

# Ten principles for effective Somali peacemaking

## Reconciliation

- Somalis have extensive experience in dispute settlement and reconciliation. Building on **Somali approaches to peacemaking can help to make international mediation more effective**. Somali peace processes are locally designed, managed, mediated and financed: in other words ‘Somali-owned’. Inclusivity and consensus are established Somali principles for decision-making.

- **Reconciliation is central to successful Somali peace processes**. This is achieved through restitution and restorative justice based on customary law and traditions, not on retribution. Somali peace initiatives prioritize preparatory processes, public outreach and dissemination, and monitoring the implementation of an accord.

- **Political space for Somali peacemaking needs to be protected and fostered**. Factors beyond the control of the local communities can undermine Somali peace processes: political manoeuvrings by Somali elites, the outcomes of national level peace conferences, and regional and international politics.

- **Accountability is key**. Somali elders derive authority from being chosen to represent their clans in peace processes and are answerable to them. Their authority empowers them to make and enforce agreements. It is integral to the success of local peace processes that Somali clans can hold their kinspeople to account for transgressions. This is the missing ingredient from international peace processes.

## Security

- **‘Security governance’ links security to accountability and is vital to endogenous Somali peace processes**. Local Somali security arrangements demonstrate Somalis’ capacity to manage security outside the framework of the state. These include cessation of hostilities (*colaad joojin*), disengagement of forces (*kala rarid/kala fageyn*), ceasefires (*xabbad joojin*), buffer zones and greenlines (*baadisoc*) and the cantonment of militia.

- **Somalis employ a range of mechanisms to address security challenges, through traditional Somali elders, religious leaders and Somali civic actors**. For instance Somali women’s groups who organized initiatives to disarm and retrain young militia fighters, or the Mogadishu Security and Stabilization Plan led by civil society and business communities.

## Governance

- **Somalis can achieve durable political structures when these are built on established ‘homegrown’ reconciliation**. Somaliland and Puntland demonstrate Somalis’ desire for government and capacity for self-governance. Somali state models have successfully combined Somali and Western democratic traditions.

- Frameworks for **governance must build on administrative structures that Somalis have already developed**, including the rooted regional polities in Somaliland and Puntland. National power-sharing governments established through international mediation have repeatedly proven to be inadequate foundations for building a Somali state.

## Reconstruction

- **The Somali private sector has led economic recovery** and has the potential to transform Somalia’s current political trajectory through entrepreneurship and economic development. Somalis have rebuilt cities and towns, constructed new schools and medical facilities, and established some of the most extensive telecommunication networks in Africa. International engagement should support Somalis as economic actors, building on what they do best: responding to economic opportunities.

- **The Somali diaspora has been one of the most important drivers of economic recovery in Somalia**. Complex ties to the Somali ‘homeland’ mean that some young people can be susceptible to radicalization. But many more are constructively involved in responding to humanitarian needs in Somalia, which can be harnessed to bring new and fresh approaches to Somali peacebuilding.

# Somali peacemaking

## conclusions for international policy

**Supporting Somali-led peace processes** is the most effective way for the international community to help Somalis find ways out of protracted crisis. External actors need to understand local processes better, learn from them and develop ways to engage with them. Somali peacemaking prioritizes political inclusiveness and legitimacy and should inform efforts to build governance and promote the rule of law.

**Strategies to develop administrative structures in Somalia** need to incorporate credible **checks on state power** – and especially its control of force – in order to address the fears of many Somalis about the revival of a state over which they have no control.

**Peacemaking should not be hostage to regional politics**. Regional bodies such as IGAD and the AU need to support reconciliation strategies that are more genuinely **accountable to Somali constituencies**.

**Somalis have developed functioning models of governance in Somaliland and Puntland**. These polities are experiencing alternative forms of government that **are more participatory than they have been for decades**. International policy needs to acknowledge, respect and support these achievements. It is neither reasonable nor viable to expect Somalis to abandon them.

**Somalis are grappling with the rise of militant Islam** and violent *jihadism*. Inappropriate international engagement based on inadequate analysis has helped to mobilize militants. Somalis and their international partners need to work together to find effective policy responses.

International actors should work with women’s groups to **harness Somali women’s contribution to peacemaking**. Somali women are marginalized in official reconciliation processes and politics, but play a critical enabling role in Somali peacemaking.

**Somalis are economic as much as political actors**. The international donor community and most Somali politicians currently have their priorities wrong. More energy and resources should be put into developing political consensus on the foundations of economic security.

**Protection** is the bottom line for external engagement and international actors should be held accountable for their actions. Without an international or regional voice Somalis are exposed to the systematic denial of their individual rights and exploitation of their territory. International actors pay lip-service to the ‘responsibility to protect’. This has left Somali civilians exposed to all manner of harm from both Somali and non-Somali actors.

**Peacebuilding comes first** and is an enabler for statebuilding. Lengthy indigenous grassroots peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in Somaliland in the early 1990s provided a secure foundation on which to establish a government and political institutions. These have combined a hybrid of Somali and Western democratic traditions.

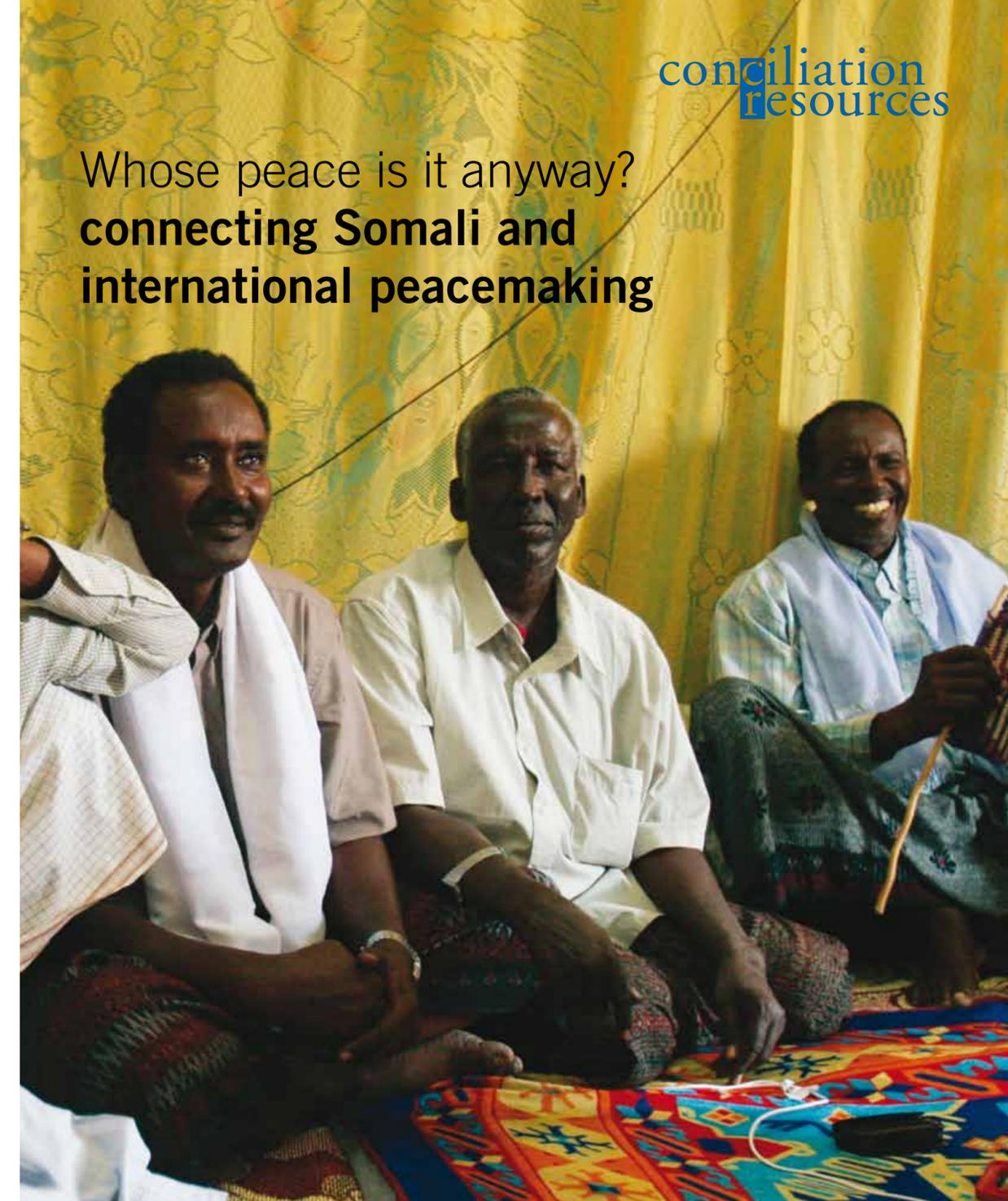
**Elders and other traditional leaders provide legitimacy for political representation** in Somali peace processes. Puntland’s stability is based on a high degree of consent between the authorities and the public, established through public consultations in which traditional leaders and civic actors have had an active role.

**Security is not an add-on**. Negotiated security arrangements are central to endogenous Somali peace processes, including parties’ shared responsibility for implementing and monitoring accords. This tallies with lessons learnt from international experience across Africa. The repeated strategy of trying to build a Somali state with a monopoly on force ignores Somali approaches and has not worked. Linking Somali and international best practice points to an effective way forward.

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Cover photo: Elders from South Galkayo, Somalia, discuss prospects for peacebuilding dialogue © Ryan Anson

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# Whose peace is it anyway? connecting Somali and international peacemaking

“**We should all recognize that Somalia is not given the necessary attention and care by the international community. We call it a failed state and we seem to admit that this is a new category of states for which we are helpless. From my own experience in Somalia I believe there is a remarkable potential in the people of this country which deserves to be given a chance: through real long term support”**

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<b>Mohamed Sahnoun, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Africa and former Special Representative of the SG for Somalia</b>
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### Whose peace is it anyway?

For many people Somalia is synonymous with violence, warlordism, famine, displacement, terrorism, *jihadism*, and piracy.

Nearly two decades of foreign diplomatic, military and statebuilding interventions have failed to build peace in Somalia. To date none of the governments that have emerged from internationally-sponsored peace processes have succeeded in establishing their authority or broad legitimacy among Somalis.

Since 2001 international engagement has served to deepen the humanitarian and political crisis in southern Somalia, leaving more than three million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2009.

But Somalia is not an entirely lawless and ungoverned land. Over the past two decades Somali people have used their own resources and traditions of conflict resolution to re-establish security and governance in many communities. Somali-led initiatives have succeeded in building viable political and administrative arrangements to manage conflict and provide security and law that have proved durable. Somali entrepreneurship has also revitalized the economy in many places.

A map of Somalia showing the Bakaaro market area.

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### Protecting Bakaaro Market

abstracted from Accord 21 main publication, credited to Mohamed Ahmed Jama

Bakaaro market lies in the heart of Mogadishu and is the economic powerhouse of Somalia. Between December 2006 and January 2008 local security forces targeted businesses in Bakaaro district and looted substantial amounts of money, killing many traders, labourers and bystanders. Insurgents fighting the TFG and Ethiopian occupation established a foothold in the market, which then became subject to raids by government forces.

Civic and human rights activists, representatives from the business community and religious leaders decided to try to demilitarize the market area and establish a community police force. Civic actors created committees to engage the TFG and the insurgents in dialogue. The committees increased pressure on the parties, using both the local and international media.

The committees managed to broker a Memorandum of Understanding with the parties. This agreed to:

- demilitarize the market zone
- deploy a 450-strong community police force in the market
- establish a Peace Fund for the protection of the market and humanitarian services
- establish a coordination committee to monitor the implementation of the agreement

All of this was to be achieved within 30 days. The MOU was implemented and businesses were able to resume their activities with greater security.

The northern polities of the Republic of Somaliland and Puntland State of Somalia are proof of this. Both are struggling with on-going tensions in the transition from peacebuilding to statebuilding. But their endurance demonstrates the potential of ‘homegrown’ peacemaking and reconciliation. Even in volatile south central Somalia there is evidence of the positive impact of Somali approaches to reconciliation and security management.

Somalia’s protracted crisis has received intermittent international attention, from a major UN humanitarian intervention in the 1990s that failed to revive the state, to subsequent regional engagement led by Somalia’s neighbours – Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya – after international interest had subsequently waned.

“**The international community must get off the fence and engage ... This is a Somali process that needs active international support to develop a capacity to govern and build in a sense of responsibility and accountability. The international community has other distractions and is afraid of history. It should not wait, but engage and support transition now”**

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<b>Charles Petrie, UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia</b>
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The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) assumed a prominent role after 2002. But IGAD has often been a forum for regional power struggles, not least between Eritrea and Ethiopia. This has at times resulted in policy disarray, and the self interests of IGAD member states have actively undermined progress on peacemaking. After 9/11 and especially the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, international focus swung back to Somalia because of perceived links between failed states and terrorism, and also latterly piracy. In 2006 Ethiopian military intervention removed a nascent Islamist administration from Mogadishu. African peacekeeping forces have since been trying to protect the transitional government. Protecting Somali civilians is not part of their mandate.

#### Somali peacebuilding

Somali peace processes succeed where there is genuine Somali ownership. They are based on consensus decision-making and focus on reconciliation and the restoration of public security.

“**To be chosen a crowned elder one should be God-fearing and fair. Fear of God tends to make an elder considerate and do the right things with a sense of justice. There is a saying: ‘men without justice scatter as deer!’ With such qualities, the good elder becomes a ‘father’ to all men under him, irrespective of their political affiliation or religious beliefs”**

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<b>Sultan Said Garasse, traditional titled elder from Puntland</b>
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Reconciliation has proven much more difficult in south central Somalia, where a combination of local structural inequalities and greater international interference has made conflict more intractable. But even here local efforts have achieved a great deal, such as local peace accords and ‘neighbourhood watch’ security arrangements in Mogadishu.

Despite their political marginalization, Somali women play an important influencing role in local peace processes, and they have led direct action to promote security, such as spearheading initiatives to demobilize militia and remove roadblocks.

“**Peacebuilding conferences in Somaliland, in Borama and Sanaag (1993) and Hargeisa (1996) would not have taken place without the collective lobbying of women pressuring the elders to intervene to end the conflicts”**

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<b>Faiza Jama Mohamed, Equality Now</b>
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**International reconciliation conferences**
International peace negotiations have applied different state models. These have been influenced by a combination of internal clan agendas, foreign security interests and, recently, a religious ideological discourse.

- Regional autonomy and decentralized governance provided the basis for negotiations in the **1993 Addis Ababa conference**, following the collapse of a highly centralized state. Warlords rejected the model, seeing it as a threat to their power.
- The achievements in autonomous Somaliland and semi-autonomous Puntland, and nascent polities in the inter-riverine regions in the south, gave rise to the concept of reviving a state through a series of federated **‘building blocks’**.
- The **Arta peace conference** in Djibouti in 2000 reversed this approach and revived the notion of a unitary state. The **Transitional National Government** (TNG) established at Arta explicitly claimed sovereignty over the entire territory. It succeeded in achieving some international recognition.
- The inability of the TNG to establish its authority opened the

door to **IGAD-facilitated talks in Kenya in 2002-04**, which favoured a federal state structure. The debate was heavily influenced by Ethiopia. The talks produced a **Transitional Federal Government** (TFG).

- The leadership of the **Islamic Courts Union** (ICU), which emerged in opposition to the TFG, made clear its desire for a unitary Somali state that rejected Somaliland and Puntland autonomy.

No single factor can explain the causes of the Somali conflict and there is no consensus among Somalis on how it should be resolved. The nature of the crisis has mutated from a clan-based power struggle to an ideologically influenced conflict with a regional and global dimension. Efforts to promote reconciliation have been frustrated by a multiplicity of domestic and external actors pursuing their own agendas, and by their inability to adapt to shifting political contexts.

Islamist militancy has brought yet another dimension. Al Shabaab, the latest manifestation of the transformation in the Somali conflict, represents a major challenge for inclusive political engagement and for conflict resolution.

Al Shabaab’s rejection of the legitimacy of social organization by clan, generation and established religious practice undermines scope for using customary Somali templates of dialogue and negotiation based on kinship. Both Somalis and the international community are searching for effective responses to this challenge.

### Statebuilding and the Somali crisis

The Somali conflict and international engagement with it are intrinsically linked. But while international diplomacy has prioritized statebuilding, it has been unable to foster a vision or institutions of a state (or states) that are acceptable to Somalis.

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<b>“Establishing a government has been IGAD’s main achievement and this is the right entry point for wider international engagement”</b>
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<b>HE Eng. Mahboub M. Maalim, Executive Secretary of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)</b>
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Historically Somali statehood and nationhood have been deeply problematic – largely a foreign construct sustained by foreign resources, subject to foreign interests and a source of external and internal wars.

The **statebuilding** approach reflects an external analysis of the Somali conflict and currently **fails to get to grips with the problematic nature of a Somali state**.

**First**, statebuilding does not deal with the apparent **contradiction between a centralized state-based authority and a traditionally egalitarian political culture**, in which the legitimacy of force is not vested in a centralized institution of a state but in a diffuse lineage system, regulated by customary law and other established institutions. Somalis have developed different state models that are proving

to be resilient, such as the regional administrations in Somaliland and Puntland.

**Second**, the statebuilding strategy **assumes public support for a revived state**. The examples of Somaliland and Puntland demonstrate a demand for government. And demand is also strong among agro-pastoral and politically marginalized populations in the southern inter-riverine regions.

But many Somalis are deeply sceptical of a revived state over which they have no authority and that they see as potentially contrary to their interests.

“**in interviews on the design of the constitution some Somalis maintained that while they did want a state, they did not want one that had ‘anything to do with them”**

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<b>Kirsti Samuels, writer and policy analyst on statebuilding and peacebuilding</b>
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**Third, the conflict in Somalia has not been solely over the state**, a political arrangement that a growing percentage of the population has no memory of.

In fact it has involved numerous armed groups fighting over resources, territory and commercial monopolies, who have little care for states, borders or sovereignty. International diplomacy is therefore handicapped by a state-centric approach to conflict and mediation.

**Fourth, statebuilding and peacebuilding are not intrinsically synonymous** – and have often been contradictory in Somalia: the former prioritizes the consolidation of government authority, and the latter compromise and consensus-building.

The establishment of government institutions cannot be the sole measure of successful reconciliation. In a culture where collective acknowledgment of past wrongs and making reparations are an important part of peacemaking, reconciliation cannot be simply reduced to power-sharing arrangements.

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<b>Fifth</b> , there has been <b>disregard for</b> the appeal and possibilities of <b>an Islamic state</b> , ignoring the importance of Islam and the role of <i>Ulema</i> (religious scholars) in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
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*Jihadism* has a historical precedent in the Somali region, for example in the dervish uprising against European colonialism (1900-20). A violent response to Ethiopia’s military intervention in Somalia

was predictable and handed religious militants a new role in political mobilization. They have had a strong appeal to the young and dispossessed who have known nothing but conflict all their lives.

**Finally**, experience shows that **state capacity cannot simply be built through coordinated bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes**. This did not work before the war and has proven not to work now.

Notwithstanding internal impediments, the international capacity and political and financial will to actually rebuild a Somali state has consistently been inadequate.

**The accountability gap**
Accountability is critical in Somali peace processes, but is absent from internationally-sponsored peacemaking in Somalia. The Somali governments that have been forged at international peace conferences have had no clear lines of accountability.

Without mechanisms of formal or informal public control, neither the donors who fund peace processes, the mediators who manage them, nor the Somali public have been able to hold to account the governments they produced.

There are broader concerns over the accountability of the international interventions that have taken place in Somalia. Somali and foreign protagonists have caused Somali civilians massive injury, even as the international community proclaims a ‘responsibility to protect’. Primacy has been given to regional and international interests, leaving Somalis without protection and without a voice in international affairs.

Somalia’s lack of international legal representation leaves it vulnerable to rights violations and abusive territorial exploitation, such as fishing and dumping toxic waste. Piracy is in part a response to this, but not an answer. The Somali people need to be safeguarded from internal and external predation.

“**Accord 21 is an important publication: a great strength is its focus on the local Somali-led peace processes that have had much greater success than internationally-backed ones, but have received relatively little attention. Instead of vague generalizations about ‘traditional elders’, we hear directly from several of these, explaining in detail their role, difficulties and achievements”**

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<b>Virginia Luling is a social anthropologist specializing in southern Somalia</b>
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<p>This policy brief is based on the findings of Accord 21: <i>Whose peace is it anyway? connecting Somali and international peacemaking</i>. Accord 21 seeks to inform better understanding between indigenous Somali and international peacemaking policy and practice. Edited by Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy, it includes 30 articles, from interviews with Somali elders and senior diplomats with the AU, IGAD and the UN, to contributions from Somali and international peacemaking practitioners, academics, involved parties, civil society and women’s organizations, and other experts. The project has been undertaken in collaboration with Interpeace, drawing on their peace mapping study www.interpeace.org All quotations are from Accord 21, which can be downloaded free at www.c-r.org</p>
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