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**PUNTLAND STATE OF  
SOMALIA**

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**Statement by the President of Puntland State of Somalia  
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**Presented at Indian Council on World Affairs  
Sapru House  
New Delhi, India  
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## **Current Situation in Somalia: Opportunities, Challenges and Issues Related to Piracy**

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Good afternoon,

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to address the Indian Council on World Affairs at Sapru House, here in New Delhi, to exchange views and share information about Somalia. This is an important occasion that once again underlines the commitment of Government and people of the Republic of India to assist in finding a lasting peaceful settlement to the Somali crisis.

At the onset, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Indian Government for the invitation and warm welcome to India. Thanks also for India's contribution to help alleviate the plight of the Somali people through security and humanitarian assistance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to portray an overview of the situation in Somalia, a country that has been torn apart and fragmented like a broken mirror by a protracted conflict. It is our noble duty to reunite the Somali nation-state after 20 years of state collapse.

My presentation will focus on three main points: 1) a brief account of Puntland; 2) opportunities and challenges in Somalia; and 3) our experiences in the fight against piracy and extremism.

### **In brief: Puntland State of Somalia**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Local constituencies established Puntland State of Somalia in 1998 at a Grand Constitutional Conference. Puntland people decided to be part of Somalia under a Federal Constitution, which addresses the fundamental principles of federalism. The Transitional Federal Charter, upon which today's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is based on, later sanctioned federalism for Somalia in 2004.

More than 3 million people live in Puntland. This includes over one million Puntland natives who returned to ancestral homelands in Puntland after fleeing persecution and clan fighting in major towns of southern Somalia, mainly Mogadishu and Kismayo. Furthermore, Puntland hosts over 400,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) scattered across Puntland, fleeing from southern conflict. It is an economic and social burden hosting such huge IDP population, who share with the host community access to employment, water, education and health. Puntland respects the human rights of all people. However, there are some subversive elements disguising as IDPs who are involved in activities to destabilize Puntland, including acts of terrorism.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Geographically, Puntland is located in northeastern Somalia with coastlines along the Indian Ocean to the east, and the Gulf of Aden to the north. Somalia has Africa's longest coastline with 3,300km, out of which 1,300km is located in Puntland coast, where over 22,000 commercial vessels pass through each year. The geographic location has made Puntland particularly vulnerable to piracy attacks.

Puntland State has held three successful elections in a peaceful manner. On 18 April 2012, Puntland adopted its State Constitution by public convention under the emerging federal system for Somalia. The new constitution paves the way for the formation of political parties and competitive democratic elections in Puntland.

Benefiting from stability, Puntland State has embarked to develop its natural resources, including exploration for oil and minerals. As security and development reinforce each other, we need international support to strengthen our security institutions and to advance peace-building development projects. It is noteworthy to mention that Puntland needs to develop its human resources sector, which is crucial to alleviate poverty, address unemployment and contribute to improving security.

### **Opportunities and Challenges in Somalia**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

South-central Somalia has been plagued by contagious violence, warlordism and general lawlessness since the state collapse of 1991. Although African Union peacekeepers aiding TFG forces have made steady gains against Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group in Somalia known as Al Shabaab, the terrorists still control many areas in south-central Somalia and routinely mount terrorist and guerilla attacks in areas under the control of TFG/AMISOM forces.

We commend the role of African Union peacekeepers in Somalia, as well as Ethiopian forces engaging in operations against Al Shabaab terrorists, as security of the whole region is inter-related.

Moreover, progress in improving security and rule of law should be matched with state-building efforts and development programs to restore stability and national governance in Somalia. Since 6 September 2011, Puntland Government has played a key role in advancing the UN-backed Roadmap peace process by hosting two National Constitutional Conferences (Garowe Principles I and II). Puntland is committed to guide, support and participate in the process to end the transition by 20

August 2012 and for Somalia to have a new Federal Constitution that is legitimate and satisfies the people's aspirations for peace and development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the past, Somalia had a highly centralized system of government where power, resources and service provision was all concentrated in the capital Mogadishu and its surroundings, thereby neglecting vast regions of Somalia. Federalism is the only viable political system that can reunite the fragmented nation, promote peace, reconciliation and heal past wounds, encourage good governance by decentralization of power, resources, and functions of government.

No part of Somalia is immune from this terrorist threat, but we will never be discouraged to sustain our hard-earned peace and stability in Puntland. Our Government is committed to consolidating security, advancing socio-economic development, and administering peace and justice across Puntland. Our constituencies fully support Puntland Government's efforts to fight against terrorism and piracy.

### **Major challenges: Piracy, terrorism and need for development**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The state collapse of Somalia in 1991 led to the complete breakdown of security institutions in the country. The security vacuum has led to the proliferation of arms, and the subsequent emergence of the twin threats of piracy and terrorism. Originally, Somali coastal communities became victims of the Illegal Unreported Unregulated Fishing (IUUF), particularly in Puntland State whose coastal community is traditionally known as Somalia's fishermen.

The violation of Somali waters by foreign trawlers expectedly triggered a reaction of armed resistance by Somali fishermen, whose livelihoods was disrupted by the illegal fishing fleets. Over time, payment of ransom by the foreign trawlers to the poor fishermen of Somalia encouraged the escalation of pirate attacks to current levels. The fishermen-turned-pirates then targeted unarmed commercial vessels, inhumanly taking hostages for ransom and disrupting international maritime trade routes. In addition to human suffering of the hostages, piracy activities in the region have impacted the cost of goods, as freight and insurance premiums increased, thereby adversely impacting local economies in Puntland and Somalia, generally.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my sympathy to the families of hostages taken by Somali pirates. Our Government is committed to do its utmost to safely release hostages held by pirates in our area, although most pirates have relocated outside of Puntland jurisdiction. Puntland Government strongly and consistently rejects ransom payments as the primary factor fuelling piracy attacks.

We believe that expensive naval patrols off the coast of Somalia cannot eradicate piracy alone, as long as the world continues to neglect the domestic conditions that produce piracy. The costs and legal ramifications associated with piracy prosecutions

in foreign countries is another obstacle. These are problems that could be overcome by pursuing a new comprehensive approach to tackling piracy in full partnership with the Somali people and their institutions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Puntland has been able to eradicate piracy activities from key coastal towns, including the former piracy hub of Eyl. Puntland has deployed anti-piracy forces (the Puntland Maritime Police Force) to Eyl and we plan to deploy PMPF forces to other coastal towns in Puntland to eradicate piracy. We send our appreciations to United Arab Emirates donors for contributing to PMPF training in order to combat piracy. In 2010, Puntland Parliament passed Somalia's first-ever Anti-Piracy Law and currently a piracy-transfer prison is under construction in Puntland.

We need international support to explore alternative livelihoods for coastal communities affected by piracy and illegal fishing, such as vocational training schools, job opportunities for youth, and reviving fishing industry activities disrupted by piracy and illegal fishing. This combined model of community development programs and economic and military means presents a workable solution. We believe assistance and a working partnership between Puntland institutions and the international community, particularly the Indian Ocean region, will be an efficient option to finally defeat piracy.

Thank you and God bless.