



LONDON CONFERENCE
SOMALIA
MAY 2017

Event on diaspora and civil society contribution to Somalia, 10 May

A supporting event on diaspora and civil society contribution to Somalia took place at Lancaster House on 10 May 2017, co-chaired by the UK, the Federal Government of Somalia, and the United Nations. It was attended by thirty Somali diaspora and civil society leaders, the United Kingdom's Minister for the Middle East and Africa, the President and Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Somalia, members of the NGO community, development partners and the international community, and was supported by Chatham House and SOAS, University of London. Diaspora and civil society participants represented a diverse range of issues, interests and geographical regions; from across Somalia, to host countries in Africa, Europe and North America.

The event provided an opportunity to hear the perspectives of diaspora and civil society, including marginalised groups, on how their complementary skills and experiences can better contribute to the positive trajectory of Somalia. It offered a platform for dialogue on how their potential, and their partnership, can be harnessed to support peaceful development in Somalia.

The event generated the following insights and commitments:

- The role of diaspora and civil society, in particular women and youth, as agents of peace and development, with the skills, ideas, expertise, capital and commitment to drive Somalia's recovery, was unanimously recognised.
- Opportunities to realise their full potential were identified. The harmonization of a legal framework for non-governmental organisations operating in Somalia was seen as a key milestone in creating an enabling environment, and the ongoing work by the Federal Government of Somalia to finalize the NGO Act by 2017 was lauded.
- A government-led strategy to strengthen Somalia's engagement with its diaspora was flagged as another important enabling factor, and the announcement of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed to establish a National Diaspora Agency was welcomed.
- The event concluded with a high-level commitment to continue dialogue and work towards closer partnership between the Federal Government of Somalia, civil society and diaspora organisations, in recognition of the important contribution of civil society and diaspora in supporting Somalia's ongoing peace and development.

The event marked a significant step forward on engagement of non-governmental actors and voices in high-level conferences on Somalia, which all agreed should continue. Highlights and key messages from the event were presented in plenary at the London Somalia Conference on 11 May, by a female civil society representative who had participated in the event.

Prior to this event a wider civil society consultation took place on 2 May in Mogadishu, organised by the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations. The *Horusocod!* pre-event in Mogadishu gathered over 150 civil society participants for panel discussions on the themes of the London Somalia Conference. A booklet that highlighted key messages from the 2 May event was distributed to all delegations at the London Somalia Conference on 11 May.