

# Report on peace-making initiative in Somaliland

April 1995–January 1997

## Background

In a national conference organized by the Somali National Movement (SNM) in Burao, Somaliland, Somalilanders took the momentous decision, on 18 May 1991, to withdraw from the union with Somalia and to reinstate the Republic of Somaliland that pre-existed the union with Somalia. Since that time there has been relative peace in the country except two setbacks in Burao and Berbera that were quickly brought under control.

That was the situation until 15 November 1994 and 28 March 1995 when violent armed conflicts erupted in Hargeisa and Burao respectively. Many people were either killed or wounded in the conflicts and significant property destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of the populations of Burao and Hargeisa districts were either internally displaced or driven to seek refuge mainly in Ethiopia but also in some other countries.

The conflict was mainly between the Government and the Garhajis fighting faction (i.e. from the Idagale & Habar Yonis subclans). The outbreak of the civil conflict was not really complete surprise because trouble had been brewing in both Hargeisa and Burao since the Borama National Congress in 1993 when the 2-year SNM regime and the presidency of Mr. Abdirahman (Tuur) Ahmed Ali came to an end and Mr Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal was elected as the new President of the Republic of Somaliland.

The cause of the conflict was assumed mainly to do with dispute about political power sharing, but no doubt it was also complicated by clan-based petty politics. Anyway it is not for the Peace Committee to give specific cause(s) of the conflict nor to apportion blame to any one particular side.

It was against this background that the peace-making initiative which forms the subject matter of this report was launched.

## Preparatory phase: April–August 1995

1. Some Somalilander individuals abroad were very much distressed by the sad events in Somaliland. These Somalilanders held meetings in the countries they lived in (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Ethiopia, Djibouti, the Netherlands, etc.) and discussed how best they could help in bringing the civil conflict to an end. These activities culminated in an enlarged conference in London, UK, 29–30 April 1995. About 80 Somalilander delegates from Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Holland, Sweden, United State of America and the United Kingdom participated in the conference.

One of the main objectives of the conference was to define a practical role that like-minded Somalilanders abroad could play in restoring peace and stability in Somaliland.

2. Among the urgent recommendations of the conference were (a) to issue an urgent call for cease-fire, (b) to establish a Council for Peace & Development-Somaliland and (c) to send a peace mission to Somaliland.

During the conference the following urgent call for cease-fire was issued and was also broadcast on the BBC Somali Service:

"The conference, saddened by the situation in Somaliland, call upon the Government and the people:

- To take immediate steps to stop forthwith the current conflict which will achieve nothing but destruction of life and property and from which none will benefit and all will be losers;
- To settle any issues of dispute through peaceful means in a responsible manner and to put national interest before all other interests;
- To implement policies and procedures accepted and supported by all regions and designed to maintain peace, stability and harmony among the people in the country;
- For Somalilanders abroad to refrain from any direct or indirect actions that might aggravate the conflict in Somaliland and to support morally and/or materially all well-intentioned activities in peace-making in Somaliland."

3. A small group from the UK delegates were temporarily nominated to act as the Standing Committee of the newly established Council for Peace & Development-Somaliland. The Standing Committee was entrusted with the task of, among other things, following up the implementation of the recommendation for sending a peace mission to Somaliland. The task entailed naming the members of the peace mission and notifying them. Also fund-raising for the peace mission was part of the task.

It was decided that resources for the peace mission should only come from the Somalilander diaspora. This was because it was perceived that external financial support for the peace mission might somehow compromise the integrity of the peace mission.

However, after some determined efforts, it proved difficult to raise anything like sufficient money. This was partly explained by the fact that the targeted people were themselves refugees with nothing much to spare. It was unfortunately also true that the conflict in the country affected Somalilanders abroad in different ways and this militated against their taking a common position to denounce the conflict and contribute to its solution.

As time was running short, nominated members of the peace mission who could afford to finance themselves were requested to proceed to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was the rendezvous for all the peace mission members from different countries in Europe, Canada, America and Ethiopia. It then came to light that some members could hardly manage by themselves. But because of the seriousness of the mission, some members somehow secured their air tickets. Others were enabled with what little money raised to travel to Addis Ababa.

## **Peace committee members & consultations Addis Ababa: September – November 1995**

1. For relative ease of accessibility to the disputing parties, Addis Ababa was chosen as the assembling and starting point. Also there was a large Somalilander community in Addis Ababa, many of them with first hand information about the conflict.
2. The draft guideline for the field work was revised in Addis Ababa. The problem of resources for the peace mission was further discussed. It became obvious that the previous position of not seeking funds from external sources was no longer tenable if the peace mission was to take off. Thus although the focus was on potential Somalilander contributors, few other sources were also approached out of necessity. Details of the resources mobilized and their sources are given in section H.

The peace mission was renamed as the Peace Committee for Somaliland and it was considered to be an ad hoc committee. The number of members was increased to 15 (fifteen). This was to accommodate some suggestions raised by some members who attended one or the other of the meetings held outside London, as explained in section B. The changes made to the guideline was agreed to by the Council for Peace & Development-Somaliland.

Chairman and Vice Chairman were also selected and the final composition of the Peace Committee for Somaliland was as listed below:

1. Mr Hassan Megag Samater (Denmark) Chairman
2. Mr Abdi Hassan Bunni (Holland) Vice Chairman
3. Mr Abdi Hussein Issa (Canada) Member
4. Mr Mohamed Hashi Abdi (Canada) Member
5. Dr Abdullahi Deria Abdi (England) Member
6. Mr Faisal Ali Hussein (Finland) Member
7. Dr Hussein A Bulhan (USA) Member
9. Mr Rashid Sh. Abdillahi (Ethiopia) Member
10. Mr Mohamoud A Ali Beyr (Ethiopia) Member
11. Mr Adan Musa Jibril (Ethiopia) Member
12. Mr Abdi Jama Hassan (Ethiopia) Member
13. Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah (Ethiopia) Member
14. Haji Osman Haji Jama (Gashamo, Ethiopia) Member
15. Mr Barre Hassan (Hargeisa, Somaliland) Member

All members of the Committee agreed to the conditions under which they were participating in the Peace Committee. These conditions were that the members were individual volunteers acting in their personal capacities and representing no political or other organizations, government or clan(s); that they were neutral to the conflict and would hear all views without prejudice; that they had no hidden agenda or political aims beyond the objective of achieving peaceful solution of the conflict in Somaliland. In the absence of secure funding, the members were supposed to fend for themselves whenever necessary. The members also agreed that, whenever appropriate, the Peace Committee would employ the traditional ways by which the Somalilanders usually used to settle their differences. The Peace Committee also decided that once its mandate was achieved, the Committee would cease to exist and its members would no longer speak or act in the name of the Peace Committee.

The mandate of the Peace Committee was limited to three specific points:

- to contact both sides of the conflict and urge them to declare unconditional cease-fire, latest by 10/12/1995;
- to urge both sides to agree to peaceful dialogue with a view to resolving the conflict;
- to prepare the final report on the Peace Mission.

The Peace Committee, having reached consensus on the composition of and the criteria for the membership of the committee and the terms of reference of the Peace Mission, turned its attention to three activities that were carried out concurrently – i.e. to brief the Somalilander community and certain foreign embassies in Addis Ababa and the Ethiopian government about the Peace Committee for Somaliland and its objectives.

3. Since significant number of military men, politicians, traditional and religious leaders from areas in Somaliland affected by the conflict were in Addis Ababa, it was opportune moment to hold a series of discussions with and seminars for the Somalilander community.

On all occasions, the Peace Committee had to explain its origin, neutrality, independence and what was that it was trying to achieve. The Peace Committee had also to quell any expectations, on the part of the Somalilanders, that the Peace Committee was there to dish out largesse to all and sundry in order to carry favour with anybody or to buy peace!

It was important to make this abundantly clear to discourage anyone playing for financial reward to attempt to con the Peace Committee into following time-wasting and pointless leads claimed to be the key to resolving the conflict.

The Peace Committee established its bone fide credentials and developed, in the course of time, close rapport with the Somalilander community in Addis Ababa. The discussions that the Committee had with the Somalilanders became more relaxed and people were readily forthcoming with their opinions. Some of them participated in the meeting that was held in Addis Ababa in April 1995 (see section B) and were already pro-active for peace. In this regard, Mr Abdillahi Degaweyne and Professor Suleiman Ahmed Guleid deserve special mention.

As expected, views expressed openly in the discussions did not, in some cases, reflect those held privately as demonstrated in subsequent private conversations. The Peace Committee was bound to listen to all views expressed regardless of what they meant to convey. Some Somalilanders saw the conflict as insoluble, in view of the irreconcilable demands of the opposing parties. Others saw it as a futile struggle that, with goodwill on both sides and with minor compromises here and there, could have been easily settled. In between these pessimistic and optimistic positions lay a variety of views. The discussions were not meant to result in concrete agreements. However, they were expected to serve as a means of promoting positive attitude to peace and this was achieved to a significant extent. Since the Somalilanders are perpetually on the move across the border between Ethiopia and Somaliland, news filtering through created favourable impression among the Somaliland public about the Peace Committee.

In general, the Peace Committee was satisfied with the way the dialogue with the Somalilanders in Addis Ababa went and the awareness and enlightenment engendered. The experience also gave the Peace Committee needed insight into the shape of things to come.

4. The Federal Government of Ethiopia was already in the picture about the peace mission because some of the members of the Peace Committee from Europe obtained their entry visas from Ethiopian embassies in Europe on the grounds of their participation in the peace mission. However, to fully brief the government about the peace mission, the Peace Committee called on His Excellency, the Minister of the Foreign Affairs, Mr Seyoum Mesfin. He warmly welcomed the Peace Committee. The Committee then apprised the minister of how the peace mission came into being and the objectives to be achieved. The Minister was informed that the peace mission was concerned only with the conflict in Somaliland and the Committee had no other agenda. The Minister pointed out the interdependence, with close family links, of ethnic Somali-Ethiopians in Region 5 and the Somalilanders (mainly nomads) who traditionally settle in this region and therefore how events in Somaliland or Region 5 could impact on both communities. Hence, continue the Minister, his government's sincere vested interest in peace in both Somaliland and Region 5. With hundreds of thousands of Somaliland refugee in Ethiopia in mind, the Minister saw the peace mission as humanitarian effort worthy of support. He indicated his Government's support for the peace mission and added that assistance, as appropriate and feasible, to the Peace Committee would be considered and wished the Peace Committee every success.

As a result of the above discussions, the Peace Committee members who needed them were granted 3-month multiple entry visas for Ethiopia. Other support provided by the Ethiopian government is reflected in the appropriate places in the report. It was the government's goodwill shown which could not be expressed in material terms that impressed the Peace Committee most.

At this point, the Peace Committee wishes to put on record its deep felt gratitude to the important personalities named below for their sustained moral support, constant encouragement and being instrumental in many actions that made possible valuable assistance to the Peace Committee on various occasions in Ethiopia:

Dr Abdulmajid Hussein Minister of Transport/Telecom  
Dr Shamsudin Minister of Natural Resources  
Mr Abdulkarim Guleid Member of the Federal Parliament

Also while the Peace Committee was still in Addis Ababa, The above-named arranged for the Committee to meet His Excellency the President of Region 5 (Somali State), Mr Eid Dahir, who was on official visit in Addis Ababa. The President expressed his full support for the peace mission and invited the Peace Committee to call on him whenever the Committee happened to be in Jigjiga, the capital of Region 5.

5. In Addis Ababa, the Peace Committee had discussions with the embassies of Djibouti, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Sweden and Italy. The sole purpose of contacting the embassies was to inform them about the peace mission and its objectives and to make clear to them that the peace mission was limited to the conflict in Somaliland. The Peace Committee neither asked for nor received any financial support from any of the embassies contacted or from any other embassy in Addis Ababa for that matter. All the embassies, without exception, were impressed with the novel idea of independent and neutral Somaliland volunteers mounting such peace mission and they were all supportive of the initiative. The Djibouti embassy granted Peace Committee members who needed them 3-month multiple entry visas for Djibouti.

6. The Peace Committee followed up and obtained financial support (US\$ 5000.00) promised earlier by the UNDP/Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia, based in Addis Ababa to Somalilanders

who (as mentioned in section B) held a meeting early in April 1995 in Addis Ababa. In this connection, the Peace Committee wishes to thank Mr Matt Bryden for his valuable assistance to the Committee.

7. The Peace Committee started to make arrangements for the field work and to travel to the respective headquarters of the opposing parties.

It was thought that if the whole Peace Committee contacted one side of the conflict first, that might provoke negative reaction from the other side.

The situation was as sensitive as that. So the Peace Committee decided to split into two groups – one group to the Government side and the other to the opposition side.

For logistical reasons, for example, the difficult terrain to travel over land in Region 5 and uncertainty about the availability of adequate and reliable land transport, the number in group A was kept small.

At this juncture, it would be in order to mention two members of the Peace Committee – Mr Barre Hassan Warsame and Haji Osman Haji Jama. They were the only two members with personal experience of the conflict and who lived in areas affected by the conflict. They were both respected personalities among their respective communities. They were knowledgeable about the intricacies of the conflict. Because of this, each one brought his experience and knowledge about the situation to bear upon the work of the group he was in.

Again, to avoid any possible misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation of what the Peace Committee was urging on the sides of the conflict to accept, it was decided to give the Peace Committee proposals in writing (in Somali) to both sides in identical letters so that they would be reading from similar scripts. Thirteen members of the Peace Committee (including the Chairman and the Vice Chairman) were then present to sign the letters. The English version of the letter is reproduced below:

The Peace Committee for Somaliland  
(an independent & neutral committee of volunteers)

ADDIS ABABA: 25/11/95

TO: The President, To: The Garhajis Council Republic of Somaliland

To: The Chairman, To: The clans & Public of  
Council of Elders Somaliland

To: The Chairman  
Council of Elected members

**Subject: ceasefire**

WHEREAS we took upon ourselves to be an independent nation that must protect its people and country but, unfortunately, have been plagued by many problems that have prevented any progress expected to be made since reinstating the Republic of Somaliland;

WHEREAS It is a great tragedy that our forces who liberated our country from the dictatorial regime of Sayid Barre are to-day facing each other in shooting civil conflict, killing and/or wounding many and destroying property;

In the light of the above, the Peace Committee saddened by the current conflict in Somaliland, respectfully and urgently request that:

1(a) The Government of Somaliland declares unconditional cease-fire, latest by 10/12/95 and accepts peaceful dialogue to resolve the conflict;

(b) The Councils of parliament actively support the Government in step 1(a) above;

(c) The Garhajis Council declares unconditional cease-fire, latest by 10/12/95 and accepts peaceful dialogue to resolve the conflict;

2. The clans and public of Somaliland – including the intellectuals, women associations, youth organizations, community and religious leaders, merchants, etc. – declare their support and demonstrate for immediate cease-fire and peaceful settlement of the conflict.

8. At this stage it should be stated that it was not the intention of the peace Committee to engage in expounding the ramifications of what the conflict was about nor to mediate between the sides. The Committee adopted this position lest its neutrality might be put in jeopardy. All that the Peace Committee was aiming for was for the two sides to agree to the Peace Committee's proposals put to them and then meet face-to-face to sort out their differences. The Committee was willing to help the sides in the initial steps, e.g. providing reliable channel of communication between the sides. The Committee was also ready to chair the hoped-for peace-making meeting and provide small secretariat to assist the meeting.

The Peace Committee's reluctance to involve itself in the ramifications of the conflict did not mean that the Committee was oblivious to what each side was saying about the conflict. It might therefore be of general interest to briefly indicate, as objectively as possible, how each side portrayed the conflict situation around the time (November 1995) that the Peace Committee was about to start its field work.

8.1 In general terms, the Government publicly maintained that the opposition (i.e. the Garhajis fighting faction) was federalist, fighting on behalf of anti-Somaliland group (i.e. Messrs. Abdirahman-Tuur Ahmed Ali, Jama-Yare Mohamed Ghalib, Hassan Adan Wadaadeed and others) based in Mogadishu and in league with Aideed Faction in Somalia and as such the opposition was bent to destroy the Somaliland State. In support of its claim, the Government pointed to the Mogadishu group's public acknowledgement of their support for the opposition. The Government saw the opposition as a clan rebellion which had to be dealt with accordingly.

8.2 The position taken by the opposition publicly was that the Government breached the National Charter, exceeded its authority and, in the eyes of the opposition, rendered itself illegal and therefore the opposition would not recognize it. The opposition saw the Government forces which faced its forces as illegally constituted militia that enabled all the clans in Somaliland to gang up on the opposition. The opposition's declared solution to the conflict was for all the Somaliland clans to get together (without the involvement of the Government) in a peace-making conference to first settle any disputes between clans and second to deliberate on the future of Somaliland. It is to be noted that by Government the opposition meant all the three Councils (i.e. Council of Elders, Council of Elected members and Council of Ministers).

8.3 It was instructive to see how the dimensions of the conflict, over time, changed so much that they then bore little resemblance to what the conflict was supposed to be about originally. This complex situation eventually produced an atmosphere of suspicion, if not disbelief, about any peace moves. How edgy both sides were was soon revealed.

As if to rubbish the Peace Committee, just before the Committee had the chance to meet both sides of the conflict, both sides publicly expressed their reservations about the Peace Committee by questioning its impartiality. Each side of the conflict accused the Committee of being in league with the other side. Of course, there was no shred of truth in these allegations. Also their accusations tended to cancel one another out and, in the event, the Peace Committee was not daunted.

There was a lot at stake and the Peace Committee could not allow itself to be put off by what could be considered as public posturing. Unperturbed, the two groups of the Peace Committee set off to go to their respective destinations. For communication purposes, since it was practically impossible for the two groups to keep in touch in the field, it was arranged that if either group had information for the other group (and indeed for the Somalilanders at large to keep them informed of what progress the Peace Committee was making in Somaliland) it would, whenever possible, contact the BBC Somali Service for an interview or statement to make. For that matter, both groups made a point of regularly listening to the BBC Somali Service. (NB not a plug for the BBC!).

### **Field work: December 1995 – January 1997**

#### **Group B: 26/11 – 20/12/1995**

1. Because of limited resources, on 26/11/1995, half of the group left Addis Ababa, by air, for Hargeisa with stopover in Djibouti to brief prominent Somalilanders in Djibouti. The group also briefed the French and American embassies as was done with other embassies in Addis Ababa. On arrival in Hargeisa, Somaliland, the group was enthusiastically welcomed by the public. Few days later, the other half of the group who left Addis Ababa by road also arrived in Hargeisa.

Soon Hargeisa started buzzing with news of the group's arrival and the public showed unmistakable positive reaction to the peace mission. Prominent personalities went even further and publicly urged the Government to embrace the peace initiative. No doubt the Government took its cue from the public desire for peace because there was a change of heart in the Government's attitude. Within a few days, the President invited the group for a working lunch. Discussions started and the Peace Committee's written peace proposals were handed over to the President. The President stated in general terms that the government was for peace but the subject had to be further discussed.

In the meantime, the group met with both the Councils of Elders (Guurti) and Elected Members and both Councils expressed their support for the Peace Mission. Later the President formed, from the three Councils, a small committee chaired by the Vice President to continue discussions with group B.

2. In parallel with its discussions with the Government committee, group B continued to meet the public in order to maintain the peace momentum.

It so happened that on one occasion, the President was addressing the public in Khayriya (public place) in Hargeisa and in his speech he briefly mentioned in a non-committal manner that the Government was willing to discuss solutions to the conflict.

This was not at all enough as an answer to the Peace Committee's peace proposals. Still, to capitalize on any positive move, no matter how small, helpful to peace restoration in the country, group B broadcast on BBC Somali Service that the Government accepted peace discussions.

From then up to 20/12/95 group B, apart from its discussions with the public, was urging the Government to announce publicly its acceptance of the Peace Proposals but the Government continued to prevaricate. Since group A was to rejoin group B in Hargeisa on 21/12/95, it would be convenient to give here an account of group A's activities up to 20/12/95.

### **Group A: 30/11/ – 20/12/95**

1. Group A left Addis Ababa on 30/11/95 by air for Dire Dawa to stop one night there and meet important politicians and military men from the opposition. Those contacted assured group A their full support for the peace mission. Group A continued its travel by road to Jigjiga (transport by courtesy of Region 5). The group stayed in Jigjiga for about 10 days (board & lodging again by courtesy of Region 5). There was a large Somalilander community in Jigjiga, a significant proportion of which belonged to the opposition clans (i.e. Idagale & Habar Yonis – the two together forming Garhajis). Some of the Idagale elders were at one time or another members of the Idagale clan council and they were in touch with the fighters in the front. Group A held a number of discussions with groups and individuals of this Somalilander community to get the feel of how this community perceived the conflict and peace prospects. Another reason why group A spent some time in Jigjiga was that, as arranged with group B while in Addis Ababa, it was hoped that the Government would take the initiative to announce its agreement to the peace proposals first so that group A would have something to offer when it contacted the Garhajis Council.

The Somalilander community in Jigjiga was supportive of the peace initiative. It must be recorded here that on several occasions when group A or the Peace Committee was in Jigjiga, Mr Abdillahi Abdi Musa (Bakayle) – an important personality and businessman in Jigjiga – went out of his way to give valuable support to the Peace Committee. While in Jigjiga, group A also briefed the Region 5 Authority about the peace mission.

2. According to the information group A was getting, it seemed that the Garhajis Council was an ad hoc council, periodically drawn from the individual Idagale & Habar Yonis councils to take decisions on certain issues. So, to alert the Garhajis community leaders to the impending arrival of group A, Haji Osman Haji Jama ( see about him in section C, point 7) was sent in advance to Daror – a stronghold of Garhajis. By this time group A was aware, through BBC Somali Service, the outwardly positive Government reaction to the peace proposals. Haji Osman reported Garhajis leaders' readiness to meet group A. Just about this time some Idagale personalities in Jigjiga voluntarily went ahead of group A to organize Idagale leaders in Camp Abokor (Idagale centre on the way to Daror) to have a meeting with group A.

3. Group A left Jigjiga for Daror on 11/12/95 (transport provided by Region 5) and stopped on the way at Camp Hashim (Arap clan centre) to meet Arap clan leaders who gave full

support to the peace mission. Their spokesmen included Messrs. Gayd Haji Nur Robleh, Omer Abdillahi Hussein and Aw Muhumed Guudle.

Group A stopped the night at Camp Abokor where it had fruitful discussions with the Idagale leaders who also supported the peace mission. Their spokesmen included Messrs. Ali Abdillahi Bane, Abdi Hashi Guleid and Moge Roble. At that time there were Somalilander refugees estimated at 32 000 in Camp Abokor – victims of the conflict. Some of them met by group A were rather militant and frustrated. Group A reached Daror on 12/12/95. It was alleged, on arrival, that the previous day a member of the Habar Yonis Council happened to be in Daror and he advised against the welcoming arrangements prepared for the group. The group was put up in a small military camp at the edge of the Daror village. Within less than an hour of arrival, the community leaders met group A under a tree. The discussions started by group A explaining the purpose of the peace mission. In reply, the spokesmen of the community leaders briefly stated that since they could not take decisions on the conflict, Group A would have to meet the Garhajis Council. Group A already knew who were the decision makers for Garhajis. The leaders were told that group A met community leaders in other places as a matter of courtesy and also to exchange views. The leaders' spokesmen included Messrs. Ibrahim Askar, Abdirahman Mohamed Ajab and Hussein Sa'mal.

Perhaps because of what was allegedly to have taken place in the village the previous day, the leaders were rather subdued, in marked contrast to community leaders met in Camp Abokor. Again there were estimated 45000 Somalilander refugees in Daror. Over the following few days, many of the community leaders came back to group A and this time warmly talked about the peace mission. At the same time they expressed their bitterness about the conflict – portraying Garhajis as the aggrieved party. Group A pointed out to the community leaders that all grievances of both sides of the conflict had to be sorted out in peace-making meetings and that was what the peace mission was about.

4. The question then was how, where and when to find the Garhajis Council. There was rumour that the Sultan of Idagale and the "acting" Sultan of Habar Yonis were in Odweyne (a 7-hour rough drive from Daror). The vehicle provided by Region 5 did not have permission to enter Somaliland – let alone in a conflict area. In spite of all this, group A was anxious to make some contact at least with some members of the Garhajis Council. So a member of group A left for Odweyne in a hired vehicle on 15/12/95. He met the Sultan of Idagale, Sultan Mohamed Sultan Abdulkadir and the "acting" Sultan of Habar Yonis, Mr Mohamed Nur Dirqeye, both of them members of their respective clan councils. Group A member explained to them the peace mission and handed them copies of the Peace Committee's peace proposals. He requested if a Garhajis Council could be made available in Odweyne or any other venue so that the rest of group A could come and meet the Council. The answer was negative, as both clans were in the process of reshuffling their clan councils.

The Idagale Sultan excused himself for about twenty minutes to discuss the peace proposals with some members of the Idagale clan Council then in Odweyne. On return, he stated that the proposals had to be put to a Garhajis Council. Also both of them returned the peace proposal document and refused to keep it. They stated that the Peace Committee could meet the Garhajis Council at some future date when both clans had completed the formation of their new clan councils. Group A member returned to Daror on the same day and briefed Group A.

The following day, 16/12/95, Group A left Daror for Jigjiga. Haji Osman was left in Daror to follow up developments there. Group A briefed the prominent Somalilander community in Jigjiga as well as the Region 5 Authority. Just about this time, the two Sultans who were met

in Odweyne broadcast on BBC Somali Service that Garhajis would not deal with Egal Administration and called on Somaliland clans to hold a national conference to resolve the conflict. Group A did not take the broadcast as closing the door, since it was not the first time the opposition made such statement. Instead, group A broadcast on BBC Somali Service an upbeat statement referring to the promise (vague though it was) that the Sultans made in Odweyne few days earlier and the Peace Committee's determination to follow up that promise.

Group A left Jigjiga for Hargeisa on 21/12/95 to rejoin Group B and reform the full Peace Committee for Somaliland. The land transport was provided by Region 5 Authority.

### **The Peace Committee: 21/12/95 – 9/2/96**

1. In Hargeisa, the two groups of the Peace Committee compared notes and took stock of progress made so far. In brief, The Peace Committee's assessment was that:

- the Peace Committee's activities generated sufficient public support for peace in the conflict areas visited;
- the indications were that the Government and the opposition, in spite of their denouncing each other publicly and making militant statements, were nevertheless amenable to accept settlement of the conflict;
- the desire for peace (on the part of the public) would gather momentum and sooner or later would weaken the resolve of both sides of the conflict to carry on with the conflict indefinitely;
- in the meantime, it was necessary, on the one hand, to keep up the public's interest in early peace and, on the other, to keep prodding both sides of the conflict into agreeing immediately to the peace proposals;
- the peace-making process in the country would probably be a long-drawn-out affair and patience and resources would be needed.

2. It was also a critical time for the Peace Committee. The Committee was desperately short of funds – in fact the Committee members hardly had money individually or collectively. Also some Committee members had to cut short their absences from their bases because either their travel documents were about to expire or there were some urgent personal matters to be attended to. As result, several members were excused, on genuine grounds including health, to return to their respective bases. However, an understanding was reached that, from then on, any member might return to his base whenever that became necessary but he might also come back and rejoin the Peace Committee whenever circumstances allowed him to do so. From that time onwards the number of the Peace Committee members in the field fluctuated. It was also considered necessary to have, at any one time, a critical mass of the Peace Committee members in Somaliland until the conflict was settled.

The Peace Committee held a series of meetings with the Government committee to urge them to speed up the government's public announcement of unequivocal and positive statement committing the Government to the peace proposals. But as days went by, it became apparent that the Government did not show the urgency with which the Peace Committee viewed the conflict situation. But also the Peace Committee did not want to stay in Hargeisa for too long lest it would be accused of being one-sided, no matter how unfounded.

Therefore, to be outside the sphere of influence of both the Government and the opposition, the Peace Committee decided to make Jigjiga as its base.

Jigjiga gives relatively easy access on land to both the Government and the opposition headquarters. One member, Barre Hassan Warsame (see about him in section C point 7) was to remain in Hargeisa to follow up developments.

3. The Peace Committee found itself in the unenviable position of approaching the Government committee for financial support. The alternative would have been for the Peace Committee to disband, with all the dashed hopes such step might have entailed. The Peace Committee received US \$10000.00 (ten thousand US Dollars). For the Peace Committee, it was really a case of the end justifying the means. The Committee never entertained that such support, though enabling the Peace Committee to continue its peace-making activities, would in any conceivable way influence its dealings with either party to the conflict – and hence recording this support publicly. It was not long, however, before the Peace Committee happened to be the guest of Sultan Mohamed Sultan Abdulkadir (a prominent opposition member) in Camp Abokor and this helped to put the Peace Committee's conscience at rest.

The Peace Committee returned to Jigjiga on 27/12/95 and continued to make contacts with the Somalilanders in town. The Authority of Region 5 were also briefed. This time, President Eid was present in Jigjiga and the Committee paid him a courtesy visit. In return, and as a follow-up of the standing invitation he extended to the Peace Committee in Addis Ababa, the President held a reception for the Committee and the discussions on the peace mission and progress made so far followed.

On 8/1/96 a member of the Peace Committee was sent to the Idagale area (Camp Abokor, Rabasso, Gashanka, etc.) to gauge the state of preparedness of Garhajis Council. He reported back that the Idagale Council was already in place but the Habar Yonis Council was not formed yet.

The Peace Committee was coming to the view that the cause of peace would also be served if the Committee initiated building bridges between clans whose relationships were severely strained because of the conflict (see Section C, 8.2) by arranging, whenever appropriate and feasible, confidence-building meetings between such clans.

With this in mind, a member of the Peace Committee was sent to Hargeisa to contact the member left in Hargeisa and find out any further developments in the Government's peace position, but also to contact some prominent Hargeisa Community leaders, representing different clans but mainly the Sa'ad Musa clan, who were willing to come out to Camp Abokor and have reconciliation discussions with Idagale leaders. The idea was warmly welcomed in Hargeisa and enough number of community leaders subscribed to the proposed delegation. The leaders drafted a letter, dated 21/1/96, to Idagale leaders, indicating their willingness to have with them friendly and brotherly discussions. The letter was hand-carried by the Peace Committee member back to Jigjiga.

At this time, the President of Somaliland held a meeting on 13/1/96 for the Sultans, Akils and other clan leaders informing them, among other things, of the Government's readiness to settle the conflict. He however stressed that the State of Somaliland was non-negotiable. He proposed a general clan conference on peace. Strangely enough, the last point did not appeal to the opposition.

Although the Habar Yonis Council was not yet formed, the Peace Committee hoped that, by making its presence felt in the opposition area and engaging important elements of the opposition in discussions as a follow up of the previous contact, the formation of the Habar Yonis Council would be speeded up.

4. The Peace Committee left for Camp Abokor on 26/1/96, hopefully to meet eventually the Garhajis Council. The transport was provided by the Region 5 Authority. The letter from the Hargeisa Community leaders was delivered to Idagale leaders who welcomed it.

The Committee had a series of extended discussions with Idagale leaders. The Idagale group with whom the Peace Committee was most of the time dealing was composing of the following:

Sultan Mohamed Sultan Abdulkadir, Akil Haji Ali (Warabe) Hussein, Haji Mohamed Aw Omer, Haji Jibril Botan, Abdi Hashi Guleid, Ali Bane, Akil Mohamed Aw Abdi (Fadhfadhle), Mohamed Hussein Ashur, Sofe Gamel and Mohamed Abdi Gass. Most of the discussions took place in the evenings, as it was in Ramadan.

The Peace Committee learned that the Idagale Council moved its base to Salahley inside Somaliland. The Sultan of Habar Yonis was still abroad and the Council for that clan was not yet formed. Sultan Mohamed Sultan Abdulkadir paid two-day visit to the Idagale Council to discuss with them the peace proposals and the Peace Committee's request to meet the Garhajis Council. The Idagale Council took the view that only Garhajis Council could meet the Peace Committee. The Peace Committee accepted this view to avoid any misunderstanding or accusation of the Peace Committee attempting to divide the Garhajis Council. The Peace Committee had chance to meet other elements of the Idagale clan, including some young fighters from the front. All the groups and individuals met in Camp Abokor supported the peace mission.

The Idagale leaders drafted a letter, dated 3/2/96, in reply to the letter from the Hargeisa community leaders and proposed 27/2/96 as the date for the reconciliation meeting in Camp Abokor. The letter was hand-carried by the Peace Committee. As to the Peace Committee's main purpose of meeting with the Garhajis Council, again that was not yet to be. However, Sultan Mohamed assured the Peace Committee that he would try hard and use his good offices to accelerate the formation of Habar Yonis Council so that a Garhajis Council would be constituted. In the meantime, the Sultan, on behalf of Garhajis clan, handed the Peace Committee a written undertaking, dated 3/2/96, advising the Peace Committee to meet the Garhajis Council on 4/3/96, the venue to be fixed nearer the date. The letter, translated from Somali, is reproduced below:

To: Peace Committee for Somaliland  
To: Garhajis Council  
To: Others it may concern 3/2/96

Subject: peace announcement

AFTER listening to the Peace Committee for Somaliland,  
TAKING into consideration all the decisions and principles governing the Garhajis clan,  
TAKING into consideration the importance of the item dealing with peace and the situation we are in as a country as well as people,

I declare and assure anybody interested that, in principle, the Garhajis clan is ready to have dialogue about peace with other clans and any one else except the Egal Administration. It is not the first time that I made a similar call.

I, The Sultan, advise the Peace Committee for Somaliland to meet the Garhajis clan Council after one month – i.e. on 4/3/96.

(Signed)  
Sultan Mohamed Sultan Abdulkadir

5. The Peace Committee returned to Jigjiga on 3/2/96, with one night stopover at Harta Shiekh. In Jigjiga the key Somalilanders and President Eid were briefed about the Peace Committee's experiences while in Camp Abokor. To widen the base for peace-making efforts, the Peace Committee sent letters to the Garads and Sultans in Sool and Sanag Regions in eastern Somaliland to solicit their active support for bringing the civil conflict to an end.

6. The Peace Committee left for Addis Ababa on 7/2/96, with one day stopover in Dire Dawa, arriving Addis Ababa on 9/2/96. The Peace Committee reviewed progress made so far and briefed the large Somalilander community there. Although neither side of the conflict had not yet unequivocally agreed to the peace proposals, the Peace Committee was very much encouraged by the mood of the Somalilander public increasingly yearning for peace. Thanks to the Peace Committee's activities, the public became more aware of the conflict and the damage it was causing to the country.

The Peace Committee decided that, in its next move, it would not only concentrate on the opposing parties but would also make conscious efforts to be instrumental in bringing about clan reconciliation whenever and wherever it might be feasible.

But before that the Peace Committee needed a short period of reflection. The Committee was also short of funds. Some members of the Peace Committee returned temporarily to their bases. However, a group of 4 members of the Peace Committee left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a period of four weeks (14/2 – 14/3/96) to inform the large Somalilander community in that country about the peace mission and how they could contribute to peace in Somaliland. The Somalilander community was also advised to refrain from actions that might aggravate the situation in Somaliland. The community was assisted in forming a small unit that would work for reconciliation and peace.

### **Peace Committee: March 1996 – January 1997**

1. The Peace Committee reassembled in Jigjiga late March 1996. The Committee was very eager to meet a Garhajis Council at the earliest opportunity. To promote the early formation of Garhajis Council, the peace Committee invited about 20 Garhajis elders from Aware District and held for them a seminar on the peace making activities in which the Peace Committee was engaged and how they would further the cause of peace when they returned to their home areas. The elders were advised to encourage the formation of the Habar Yonis Council and thus that of Garhajis Council for whom the peace Committee was waiting to meet with.

Also in keeping with the Peace Committee's determination to make its activities widely known and to give moral support to any group or clan that showed interest in Peace in Somaliland, some members of the Peace Committee attended an intra-clan conference organized by Habar Je'lo in Ainabo in March 1996. The conference was informed of the peace proposals of the Peace Committee. One of the main recommendations of the conference was a call for peace in the country.

2. The Peace Committee left Jigjiga for Hargeisa on 16/4/96 to hold further discussions with its Government counterpart committee to press for definite and early Government response to the peace proposals. The Peace Committee also continued in its public education activities to raise public awareness about the current situation.

By this time, the Hargeisa community leaders were in receipt of the invitation of the Idagale leaders and they were very enthusiastic about the prospect of meeting with their estranged fellow Somalilanders. In this connection, a member of the Peace Committee paid a quick visit to Camp Abokor to check on preparations for the planned reconciliation meeting. He reported back that the Idagale elders requested postponement of the meeting to 19/5/96 and for it to run for seven days. The Hargeisa leaders accepted the postponement.

At this stage, to minimize the logistics problems, the Peace Committee was planning that whichever meeting took place first ( i.e. Hargeisa leaders/Idagale leaders or Peace Committee/Garhajis Council), the other meeting would follow immediately.

With regard to the Garhajis Council, it was no near coming into existence since the reshuffle of the Habar Yonis Council was not completed. In the course of peace-making activities, The Peace Committee met individual members of both Idagale and Habar Yonis Councils who expressed their support for peace. However, the Peace Committee never had the opportunity, in spite of repeated efforts, to meet a constituted Garhajis Council to which the Peace Committee's peace proposals could be directly put. Since the main concern was the early restoration of peace in the country, the Peace Committee did not consider the non-availability of the Garhajis Council as a bar to exploring all other avenues open to the Peace Committee in its search for peace.

3. The Peace Committee was getting concerned about what it saw as foot-dragging regarding the Government's attitude to quick settlement of the conflict. The Peace Committee suspected that the Government committee was no more than a fob-off and the only authority that could take action on the peace issue was none other than the President. Accordingly, the Peace Committee held several meetings with the President, in the presence of some members of the Government committee. The President argued that the Government needed time to inform front-line armed forces and deploy them in a manner compatible with cease-fire but at the same time ready for any surprise attack. The Government stuck to this line or variation of it, blaming the delay for difficult logistics. The Government also claimed that the opposition did not have identifiable and unified leadership structure with which the Government could conduct any meaningful peace talks. In this connection, it may be recalled that the opposition maintained all along that it would have nothing to do with the Government ( see the Idagale Sultan letter of 3/2/96). The sides of the conflict seemed to be at cross-purposes!

The Peace Committee feared that the search for peace was heading towards a deadlock. The Committee also reluctantly but justifiably came to the conclusion that neither side of the conflict was really committed enough to bring the conflict to an early end. The Peace

Committee was aware of the commonly held view that, in both camps, there were some militant elements whose influences militated against wiser counsels to prevail.

It was about this stage of the conflict when the President of Somaliland spoke for many when he ruefully declared openly that the character of the conflict had transformed and he characterized it as a "project" where both sides were being manipulated to keep the "project" going!

4. Since the aim was to restore, soonest possible, peace in the country, the Peace Committee modified somewhat its tactics by not being too rigid about the means of achieving that aim – in other words not just limiting its efforts to persuading the two sides to agree to the peace proposals but also to follow up all promising alternatives likely to serve the cause of peace. However, The Peace Committee was always conscious of maintaining its independence, neutrality and its ability to work with all good-intentioned individuals and groups genuinely interested in the resolution of the conflict.

The change of the Peace Committee's tactics was mainly dictated by two factors: The first was the apparent lack of commitment and urgency of the disputing parties to settle the conflict. It even seemed that both sides were oblivious to the damage that the conflict was causing to the country – in loss of life and destruction of property, let alone the huge resources used by both sides to finance the conflict. The second factor was the growing public desire for peace triggered, in the main, by the Peace Committee's activities up and down the country. To capitalize on this ground swell of support for peace which was gaining momentum by the day, the Peace Committee intensified its activities in motivating the clan leaders to adopt pro-active stance on peace and start moves or steps to settle any differences or misunderstandings between different clans. The Peace Committee held seminars for different groups of community leaders and associations (e.g. women associations) to help the peace movement to snowball. In this regard, Mr Ahmed Abdillahi Ali Bahal and Mr Ahmed Barre Omer in Hargeisa played an important role in peace-making efforts in the country.

At this time, the Peace Committee was fairly convinced and the indications were there that peace would inevitably come through the sheer grass roots determination to have peace in the country. However, what was lacking in Somaliland up to that time was socially conscious and trusted active Somalilanders who could give expression to the fund of goodwill that existed in the Somalilander public. The Peace Committee provided that missing trustworthy Somalilanders. The Committee repeatedly pointed out how the conflict was ruining the country and it forged alliances with like minded Somalilanders who were ready to denounce the conflict and agitate for its early ending. The Peace Committee concentrated its efforts mainly on mobilizing public opinion for peace and the Committee succeeded in these efforts to a large extent.

5. Up to this time, the conflict was limited to few urban areas and relative peace prevailed in the nomadic areas in the country and in Region 5 of Ethiopia in which Somalilander nomads inhabit and roam about with their livestock. In the following will be given an account of incidents and events that eventually ushered in peace in Somaliland.

In May 1996 a serious incident occurred between the Habar Je'lo and Garhajis clans in Gashamo area in Region 5 of Ethiopia. The Peace Committee, mindful of the dangers such incident might give rise to, immediately travelled to Yirowe, Las Anod and Odweyne to urge the clan leaders in those centres to do their utmost to settle the incident quickly and not to allow it to get out of hand. The clan leaders of Habar Je'lo and Garhajis were themselves also

very conscious of the dangers posed by the incident and quickly arranged a peace-making meeting in Gashmo (20–24 May 1996). Members of the Peace Committee attended the meeting. As result of this incident, The two clans planned for further meetings to consolidate peace and harmony between the clans.

In the meantime, the Peace Committee organized, as mentioned earlier, and led a reconciliation delegation of 72 Hargeisa community leaders to Camp Abokor to meet with 180 Garhajis clan elders including religious, intellectuals and military personalities. The gathering lasted from 3–30 June 1996. This huge confidence-building gathering was entirely due to the initiative of the Peace Committee. The Committee also mobilized some resources for the gathering.

Since the venue of the gathering was in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government not only blessed the gathering to take place in Ethiopia but also designated a prominent Federal parliamentarian, in the person of Mr Abdillahi Abdi Issa, to liaise, on behalf of the Ethiopian government, with the Camp Abokor gathering. The Region 5 Authority was also fully involved in holding the gathering. Mr David Lambo (UNHCR/Addis Ababa) also deserves thanks for his support in logistics relating to holding this gathering.

The main purpose of the gathering was to provide an opportunity for clans whose relationships were put under stress by the conflict to meet and talk things over with each other informally and in a relaxed atmosphere and to iron out any misunderstandings or dispel any suspicions. The gathering also provided the direct communication between the clans that was lacking. Since there were no controversial issues that the clans were to negotiate about, the gathering proceeded smoothly in a friendly and leisurely atmosphere. The participants of the gathering all agreed to foster the peaceful and friendly coexistence that traditionally marked the life of the Somalilander clans. They also recommended to hold a similar gathering inside Somaliland to boost the peace movement in the Country and proposed 15/9/96 as the date for the gathering. The Camp Abokor gathering was unqualified success.

The Kabri Bayah community (in Region 5) invited the participants of the Camp Abokor gathering to show their full support for the gathering and its recommendations. They promised to play their role in peace maintenance in the area.

It seemed by this time that the forces for peace were unstoppable and there was a great hope that the two sides of the conflict would soon be engulfed in and overwhelmed by the peace spontaneously breaking out around them. However, there was no guarantee that uncalled-for conflicts would not occur. A dispute between the Isahaq (a Habar Yonis subclan) and the Idagale clan that had been festering since May 1996 flared up again in July 1996. The Peace Committee immediately mobilized a group of 35 Hargeisa community leaders, from various clans, who participated in Camp Abokor gathering to intervene as peace-makers between the two clans concerned.

The Habar Yonis clan also dispatched quickly 25 clan elders for the same purpose. The two mediating groups together arranged in Qoton a peace-making meeting for the quarreling clans who accepted the mediation and the situation was thus defused.

In parenthesis, on 4/7/96 the President of Somaliland declared that, in accordance with the National Charter, the Government would henceforth act as a care-taker until a new administration was chosen by the people of Somaliland. At a later date the Chairman of the Council of Elders (Guurti) announced that a National Congress would be convened on

15/10/96 to deliberate on national issues and elect the new President and Vice President for the Republic of Somaliland.

These developments gave rise to some uneasiness in the country as the conflict was not yet resolved and thus peace in the country as whole was not yet firmly established. A significant proportion of the public opinion, including that of the Peace Committee, saw peace as a priority and would have preferred a National Conference on peace before plunging the country into clan-based political activities that might prove too disruptive. This was a time when both sides of the conflict appeared to have lost heart for an aimless but costly struggle.

The peace-making process in the west of the country made more demand on the Peace Committee than it did in the east, as the clan leaders in the east proved to be more effective in reconciling clan differences.

The Habar Je'lo and Garhajis clans followed up their Gashamo meeting with further peace-making meetings in Bali Dhaye (1-12 June 1996) and Duruqsi (1-13 July 1996). Some Peace Committee members attended both meetings to give moral support to the organizers and participants and to make known to them the Committee's activities in the country.

The Peace Committee then turned its attention to the preparation for the meeting recommended by the Camp Abokor gathering and scheduled for 15/8/96. The Gabiley community leaders offered to host the meeting. However the Arap clan leaders approached the Gabiley leaders requesting that the Arap clan be given the honour to host the meeting in Bali Gubadle and the request was accepted. But the Sultan of Arap clan was not keen on the meeting and asked the Peace Committee to write to the Government for its approval. The Peace Committee, feeling that it was an unnecessary bureaucratic step, wrote to the Government. The Government's reply, from the President's office was contained in a letter, in Somali, dated 13/8/1996 and a translation of it is reproduced below:

Republic of Somaliland  
The Presidency

JSL/M/N/015-B733/0896 AUGUST 13, 1996

TO: Hassan Megag Samater  
Chairman, Peace Committee for Somaliland  
CC: H.E. Omer Mohamed Handule  
Minister of Interior

Mr Chairman,

Refer to your letter PO/SL/196-13, dated 11/8/96, about peace meeting to be held at Bali Gubadle.

As we have already informed you, the Government welcomes and supports any means of achieving peace as stated in the Government policy. Since you embarked on this work, we have given you full support and we have accepted in good faith any conditions that you asked for from our side.

We, however, inform you that when we first met, the search for peace was already in progress for sometime and many attempts were made. You are new to this work and probably you will try methods already tried to no avail.

Now since you have been engaged in this work, we have not seen anything that we can consider tangible and valuable results and we do not expect any of that. As you are aware, in that period we took into the national domain the army of estranged people and some units returned to the fold and still the process, direct and indirect, of conducting lasting peace is continuing.

If your objective was the realization of durable peace, we think we can get that quicker. In fact your activities hindered peace finalization in some areas, as these successive meetings have given rise to different interpretations and their conclusions are only to call for further meetings. In fact we shied away from telling you like that before but we wanted to give you enough time for the work.

Many shortcomings have come to light and wrapping up the peace process has become drawn-out and you have adopted step-by-step peace-making when this country needs a plan for concluding peace speedily.

We believe the way we are doing things will bear fruits, therefore we request you, if it is possible for you, to leave it for us.

TO GOD WE ARE GRATEFUL

(Signed)  
Abdillahi Mohamed Duale  
Minister of Presidential Affairs

To maintain its non-controversial position, the Peace Committee did not reply to the Government letter. Since the Committee was not in competition with the Government, nor with any other body for that matter, for peace-making in the country, the Committee let the matter rest there and the Bali Gubadle meeting did not take place. It was a disappointment to the Peace Committee but much more so to the community leaders who tried hard to serve the cause of peace. However, the previous good work done in Camp Abokor made this missed opportunity less damaging.

The peace-making process in the east of the country was approaching its final stage. To wrap up their series of meetings, the Habar Je'lo and Garhajis clans organized an enlarged meeting in Beer from 18/9 – 15/10/96. Practically all the major clans of Somaliland participated in the meeting and members of the Peace Committee also attended it as interested observers.

One of the major recommendations of the meeting was a call for all the clans to hold jointly a conference on peace, corrections and future prospects; the clans to be free to choose their own delegates to the conference which might be held where deemed appropriate. However, political expediency took precedence over the principle of laying down strong basis for peace in the country and the proposed conference did not take place. The Beer meeting in effect put an end to the conflict. The Beer meeting was a complete success, in spite of the Government's antipathy to it.

6. So at last peace was restored in Somaliland through the efforts of the Somalilanders themselves. The opposition embraced and participated in the National Congress convened in Hargeisa (15/10/96 – 13/3/97). The conflict that not long ago appeared to be insoluble simply ceased to exist –and a good thing too.

For the Peace Committee, it is enough that peace now prevails in Somaliland and sincerely hopes that it will prove to be lasting peace. The Peace Committee brought its peace-making activities to an end on 30/1/1997 and the publication of this final report means that the Peace Committee is disbanded and no longer exists, as stipulated when it was created in November 1995.

## **Conclusion**

1. When the Peace Committee for Somaliland set about its Peace Mission to present specific peace proposals to both the Government and the Garhajis fighting faction, the situation in the country was a daunting one. Anyone who presented himself as a peace-maker expected negative reaction and gratuitous vilification from those committed to the civil conflict.

However, the Peace Committee, rather than taking no for an answer, persisted with its mission. The Peace Committee was sustained by the belief that the Somalilanders were capable of solving their internal problems without external intervention. The Committee had to reason with those in the country who were in a position to influence events and had to allay their concerns about what peace-making with the other side might entail.

The Peace Committee acted on the principle that, in ending the conflict, neither side of the conflict should feel either the victor or the vanquished. Although the members of the Peace Committee, as unbiased Somalilanders, had vested interest in peace and stability in Somaliland (hence the whole idea of undertaking the peace mission), yet they had to take detached view of whatever they heard about the conflict. The Peace Committee had to maintain strict neutrality in its dealings with both sides of the conflict. The Committee had all along to guard against giving the impression that it was sitting in judgement over who was right or wrong in the conflict.

2. It is gratifying to note that by the time the Peace Mission came to an end there was peace throughout Somaliland. The Peace Committee cannot claim that this was all due to its work. However, what it can rightly claim is the fact that it was the only neutral and credible Somalilander group, without axe to grind, who breached the "taboo on peace" and repeatedly contacted the opposing parties to urge them to give chance to peace talks as an alternative to fighting. Not only that, but the Peace Committee also enlisted the support of peace-loving Somalilanders, both inside and outside the country, to actively encourage the peace moves sparked off by the activities of the Peace Committee.

Eventually there came about unstoppable yearning desire for peace and ending the conflict was unmistakably on the national agenda.

3. It is worth mentioning here once again the peace-making conference in Beer (September/October 1996) which brought together the major Somalilander clans. It marked a turning point in the search for peace in Somaliland. It was also an outstanding example of conflict resolution and its positive impact sounded the death-knell of the conflict. The conference paved the way for peaceful and harmonious relationships between the clans.

This is the time to reflect rationally on past mistakes and on how to guard against them in the future. However, we do not have the luxury to indulge in recriminations and idle talk. Once again an opportunity has presented itself to us. Will we, this time round, grasp it with open arms? We can not afford not to.

## **Lessons Learned**

It is time to pause and ponder over the conflict to see what lessons we can draw for the future. If we fail to do this and not learn lessons from our past mistakes we will be condemned to repeat similar mistakes with disastrous consequences. Some of the lessons learned are enumerated below:

1. There were neither irreconcilable fundamental ideology nor issues of principle involved in the root causes of the conflict. The situation in the country that eventually led to the armed conflict was allowed to drift for far too long. Given conviction in and commitment to nation-building, sense of responsibility, decisiveness, trust and spirit of give and take on the part of all concerned (qualities apparently then lacking), the conflict could have been effectively dealt with before it started and the country spared avoidable disaster.
2. When the conflict broke out, the people were armed to the teeth and perhaps owed their allegiance more to their respective clans than to the flag. The result was heavy loss of life and property for no good reason.
3. The fact that there was a government in place when the conflict started can be considered as a redeeming feature in the conflict situation. It allowed the opposition to maintain, outwardly at least, that its quarrel was with the Administration and this attitude had the effect of preventing the conflict from developing into an all-out clan warfare that would have played havoc with the country.
4. The conflict was perceived to have been instigated by self-centred and urbanized elite who opportunistically manipulated the clans with which they were affiliated for personal short-term interests. This resulted in (a) marginalizing the traditional clan elders, rendering them impotent in the eyes of their clansmen and (b) sacrificing the higher interests of the country at the alter of clan-based petty politics which, by their nature, are selfish.
5. The Guurti (Council of Elders) failed to use sufficiently and publicly their clan, moral and political clout to bring effective pressure to bear upon the conflict situation. After all, one of their functions was peace maintenance. It is, however, fair to point out that the opposition saw the Guurti as an extension of the Administration. This last point has a bearing on the role of the Guurti in the future.
6. In spite of the militant public stance of both sides of the conflict, the capacity for reconciliation always existed and this increased as the conflict dragged on and got bogged down in a stalemate.
7. There were many Somalilanders of good standing in the country who could have played an important role in resolving the conflict. However, because the conflict polarized the public on clan lines, such good people were judged by their clan affiliation rather than what they stood for. Thus the conflict succeeded in further entrenching the hold that the clan system has on our social life and this does not bode well for our politico-social development.

8. The Peace Committee proved an eye-opener for Somalilanders and for others indeed who did not imagine that there could be outside Somaliland sufficiently motivated Somalilanders who would spontaneously offer their services for peace-making in Somaliland without expecting, in return, reward or praise. The Peace Committee members saw it as their civic duty to help out in the emergency. (In fact the Chairman of the Peace Committee sacrificed his post with an international agency in order to contribute to peace restoration in the country).

9. It was amazing to discover the amount of distorted information each side of the conflict was spreading about the other side. With such disinformation circulating in the absence of independent, free and fair mass media in the country, it was no wonder that the public at large was polarized, confused and mainly ignorant of what was really going on outside one's constituency. This was what poisoned the atmosphere and persuaded many misinformed Somalilanders, inside and outside the country, to justify the conflict on differing biased grounds.

10. Those who maintained that the conflict could only be resolved by the Somalilanders themselves were vindicated. The Somalilander traditional ways of settling disputes were brought into play. The Peace Committee played a catalytic role in the peace-making process.

11. We, Somalilanders, have demonstrated that we have the capacity to indulge in an orgy of self-destruction followed by reconciliation, without external prompting. We have not, however, developed yet a coherent policy designed to prevent conflict or resolve it when it occurs.

12. Lastly, it will have a sobering effect on all of us to cost the conflict by estimating the resources (from all sources) mobilized for financing the conflict plus the human value of all the Somalilanders killed or wounded/disabled plus all the property destroyed plus the cost of opportunities missed while occupied with the conflict and then ask the question: Was it price worth paying?

## **Insurance policy against future civil conflicts**

1. Any procedures adopted for conflict prevention should be based on home-grown values reflecting the strengths and limitations of our society. Certain attitudes and behaviors emerge over time as society develops. The child's behavior is shaped early on in life in the environment of its family. This is the time to guide the child to grow into a good citizen, with all the civic rights and responsibilities this may entail. This may sound a counsel of perfection but in fact it is basic requirement of every good citizen. In the end, it is the sum total of the citizens' behavior, aspirations and outlook that characterize a particular society. However, planning for the development of an enlightened and just society is a long-term process but it is a goal worth striving for.

2. In the meantime, certain practical steps have to be taken to lay down progressive social policies designed to govern fairly the affairs of the Somalilander society and in the process to prevent civil conflicts or solve them if they occur. At the present time, because no political or other social organizations properly constituted and functioning are there, the two major channels through which measures for peace maintenance can be effected are the Government and the clan system.

## **The clan system**

1. It is mentioned in section F how the conflict brought to the fore the ugly aspects of clanism. In recent years there has been some transformation in the internal set-up of the clan.

It has come about that the position of the traditional elder has been either taken over by consent or usurped by a clan council. During a civil conflict, the clan council functions as a war council. The traditional elder is usually a member of the clan council. Some say that this development has brought some sort of democracy and accountability into the affairs of the clan. Others counter that a tried and proven clan management has been destroyed. It remains to be seen how the clan council will develop in the future and what will be its relationship with the Guurti (Council of Elders) members of the clan.

Whatever the merits and demerits of the clan council, the crucial point is how it is used. The clan council has already been employed as a tool for both conflict initiation and resolution. The main interest of the Peace Committee lies in the use of the clan council for conflict prevention and resolution.

2. Therefore, the Peace Committee recommends that: at the regional level, the clan councils in each region to meet and agree on a binding code of conduct that will govern the relationships between the clans they represent. The aim of the code should be to foster and maintain peace, harmony and cooperation between the clans in that region. The code should contain guidelines on how to settle incidents that may occur between the clans. It is assumed that the individual clans each have their own internal arrangements for settling internal disputes; at the national level, all the clan councils should meet to lay down an all-clan and binding code of conduct for all the Somaliland clans. A point that the all-clan code must highlight is that if there is a dispute between two clans in any part of Somaliland, the other clans should immediately offer their neutral mediation. However, no clan should under any circumstances side with one or the other of the quarrelling clans. The sanction to be applied by the rest of the clans against any clan that fouls this point can be specified in the all-clan code of conduct. The codes of conduct may be based on our traditional/Muslim practices.

3. As referred to earlier the clans, in the absence of political parties, have by default assumed the power-base of the politicians. Is it too much to ask of the politicians to use their clan cards constructively in the best interests of the country? The Somalilander politicians are called upon to be responsible enough to subordinate short-sighted and selfish personal and clan interests to the greater common good.

4. The Peace Committee disclaims any notion that the Committee endorses that the clan system as it is now be allowed to feature permanently in our social life. For want of an alternative system, the clan system is pragmatically used in this section. No doubt this type of clan system will remain with us until such time that it either develops into or is replaced by a better social system.

## **The Government**

1. To the ordinary Somalilander in the street or in the bush, the Government is the three Councils (i.e. Council of Elders, Council of Elected Members and Council of Ministers) all-in-

one. This has implications for the Council of Elders whose main responsibilities include maintenance of peace among the clans. If the Council is perceived as an extension of the Government, its national role will be misunderstood. Perhaps this is why the Council appeared ineffectual as a peace-maker in the conflict. It is important that the Council establishes clearly its identity and responsibilities to play an effective role in our national affairs.

2. As regards civil conflict prevention, the Peace Committee maintains that good governance is the main safeguard against excesses that the citizen might construe as State-sponsored. These excesses may take different forms such as clanism, regionalism, nepotism and get-rich-quick mentality of individuals in authority, etc. Basic human rights may also fall victim to officially sanctioned treatment of individuals and/or groups. If this state of affairs is allowed to characterize the behavior of a government, it will usually not be long before public resentment towards such government leads civil unrest. To create an environment conducive to peace, security and stability in the country, the Somaliland Government must formulate and apply enlightened social policies. With this in mind, the Peace Committee recommends that:

2.1 The Government should urgently prepare and act on effective and comprehensive programme for collecting unauthorized weapons held by individuals or collectively by clans in the country. The Government must give top priority to this issue. The services of clan councils can be enlisted for this issue. Public education and information programmes should be launched in conjunction with the weapon collection programme. The Government should aim and work for the day when the Somalilander will look to the Government rather than to the clan for his/her personal safety and that of his/her property. Without collecting the weapons held by the public, the potential for catastrophic civil conflict will always be there.

2.2 The Government, in collaboration with all appropriate agencies, must formulate a programme for rehabilitating the thousands of young men whose livelihood has become bound up with carrying a gun. Absorbing all of them into the national army and the police will not be a permanent satisfactory solution. This will be a burden on the Government budget and will use up what should have been used for the development of the social sectors. Eventually these young men should be helped to gain some basic skills that will enable them to engage in private enterprises.

2.3 The central Government support for the individual Regions must be according to need and must be transparent and even-handed.

2.4 The Government must adopt fair employment policy so that all the citizens have equal opportunity for all types of employment in all the Regions in the country. No citizen should be put at a disadvantage because of his/her place of birth or clan affiliation. Procedures for recruiting for representation abroad should also be completely fair. However, in all cases, merit and qualifications for any given job should not be compromised.

2.5 The Government must adopt education policy on the lines of the employment policy in para 2.4. Training abroad should be fairly regulated and made conditional on the needs of the country.

2.6 The Government must follow a deliberate policy of rotating Government employees (including the police and the armed forces) so that at any one given time in a given Region there is a good mix of Government employees from different clan affiliations. No clan should

be allowed to claim that it should, by right, dominate employment in any given Region, District or any public/private work-place.

2.7 The Government must establish public broadcasting service that can easily be received within the country. Such service should be objective, informative and free from misleading or biased information.

2.8 The Government must be sensitive to public opinion and must fine-tune its policies to reflect the legitimate concerns of the public.

2.9 The Peace Committee repeats that all the above recommendations and more flow from good governance. The aim should be to have in place a government that will implement these recommendations and more to steer the country clear of conflict-provoking situations and to focus on rehabilitation, development and nation-building. It is high time to look ahead and proceed to make up for lost time.

### **Private associations**

1. For the purposes of this paragraph, private association is taken to mean any association not run or funded by the Government. It is very important to encourage and support the establishment and development of social groupings that transcend clan affiliations. In this respect, teachers, students, youth, women, doctors and nurses associations and trade unions are cases in point.

2. As a Muslim society, it is incumbent upon our religious scholars to participate in and supervise Islamic teaching so that the masses properly understand the basic tenets of our religion – especially what it forbids and what it permits and what are the rights and duties of the individual Muslim as a member of the society. Although our society should reflect the values of a Muslim society, it should also remain open-minded on worldly matters.

### **Resources mobilized for the peace mission**

As mentioned in section B, the initial plan was for the peace mission to rely only on contributions from the Somalilander diaspora. However, it turned out that enough funds could not be raised from this source, the main reason being that the Somalilanders were themselves refugees living on handouts by host countries. It therefore became necessary to approach few potential contributors for support in cash and/or in kind. In this connection, the Peace Committee wishes to thank Mr Andy Carl (Conciliation Resources, London, UK) for valuable logistical support, including the printing of this report.

### **5. Conclusion**

Finally, the Council hopes that the proposals outlined above will materially contribute to the debates of the National Congress. The Council is also confident that the proposals will be carefully studied by the Congress in session and hopefully adopted for the greater good of our country.

With best wishes and successful deliberations.

Suleiman Dirir Abdi  
Chairman, Council for Peace & Development-Somaliland  
Address: 43 Huddleston Close Parmiter Street  
London E2 9NR England, UK.

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