

Somaliland Focus (UK)  
**ROUNDTABLE METTING**  
Thursday 9 March  
**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

*A 'roundtable' style meeting was held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at the House of Commons, and organised by Somaliland Focus (UK). The meeting was chaired by Dr Steve Kibble (Somaliland Focus and Progressio) and was run under the Chatham House Rule, consequently **no comments made during the meeting may be attributed to specific individuals.***

*A total of over 35 individuals attended, including Lord Avebury, UK MP Kerry McCarthy, the current Speaker of the Somaliland House of Representatives, representatives of the three Somaliland political parties, representatives from the Somaliland Government, personnel from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, Action Aid, Progressio, Amnesty International, Democracy Network for Somaliland, Somaliland International Recognition Action Group, the Anglo-Somali Society, Independent Diplomat, Gargar, Raad International, Somali Voice newspaper and others.*

*The meeting was intended to spark discussion amongst a group with an ongoing and active involvement in issues relating to Somaliland and representing a range of UK and Somaliland groups. These notes are intended as an indication of the issues covered, though they are not a transcript of the discussion.*

*Please also note that the content of the discussion **does not necessarily reflect the views of Somaliland Focus (UK)**, whose objective is to facilitate the type of discussion that took place at the roundtable meeting covered by these notes. We aim to help to foster a genuine and ongoing debate on issues relating to society in Somaliland. This will inevitably include contentious subjects such as those surrounding Somaliland's quest for international recognition. This should not be taken to imply a specific organisational viewpoint.*

1. **Recognition:** the meeting started on the subject of international recognition and remained focused on that subject for the major part.
  - a. Taxation, currency and postal systems cannot be integrate into international systems without recognition. Trade also stymied – eg certification of livestock largely takes place in Yemen.
  - b. UK reluctance to recognise is a major disappointment.
  - c. Somalia is not in a position to formulate effective policy on this issue or any other in the foreseeable future, therefore makes prior agreement on their part impossible.
  - d. Paul Boateng (UK High Commissioner to South Africa) might be able to highlight, within the SA/AU context, the strides Somaliland has made in achieving a viable stability.
  - e. Alun Michael/Kerry McCarthy trying to establish All-Party Group on Somaliland. Needs 20 MPs from cross-parties to sign up. Perhaps 6 with real commitment and the rest just willing to put their names to paper.
  - f. Best strategy for pushing recognition might be to abandon hope of one party taking the lead and look for a small group willing to act simultaneously.
  - g. ICG is increasingly interested in Somaliland. Report due this month which will recommend action in the direction of recognition.
  - h. Foreigners can play a role in helping to build Somaliland government capacity. A lot of action but little coordination at the moment. Recent application to DFID was unsuccessful because it was not completed in format required by DFID – help needed to learn how to apply for money more effectively. Outsiders can also help to convince international community of validity of recognition.
  - i. Shift of emphasis on this subject to AU might be good – time to stop focusing on IGAD.
  - j. 30 UK MPs were supportive of recognition in 1993. Doesn't seem that much has improved since then. The list of MPs from then should still be available somewhere – needs following up: contact them again (for APG?).
  - k. Ethiopian agreement to use Berbera is de facto recognition.

- l. Need to explore statuses short of full recognition – eg observer status in UN, AU.
  - m. While everyone professes to want Somali development, they are too scared to act accordingly: development stymied by lack of recognition. Eg, UNDP recently sought to undertake project in Somaliland, but required approval from Somali government, so went to TFG. This derailed the project.
  - n. Should be able to use 'war on terror' as leverage: While boats are being hijacked off southern coast, Somaliland is proving more able to apprehend terrorists (eg election shoot-out/arrests and post-GTZ arrests).
  - o. Recognition would also allow Somaliland government to sign/ratify human rights treaties (would allow international community to apply pressure for this as well). Somaliland government has recently established human rights sub-committee.
  - p. Political parties and judiciary also need help in consolidating/building capabilities. Some undemocratic elements were acknowledged (eg limit to three parties) but necessary for continued transition away from purely clan-based system. Political parties have already had to contest several elections but are not really ready yet – policy is lacking etc.
  - q. Somaliland is the only African country with a bi-cameral system in which President is accountable to Upper House, and also where opposition parties hold a majority of parliamentary seats.
  - r. Question: does the Somaliland government have a connection with Westminster Foundation? Answer: yes, but WFD isn't prioritising Somaliland because of lack of recognition.
2. Discussion on UN/World Bank **Joint Needs Assessment for Somalia** and development funds.
- a. No-one locally knows what is happening.
  - b. Most funding for Somaliland is managed through Nairobi. Does Somaliland government have strong representation in Nairobi? Answer: no. TFG is represented there and Somaliland doesn't get any profile. There is some resentment that many of those that are in Nairobi and meant to have responsibility for Somalia/land are not well qualified to make decisions.
  - c. Note was made that, if there is a real perception of UNDP bias against Somaliland then this should be taken up officially (by UK government?) with UNDP.
  - d. World Bank has had a stronger relationship with Somaliland than with Somalia, though the existence of the TFG tilts that balance away from Somaliland. There is no formal contract between Somaliland and WB, but case by case compacts, visits, projects do exist.
  - e. WB organised a post-conflict conference on Somalia, in which Somaliland was going to participate, but WB required TFG to approve plans and Somaliland reps withdrew in protest.
  - f. DFID does not see Joint Needs Assessment as closing any doors – no decisions on principle of channelling funds to north/south have been made.
3. **Political Islam** is increasingly evident in Somaliland, but so far, as long as Government acknowledges sharia law, they have been allowed to continue largely unimpeded. There is a belief that this situation can only last if real progress is made in development terms.
4. **Livestock ban**: must be lifted and help needed in lobbying Saudi Arabia.
- a. Is the issue primarily a veterinary one? If so, foreign intervention would be inappropriate. Disagreement on this: others felt it is not a health issue, but a political one.
  - b. Could UK look for creative solutions: eg buy all Somaliland livestock and certify them. Market would be readily available once certified. UK could also offer veterinary advice, helping establish certification capacity.

*If you have comments regarding these notes, please contact Michael Walls or Somaliland Focus (UK)*  
[mail@michael-walls.com](mailto:mail@michael-walls.com)  
[info@somalilandfocus.org.uk](mailto:info@somalilandfocus.org.uk)