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Strengthening dialogue between NSAs, administrations and the EC on the European Union's new assistance strategy to Somalia

Saferworld and its Somali partners, the Academy for Peace and Development, the Centre for Research and Dialogue and the Puntland Development Research Centre, are supporting a process to establish non-state actor (NSA) structures in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. The structures will enable NSAs to engage in dialogue with local administrations, transitional government structures and the international community, including the European Commission (EC). There is a particular focus upon engaging NSAs in the development of donor assistance strategies. The programme has established mechanisms for coordination and consultation with a range of NSAs at local and regional levels, and it is assisting NSAs to become more effective agents for change by enhancing their capacity to understand and formulate policy.

A major achievement of the programme to date has been the establishment of NSA working groups in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. These working groups have begun to engage in dialogue with the EC and international donors on external assistance to Somalia. The development of a new European Union (EU) assistance strategy to Somalia now presents a crucial opportunity for the NSA working groups to effectively engage in the strategy development process.

Outcomes of NSA consultations on the Annual Operational Review

In March 2006, Saferworld and its partners organised a series of consultations between the EC and NSA working groups in Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central Somalia. The consultations, which focused on the Annual Operational Review, provided an important opportunity for the NSA working groups to discuss and provide input into the EC's assistance strategy to Somalia. Following the consultations, the NSA working groups prepared written comments and recommendations, which were submitted to the EC Somalia Operations. The following summarises the recommendations and issues raised by each of the working groups.

The **Puntland** working group:

- expressed concern about the unbalanced distribution of aid between Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia and recommended that aid allocations be based upon the size and population of each region
- recommended that capacity-building support be provided to local and state institutions, and expressed concern that most projects in Puntland were carried out by international NGOs rather than local authorities and organisations
- encouraged support to democracy awareness, civic education, media training, human rights and good governance programmes in Puntland, including awareness-raising on the Puntland and TFG constitutions

- recognised that dialogue between Puntland NSAs, authorities and the EC had improved, and recommended that they develop a more operational partnership and working relationship and that capacity-building support be provided to NSAs
- recommended that the EC give greater priority to responding to disasters in Puntland and promoting long-term food security, through a range of interventions to improve productivity, marketing and management of resources for livestock rearing, fishing, and agriculture
- recommended that the EC support improvements in health, education, water and sanitation, through a range of programmes including support for rehabilitation of schools and improved teacher-training and curricula, establishment of waste management systems, upgrading of health services and regulation of pharmaceuticals, and provision of clean water
- recommended the expansion of micro-credit services in Puntland, but also identified the need to lower interest rates, develop co-operative associations for recipients, and develop a longer-term strategy for the provision of micro-credit services
- recognised the importance of the remittance sector to stimulating the local economy and encouraged EU support to reducing the costs and barriers to remittances

The **Somaliland** working group:

- expressed concern that Somaliland receives a smaller share of EC funds than Southern Somalia, however the EC clarified that Somaliland had received over half of EC funds to Somalia in the last decade.
- recommended that the EC engage more directly in partnership with the Somaliland government. The EC clarified its position that it could not provide funds directly to the Somalia/land authorities, who had not signed the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, though support to certain government institutions was provided indirectly, through UN or international NGO projects.
- questioned the EC's emphasis on the remittance sector and recommended that strengthening financial institutions and providing support for small businesses and emerging markets and industries be a priority.
- recommended that the EC prioritise girls education in Somaliland

The **South Central** working group:

- recognised and expressed satisfaction with the EC's interventions and achievements in Somalia
- expressed concern that South Central Somalia had been marginalised from EC assistance, despite the severe man-made and natural disasters in the region, and recommended greater EC access and intervention, including the reestablishment of an EC office in Mogadishu

- recommended that the future priorities for EC support to South Central be institution-building, reconciliation, security, and NSA participation in all aspects of the programming cycle

Recommendations to the EC on the consultation process

Over the coming months, the EC will hold a series of consultations with Somali NSAs, administrations and EU member states to inform the development of the new EU assistance strategy to Somalia. This will include a series of information-sharing and consultation meetings with each of the NSA working groups in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia. Enabling NSAs to make a real contribution to the new EU assistance strategy through this consultation process is vital to ensuring that EU assistance is informed by Somali experiences and perspectives and is sensitive to conflict dynamics. In order to make the consultation process effective, the project partners recommend that the EC:

- Ensure that the NSA working groups have enough time and information to prepare and co-ordinate their input into the draft strategy. Inform them of the consultation and strategy development process and timetable and provide them with relevant documentation, including the draft strategy, in advance of the consultations.
- Develop sustained dialogue with the transitional government structures and Somali administrations on the importance of guaranteeing space for NSAs and enabling them to participate in the formulation of EU assistance strategies.
- Discuss the outcomes of the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) with NSAs, and consult with them on how the new EU assistance strategy should reflect the JNA findings and support its implementation.
- Create space for dialogue between NSAs, administrations and the EC at all levels on the development of the new EU assistance strategy.

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