

## Communiqué of the Gurmud Conference on “Vision 2020” An Alternative of Vision 2016

On March 21-22, 2015, delegates from the Somali Diaspora from across the USA and Canada met at a conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota under the theme “**Gurmud Conference: the quest for Somali-led permanent political process for 2016 and beyond**”. Through plenary and working groups, participants discussed and analyzed the transition towards democratic legitimacy in 2016. Participants debated the constitutional and legislative options as well as development of multiple models of change for political transition in August 2016 in Somalia. Participants took into account the paralysis of the Somali political system, which resulted in unfulfilled political mandates and failure to meet constitutionally-mandated benchmarks as well as the basic needs of the Somali citizen. Expert participants thoroughly assessed the performance of key national institutions including the legislative, executive and judicial authorities as well as the role of the foreign actors, both regional and global.

At the end of the second day, the Conference issued the following *Statement of Principles* which embody a framework for a path to constitutional as well as negotiated political transition for 2016.

1. The Conference strongly underscores the importance of protecting the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Somalia. The Conference further affirms the central role of the Somali citizen in running the affairs of the country, and notes that genuine political reconciliation is the key to durable peace and stability in Somalia.
2. Despite the aspirational goal post for one-person-one-vote in 2016, the Conference reminds all stakeholders that given the prevailing security circumstances and lack of structural and legal mechanisms necessary for genuine elections, it is desirable to admit at this early stage that traditional national elections can not be conducted in 2016, and consequently draw up contingencies thereof.
3. To ensure broad Somali ownership of the political roadmap and transition towards 2016, and to prevent the absolute control and monopoly over the political decision-making process in 2016 by a few Somali political figures or foreign actors, the Conference proposes the following:
  - (a). The Conference warns against outsourcing the determination of national electoral politics of 2016 to the regional administrations as this model would not be dissimilar to the political roles that the Road Map signatories enjoyed

during the Transitional Road Map period of 2011/2012, a process which was widely criticized for placing the destiny and future of the Somali people in the hands of a narrow group of stakeholders whose existence is predicated on advocacy of regional grievances, and with no national unified national agenda.

(b) The Conference proposes given the present reality that the current parliament flawed as it may be ought to be *preserved* and *retained* for purposes of the coming elections as it is foundational bedrock and the key national institution for political legitimacy for 2016 as well as the source for the ultimate expression of national will in developing the models of change for political transition in August 2016 in Somalia.

4. The Conference urges the recently appointed Independent Review and Implementation Commission to immediately start, in coordination with parliamentary Oversight Committee, the constitutional review process and propose key amendments to the constitution that could be translated into action before August 2016. These amendments and proposals must provide the framework for the transition to 2016 and harmonize contradictory and transitional provisions in the current constitutional and legislative frameworks.
5. The Conference reminds the Somali political leaders that time is of the essence and, therefore, starkly notes key steps needed to be completed immediately by the parliament and the government *before* August 2016 including, but not limited to;
  - i. Formation of the Constitutional Court;
  - ii. Appointment of members of the Judicial Services Commission;
  - iii. Appointment of members of the National Electoral Commission,;
  - iv. Establishing of multi-party political system;
  - v. Establishment of the Anti-corruption Commission;
  - vi. Appointment of members of the Independent Borders and Federation Commission;
  - vii. Establishment of the National Interstate Commission, and
  - viii. Establishment of the National Reconciliation Commission.

The Conference emphasizes that failure to establish these institutions in a timely fashion not only constitutes a blatant violation of the constitution but it also perpetuates the lack of institutionalization of the Somali political system, thereby allowing foreign actors to manage the Somali political affairs through the so-called “negotiated” measures rather than established legal processes.

6. In order to curtail the outsized foreign influence in the Somali political decision-making process and close the capacity gap at the relevant governmental institutions, the Conference urges the Somali government to enlist Somali experts and technocrats with unimpeachable credentials, integrity and proven nationalism to assist in developing model processes for political transition in 2016.
7. Underscoring the Somali public's overall lack of trust in their political leaders and governmental institutions, the Conference emphasizes that the success of any political transition in 2016 in Somalia will depend on effectively addressing a host of interlinked constitutional and legislative challenges and especially on providing institutional arrangements for their actual implementation. Therefore, the Conference calls upon government and the parliament to, with a sense of urgency, coordinate in discharging their solemn duty and constitutional mandates without any further delay.
8. Bearing in mind that *Gurmad* Conference is the start of a coordinated efforts by Somalis to restore Somali institutional ownership of the political process for 2016 and beyond, the Conference appointed a steering committee comprising Somali intellectuals representing various Somali Diaspora to follow up the implementation of the outcome of the conference and reach out to the Somali public for the purpose of formulating Somali-owned process for 2016.