebuilding the justice system of the country. The recommendations made by the conference that was held in Mogadishu from April 1-5 must be fully implemented, and consultations with the Somali legal experts must be continued.

On Public Financial Management

For the last two decades, the Somali economy was informal. This informality is no longer an option. It is important to note that during the transitional period, Somalia has been described as the most corrupt country in the world. This was the case, among other reasons, because of the lack of public financial management. However, the task that the Federal Government needs to undertake is to rebuild the entire economy. The Federal Government has many lessons to learn from the transitional period, and it needs to take the necessary steps to confront corruption. Experts on macroeconomics (Somalis and non-Somalis) who can handle the set up of the entire Somali economy need to be identified. A transparent banking system and financial regulations that can meet the standards of the global economy need to be put in place in Somalia and be obvious to all stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Somalia Conference in London was another step toward for rebuilding Somalia. However, in order to reach the goals agreed on by the international community, we recommend the following points to the international community, the Somali Government and all stakeholders

To the International Community

1. Translate your commitment to the rebuilding of Somalia into concrete action. The three practical measures of security, justice and public financial management are commendable.
2. Direct the International NGOs to closely work with the Somali Government in order to encourage peace and stability.

To the Somali Government

1. Focus on Security issues by rebuilding viable National and inclusive Security Forces, and recruit competent leaders/recruiters in the military and police forces.
2. Engage all stakeholders and listen to their concerns with open hearts to sort out any political misunderstandings.

To the Somali Stakeholders

1. Engage the Federal Government, and look at the bigger picture so that the system of governance that leads to peace and stability can come back again.