



## Transcript

# Somaliland's Role in the Stability of the Horn of Africa

President Dahir Rayale Kahin of Somaliland

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## **President Dahir Rayale Kahin of Somaliland:**

Mr Chairman, I would like to thank you, for inviting me to Chatham House. I am extremely delighted to be here with you this afternoon, to speak about the issue of recognition of Somaliland among others.

I would like to emphasize the success story of Somaliland which by and large the international community failed to recognize. A success story that is basically considered as a miracle achievement attained by Somalilanders, without tangible assistance.

Over the years our administration has taken a series of steps towards a nation building process from 1991. This process was long and painstaking one, it constituted reconciliation, demobilization and institutional processes through homegrown bottom up approach. Which by and large became a model for nation building.

It all started with an SNM (Somali National Movement) sponsored Conference held in Burao in May 1991 (widely known as Burao National Conference), which set the stage for a new beginning – the restoration of Somaliland's statehood in 1960. Then followed a National Conference in Borama in 1993, which was the corner stone of an elected President and Vice President, the adoption of a National Charter with a two-chamber parliament through an Electoral College. A model labeled as "Africa's Best Kept Secret" by Professor Iqbal Jhazbay of South Africa. It is worth noting during that process that there were hiccups and pitfalls that slowed down the process, such as the conflict of 1995 to late 1996 that took place amongst us, which cost both human lives and other resources. Somaliland overcame this conflict through reconciliation. That was a learning experience. Once again in 1997 an electoral college was assembled in Hargeisa, whereby a President (Late President Egal) and myself as Vice President were elected.

In addition, a national constitution was adopted and was put for a national referendum in 2001 with 97% approval. International observers described the process as free, fair and consistent with international norms for referenda and elections. In the meantime, back to back elections were held, i.e. local Government, presidential, and Parliamentary elections which were characterized

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by the international community as fair and transparent. It is worth noting once again, that the aforementioned process was extremely challenging and terribly costly.

Mr Chairman, I would like to note, that our late President, Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, (may God bless his soul) passed away on May 2002 in South Africa. At the time, the term of his office was to expire within nine months. Soon after the death of late President, I was sworn in as the new President of the Republic of Somaliland, according to the constitution of the Republic which states that the vice President takes the seat of the President. This was the smoothest transition that I can think of, after the nine months we held the first Local Government, Presidential and Parliamentary elections successfully. During my tenure, my administration made possible all of these back to back elections with transparency and fairness.

All alone, Somaliland has contributed immensely to the regional security, democratization process and a regional geopolitical stability. Today Somaliland enjoys fantastic relationship with its neighbours.

Somaliland attained its independence from Great Britain 1960. As a result 35 countries recognized Somaliland's statehood; these included Egypt, Ghana and Libya among others.

As you are fully aware of the definition of a STATE is that it should have:

- A permanent population;
- A defined territory;
- A functioning Government;
- A capacity to enter into relations with other states.

My country fulfils all the above and thus qualifies for statehood.

Allow me to say something about our views towards Somalia. There are those who believe that the recognition issue of Somaliland may adversely affect or undermine the reconciliation efforts underway. I would argue that the opposite is true. If Somaliland is recognized, those in Somalia would concentrate and spend all their energies in finding a solution to their conflict, if Somaliland issue is taken

out of the equation. In addition, we believe that a sovereign and recognized Somaliland could play a positive role in the reconciliation of Somalia.

Having seen the tremendous strides Somaliland has made despite enormous odds, in the past 18 years, the world community padded Somalilanders on the back, and told us time and again that we are on the right track, and that we should continue on this course. The people of Somaliland have decided in their 2001 referendum to affirm their sovereignty thus challenging the world community as to how long to stay on the course without recognition. It is about high time that the international community gives serious attention to the achievements and the success story of Somaliland.

If East-Timor, Eritrea, Serbia, Georgia, Kosovo to name a few were recognized as sovereign nations, in the last 18 years, why not Somaliland? The fact of the matter is that Somaliland is more populated than approximately 63 sovereign countries including Luxemburg, the republic of Congo and Jamaica. Somaliland is also larger in area than 85 sovereign nations, including Belgium, Jordan, and El-Salvador.

Somaliland has built a society founded on peace, democracy, justice and the rule of law. Our commitment to the peace and stability of the region includes unreserved respect for the unity and territorial integrity of all our neighboring states; expecting a reciprocal treatment from its neighbors.

Somaliland neither stands for secession, nor for the revision of Africa's borders. The people of Somaliland have made their choice loud and clear, independence is an inalienable right.

Today, our economy and livelihood by and large depends entirely on the livestock sector, a sector that is subject to extreme fluctuations depending on the domestic weather conditions and external market situations, two vital variables not under our control. We are working hard to diversify the economy, by exploiting our vast untapped resources, like oil and gas, precious stones and the vast sea resources over the coming years. We have already taken steps in that direction, we will open on March 15 the first bid round for hydrocarbon concession, the bid round will include eight concession blocks comprised of more than 89,624 square km of

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onshore and offshore, but our efforts are being hamstrung by the refusal of the international community to invest in our country or deal with us bilaterally.

The Lack of *de jure* recognition hinders the development of Somaliland in terms of foreign investment, infrastructure and the delivery of meaningful social services, in that respect Somaliland earnestly, requests from member states of international organizations to recognize Somaliland. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Such a recognition will in no doubt allow the European Union, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and the international community in general, to deal with Somaliland on a bilateral basis and engage with us in the developmental programmes that Somaliland has been wrongfully denied over the years.

Understandably, there is an alarm here in London and elsewhere around the world about the issue of failed states in these troubling times, and a desire to limit any dangers they might pose to our collective security.

Trust me, we know all about failed states. Somaliland is not a failed state, but rather, a capable, responsible and democratic state. However, we share the same fears with you about failed states, and the threat they could pose to us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Likewise, the well-being and the success of other nations can equally have a profound positive effect on all of us. The reality on the ground today is, in our global village, what is good for one country is good for the other. The surest and the most effective way of fighting terrorism is not by trying to cure the symptom of the disease but the root cause of the malady by eradicating poverty, which manifests itself in misery and frustration. It is easy to assume that a neglected poverty-ridden society will be a congenial breeding ground for terrorists. The rich and the poor countries must have a common agreement to fight and cooperate in the interest of all mankind to eliminate poverty at the global level. Fighting human misery and degradation of human life must be a common concern for everybody, if we aspire a more peaceful life in this fast shrinking world of ours.

In the past Somaliland has been a victim of terrorism on numerous occasions. Most recently, on October 29 2008, international terrorism struck the heart and the soul of Somaliland. Using at least three suicide car bombs, violent extremists attacked our innocent citizens, the symbols of our democracy, the United Nations offices and the Ethiopian mission in Hargeisa the capital city of Somaliland. More than twenty innocent people of different nationalities were killed in these senseless terrorist attacks and dozens more were injured.

Despite our limited resources and capabilities, our government immediately responded to help the victims and quickly took all the necessary measures to thwart any further attempts to destabilize our peace and stability.

Clearly, the timing of these violent terrorist acts indicates that they were launched in order to disrupt and derail our National Voter Registration Process, a key democratic milestone achievement for our country. But the government and people of Somaliland are determined not to allow the actions of these terrorist thugs to defeat our infant democracy and stop our desire and aspiration for peace and stability.

The tremendous outpouring of sympathy and solidarity from members of the international community including the UK Government, our moment of national tragedy heartened our government and people. For this, Somaliland is deeply grateful. Indeed, our pain and tragedy is similar to the one inflicted upon the innocent citizens of Washington DC, New York City, London, Madrid, Bali and many other cities that fell victim to the violence perpetrated by the same violent extremists.

It is, therefore, the conviction of my Government that the threat of international terrorism should be addressed with full participation of all peace loving nations through effective international, regional and sub-regional cooperation. Taking into account compacting terrorism that the fight against terrorism takes place within the framework of respect for all the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, our government specifically appeals for the help and cooperation of the international community.

Somaliland has fought piracy in its waters. There has not been one single piracy case in the territorial waters of Somaliland. In fact, we have caught pirates at

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least three times in Somaliland and tried them in our courts. They were sentenced up to 20 years.

Now, we have finalized successfully, the Voter Registration in all six regions of the Republic of Somaliland, thanks to the international community, donor countries including Great Britain for their significant financial, material and moral support to the democratization process in our country.

We planned to hold our second round of Presidential Elections on March 29. However, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) has recently announced that the elections would not be held as planned due to technical related matters.

In that regard, and after series of consultations with the political parties, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced a delay of 91 days, which starts on the March 2 2009, in other words elections will take place on May 31 of this year.

As I stated earlier, my Government has successfully held series of expensive and exhausting elections with fair and transparent results in the past.

Today, my Government expresses its full commitment in holding free and fair elections on the announced date, once again. Additionally, I assure the continuation of successful nation building process of the Republic of Somaliland.

Finally, I earnestly request from this distinguished audience to support the just cause of Somaliland. With that note Ladies and Gentlemen, I sincerely thank all of you for your attendance and patience.

May God bless you all.