

Joint Statement by Senior Members of the Somali Diaspora in Europe

1] Introduction

We, the Somali diaspora, now settled in several European countries and who are members of the many clans which have inhabited Somalia for centuries, have agreed on this joint statement to show our commitment to assist the country of our birth and which we still love.

2] Piracy

2.1 We deplore the pursuit of piracy operated from Somali ports. This has brought riches to only a few based in Somalia and probably more to their powerful partners safely based in other countries. A major reason why some Somali fishermen turned to piracy was because they lost out to powerful foreign fleets fishing unchallenged and recklessly in Somali territorial waters. Reports of such incidents of illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) incursions have been published by the joint committee of the International Maritime Organisation and the Food & Agricultural Organisation but have gone unpunished by the UN or by those of its member states whose own fleets were responsible. We are disappointed that they chose not to listen to the calls for help from Somali fishermen.

2.2 Statements on piracy made at recent conferences (5th Manama Dialogue, Bahrain, 12-14 December) and (UNDP/UNPOS, Nairobi, 10-11 December) have sought to bring understanding to the issue but the thrust of successive UN Security Council Resolutions (1725, 1816 and 1851) have overlooked the points made in paragraph 2.1 above.

2.3 We support the efforts of the international community including the European Union *Atalanta* naval force now charged by the United Nations to combat piracy in the region and to enforce UN SCR 1816. But its task should be principally to deter the incursion into Somali territorial waters by foreign fishing fleets and we seek clarification that this will be the case.

2.4 With this reassurance, we will seek to influence regional and local leaders to use all their powers to counter support for pirate groups and to encourage the unconditional release of ships and their crews taken hostages.

2.5 We will encourage Somali ports to register their fishing and maritime trading fleets so that, after an agreed period, UN authorised naval forces may assume that unregistered ships in Somali territorial waters are hostile and that in any encounter, they may take appropriate action.

3] Seabed contamination

3.1 We note UN reports which show that people in the areas around northeastern Somali towns have suffered far higher than normal cases of respiratory infections, mouth ulcers and bleeding, abdominal haemorrhages and unusual skin infections caused by nuclear and other toxic waste dumped in Somali coastal waters over recent years.

3.2 We continue to be disappointed by the lack of international concern on this matter. We demand a survey of the seabed take place in 2009 to report at the earliest opportunity.

4] Peace Efforts

We have watched efforts to bring peace to Somalia start up and too quickly fail. The withdrawal from Somalia of troops from Ethiopia and possibly the African Union make it clear that there is little appetite to despatch a new military force to Somalia and that there is no support for hostile interdictions. While there remains such indecision, Somalia continues to remain in an impoverished state. This has impacted on the lives of our families and friends, and on clan members living in Somalia.

5] The Clans

We continue to maintain our clan identity (1) which has now become intertwined with the culture of the country (2) which each of us now calls home. From our advantaged position, we can see clearly the dangers which clan rivalry has caused in Somalia. Therefore, it is important that those of us outside Somalia demonstrate that we can work together for its benefit and without rivalry and in the hope that our initiative can be followed within Somalia, showing that our traditional clan links can be made into forces for good.

6] Our commitment

Until now, the Somali diaspora has not played sufficient part in seeking to resist this process. We have strengths and knowledge which we are confident can be of assistance and advantage to all. We wish to support those in Somalia who seek a lasting peace and progress towards the development of the country. We commit ourselves to work with the international community, using our clan links with local communities in the pursuit of development, improved security and for human rights.

Through this Joint Statement, we set out how we intend to demonstrate this commitment in the cause of peace and development:

7] Network

We will set up a network of key people in the diaspora settled in identified countries who are trusted by their clans and local Somali communities.

8] Co-ordination

We will co-ordinate our programmes, use our influence and contribute to deserving funding programmes which work towards a peaceful and developing society in Somalia and towards supporting a government once again able to represent its peoples and to play its part in the family of nations.

9] The Reconciliation Process

We offer the services of key members of the diaspora, dependent on adequate funding, to travel to regions where their expertise is relevant and where they are trusted by the host communities.

10] Development

We offer the services of the diaspora to jointly determine strategy; participate in identifying suitable local development projects; and to contribute towards these projects. Also, to jointly assess the success of delivery as evidence of our commitment.

11] Health

We offer wherever possible and appropriate to involve diaspora community specialists to participate in joint assessment programmes in inoculation and similar initiatives.

12] Education

We offer to lead and join exercises to assess the education needs in all areas which welcome such initiatives and to raise funds for the sourcing and distribution of educational materials.

13] Governance

We offer our services to strengthen local administrators through acting as counsel, both remotely and by our presence.

14] Regions of interest

We welcome those identifying with families and clans from all regions of Somalia to join us.

15] Next Steps

We recognise that, upon agreeing this Joint Statement, we commit each one of us to the reconstruction of our damaged country of origin.

This document has been signed by representatives of the Somali diaspora in Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. It has been supported by members of the Somali diaspora in Australia, Canada and the USA. These names have been published and all members of the Somali diaspora are welcome to sign the Joint Statement.