



**Federal Republic of Somalia
Somalia National Economic Advisors**

6th April, 2021

Open Letter to Somali Political Leaders “on Peace, Security and Election”

The members of the National Economic Advisors (NEA) of Somalia are very concerned about the deadlock in the 2021 elections process and its attendant consequences. The NEA is part of the National Economic Council (NEC) established in mid 2018, which consists of the President, PM, Economic Portfolio Ministers, Central Bank Governor, the Presidents of the Federal State Members, and currently eight (8) Economic Advisors (comprising national and international experts). The prime purpose of the NEC is to promote and secure sustainable socio-economic growth, and inclusive development; a mission that can only be achieved when peace, security and stability prevail.

The current political crisis engulfing Somalia does not only affect the functions of the NEC, but it could also represent the most severe threat to the integrity of our nation in a generation. The limited socio-economic progress that has been attained painfully and slowly in the past few years will be reversed. Also, the challenges facing the nation will become more intractable if we turn back to the abysmal recent history **“of a poster child for a failed state. And what is at risk, is precisely everything”**.

Today, Somalia faces a turning point to pursue peace, security, stability and development; or turn to danger, darkness and dissolution. It is through prioritizing and putting the national interests at the top of the agenda, and leaving behind petty squabbles that the country will exit the long dark tunnel and move towards the light.

Looking back, the Somali political leaders and society at large will recall the chaos and destruction brought about by the collapse of the central authority in our recent history, and the long transition from the lack of a central authority to the current incomplete federal system that aims to accommodate the diverse sets of interests between the center and regional in Somalia, within a federal and cooperative framework of governance.

The on-going transition was driven by a desire to give voice and devolve governance to the states and as well as local authorities, and strengthen the delivery of public services. The NEA are concerned that continued political instability will simply replace the previous dysfunctional unitary system with a completely nonfunctional federal one. In such event, the threat of balkanization and instability will be ever closer, and make the yearning for national peace and prosperity a distant dream.

The unfathomable disagreements within the NEC nucleus (FGS and FMS) causes us to worry about how the uncertain political environment would adversely affect the livelihood of the Somali people and the effectiveness of the vital NEA formulated reforms on: financial integrity, cooperative fiscal federalism, regional cooperation, and private sector development. Consequently, we implore political leaders in Somalia to set aside their political differences and personal interests, as the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity will not be realized through spurning dialogue, but through a transparent and peaceful electoral system at the ballot box.

Underdevelopment and insecurity remain the biggest enemies of peace in Somalia. Moreover, as absolute poverty remains pervasive and affects 70% of the population, a non-disruptive kind of toolkit is required to address the pertinent issues. At the same time, the success of political systems can only be measured by gains in effective governance, prosperity and peace. If politics does not lead to progress, it will lose its purpose, just as surely as it will lose the support of very people that provide the basis for legitimacy and credibility to governments.

Memories of the conflict induced collapse of the Somali government in 1991 must act a prescient reminder to us all of the risks of failed governance. The millions of our people that have been internally displaced or exist in refugee camps for decades, and the many thousands that perished in the worst recent man-made famine in the world in 2011 and in the more recent one of 2016 are graphic lessons to ponder and behold. Also, the current insecurity perpetuated by terror combatants, the millions begging for water at this time in plighted regions, and perpetual humanitarian appeals to feed many Somalis should refocus the attention of political leaders and the nation at large.

The current political stalemate and uncertainty in Somalia has distracted from and delayed much needed measures to cope with these life-threatening developments in the country and most importantly for the most vulnerable communities. Urgent resolution of the crisis and building functional and effective public institutions could ease the constraints on raising funding for the basic security and social services, promote the nascent progress in private sector activities, and encourage international partners' support for livelihoods and the national economy.

A political agreement among the Somali political leaders will restart the potential for recovery and growth of the economy. According to conventional wisdom, "politics is the art of the possible", and often the second-best attainable option. There is consensus that the main issues that the leaders need to resolve are: the composition of the elections committee; the makeup of the committee that will manage the selection of Somaliland members of parliament; and the Gedo governance resolution. A technical group that was established by the FGS and FMS leadership has reportedly agreed on and advanced to the relevant political leaders the measures to resolve the three contentious issues.

The NEA urges the national leaders to resolve all the outstanding matters, including gender representation and inclusivity of all marginalized communities, that would lead to open and transparent elections, which all the principals should and profess to want. It is for this reason that we implore all political leaders in Somalia to urgently set their eyes on the ultimate prize, which will never be attained through conflict and confrontation, but instead, through peaceful and transparent electoral system. At this difficult time in the nation's history, we need unity for the sake of the generations to come and for the judgment of history, which will record the integrity of the responsible leaders and their contributions to national stability, peace, and development.