

Expectations of the London Conference by Humanitarian and Development Actors Operating in Somalia

11 May 2017

The London Conference on Somalia presents a massive opportunity to galvanise international support for Somalia and to respond to the devastating humanitarian and development needs of the fragile peace and security situation that face Somalia and the Somali people -especially women and children including those with disabilities.

To ensure that the Conference is a success and brings out the desired results for the Somali people, the Somalia NGO Consortium members recommend that the conference focus on the following:

Averting a famine in Somalia, and protecting children and women - The humanitarian situation is deteriorating at an alarming pace and the risk of famine in 2017 persists. Over 6.2 million people are in need of assistance and more than 615,000 people have been displaced as of April 21st 2017, the majority of them being women and children including those with disabilities. Over 22,000 cases of Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD)/Cholera have been reported since the beginning of 2017. Over 3,800 cases of measles have been reported. The conference should commit to ensure that the much needed resources to deal with the situation are given, as well as creating a mechanism that will support the already existing structures to deal with the outbreaks.

Concerns over the physical safety of the displaced, gender-based violence, recruitment and use of children by armed forced or armed groups, unaccompanied/separated children, etc. are all on the rise, in particular in areas with high concentration of newly displaced such as Baidoa and Mogadishu and eastern parts of Northern Somalia.

It is imperative that the focus is on humanitarian response and averting famine and that armed conflict is not escalated in the current environment. Reports of upcoming military offensives in the country are concerning as past experience shows that military offensives not only make it harder for people to reach but also create more displacement. The verge of a famine is not a good time to start a military offensive.

Vibrant civil society is key for a progressive society – In spite of being a major stakeholder, civil society including women’s rights organisations has been a missing component in many steps of the 2014- 2016 Somali Compact which was signed in Brussels in September 2013. While some positive steps have been made, much more still needs to be done to increase civil society involvement in the National Development Plan (NDP) process and in setting the agenda for humanitarian assistance, development and peace. We therefore urge all actors to uphold the principles of the enshrined in the New Deal for engagement in fragile states by supporting genuine, transparent and effective participation of civil society by giving space to civil society, men and women to actively get involved in the implementation of the NDP from all Somali regions and in all stages of the process.

Further support is needed for accelerated socio-economic stabilisation, the provision of basic services and livelihoods in Somalia through increased planning and investment in development and facilitating the voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in line with the National Development Plan.

International support is essential, but Somalis should set the agenda - The role of international actors needs to be carefully considered and managed. Somali state building and peacebuilding should be Somali-led, with international actors in a supporting role. Much of the work conducted in Somalia whether humanitarian, development or state building, would be impossible without substantial financial and technical investment by an array of international actors. However, the strategic objectives of external actors involved in Somali politics, security and development should be secondary to the aspirations and needs of the Somali women, men, and children. Somalia's international partners must not impose externally driven deadlines or conditions on the delicate political processes that Somali leaders and people are engaged in.

Humanitarian response must be linked with early recovery and longer term resilience initiatives Somalis have been living in a situation of long-term vulnerability to recurring climate related disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, market disruptions and price fluctuations, conflict over resources during times of scarcity and all of this is often exacerbated by conflict. As well as urgent assistance at times of emergency, they therefore require support to build their long-term resilience to the threats they face. This requires consistent support to on-going and new resilience initiatives focusing on building livelihood viability, improving preparedness and contingency resources, improving the natural resource base and supporting government and community social response capability. There is therefore a need to invest in recovery and resilience and make long term developmental investments that would promote economic growth and livelihoods and reduce the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance over time.

Peace and security mean different things to people based on their experiences and needs - the conference and what it needs to achieve must be grounded in the realities of local people and specific attention should be paid to understanding the realities of women and children on the ground and how their rights could be improved and protected. Somali women continue to face grave harms in the course of their lives, including domestic violence, sexual assault and forceful retaliation for promoting women's rights or participating politically. Internally displaced women and girls are particularly at risk of rape and sexual violence by armed actors, including government soldiers and militias. Women with disabilities are twice as likely, and girls with disabilities are up to four times more likely, to be affected by violence than their peers without disabilities. Greater investments are needed to ensure that all sectors of Somali society recognise the rights of women and the political, social and intellectual value that they bring. Greater justice and security as well as implementation of relevant laws on prevention of gender-based violence is similarly required to protect women, and to ensure that perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence no longer benefit from the impunity conferred by inadequate justice and policing systems, Holistic actions is needed to redress Social discrimination, inequalities and denial from services mainly affecting culturally discriminated minorities and people with especial needs.

The National Development Plan has a strong approach to addressing the root causes of conflict and violence. These approaches must likewise put serious political will and investment into youth focused inclusive governance, equitable service provision and civic society strengthening.

Galvanising support for the National Development Plan: The conference should reiterate continued support for the new National Development Plan (NDP). This is the first development plan of its kind since 1986 and shows the desire of the Federal Government of Somalia to adopt a development-oriented approach. This is welcome and must accompany continuing support to meet on-going humanitarian and development needs. For a better outcome of the conference, a position should be developed on how to address support for the developmental and peace objectives of the NDP that will not compromise activities in areas held by Non State armed groups. This is by promoting systems and structures that promote crosscutting development across the whole of Somalia. The conference should consider what part of the

current “humanitarian case load” can begin to be classified as developmental, and which would be better addressed through instruments of social protection, reintegration or basic services (health, education, water, or labour) strengthening local markets to make more food available and accessible by local communities; and building linkages between local interests (i.e. community) served by NGOs and their engagement to the Regional / District planning processes and implementation.

Working together effectively to respond to the threat of famine and consequent mass displacement - Since November 2016, 3,000 people a day in Somalia are being forced to abandon their homes in search of water and food. This is the highest displacement level since the 2011 famine. More than 187,000 people have been displaced in March alone within Somalia due to the drought, bringing the total number to more than 615,000 since November 2016 with the majority of the displaced moving to urban areas such as Baidoa and Mogadishu. The current influx of refugees and IDPs compound an already dire situation with more than 1.1 million protracted IDPs and almost 1 million refugees in the region, who have very limited access to durable solutions to end their displacement. Humanitarian and development actors, both Somali and international, must engage in joint planning and identify collective outcomes under the leadership of the government and support the newly created Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management and other regional disaster management institutions in the respective Somalia regional states, through capacity-building. Human resource capacity to focus on longer term planning activities in the early stages of displacement must be increased through the engagement of development experts such as urban planners, experts in local government and community driven development to support government capacity. Once again, this has the potential to become a regional displacement crisis and needs to be addressed on priority basis.

This Conference also has the opportunity to take forward the commitments made during the IGAD Heads of State Summit on Somali refugees. In its communiqué, IGAD also references support for the NDP which can be achieved by supporting and strengthening security and stability.

State formation and coordination needs to be achieved on priority basis to improve accountability, transparency and efficiency - The process of State formation has established new Administrations in addition to the already existing ones. This has come with its own challenges as a result of unresolved Constitutional matters which provide little clarity on the relation between the FGS and its Regional States. The Constitution of the FGS still remains to date a provisional constitution. There is a need for support to the various levels of government in the process of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of line ministries, Regional States and other institutions that are involved in management, coordination and monitoring of humanitarian and development assistance. This should be in all regions and arms of their governments.

Access is key therefore negotiations and dialogue on reaching inaccessible areas should be done. - Large portions of the country remain under the control of Non State Armed Actors. Security and humanitarian access are major challenges across Somalia. There are on-going blockades by Non State Armed Actors in some of the worst drought-affected areas of Somalia, severely affecting the passage of humanitarian supplies to these areas and preventing people from leaving them in search of humanitarian assistance. The military offensives launched by the Somalia National Armed Forces/AMISOM have not translated into safe and predictable humanitarian access to populations in need. Moreover, money demanded by armed actors at checkpoints is increasing the cost of trade, with a significant knock-on impact for the living costs of ordinary Somalis.

Statement endorsed by the following organisations



End notes

- The Somalia NGO Consortium is a network of over 80 Local and International NGOs working in Somalia and Somaliland.
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