



## **Report of the Round Table Discussion on “Somaliland – Africa’s Best-Kept Secret?”**

On the historically seminal occasion of Ghana assuming the 2007 chair of the African Union, celebrating 50<sup>th</sup> years of its independence and taking its seat at the UN Security Council, a roundtable discussion was held on 5 March to probe into the topic: *'Somaliland – Africa’s Best-Kept Secret?’, Unpacking recent Somalia & Somaliland Dynamics.*

This timely roundtable was arranged by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in association with the University of South Africa’s Department of Religious Studies, a West African and South African institution, which specializes in the international relations of the Horn of Africa’s security architecture, cultural and social dimensions.

Speakers included, the veteran Ghanaian politician Mr. K.B. Asante; South African academic Dr. Iqbal Jhazbhay; Head of the Kofi Annan Conflict Prevention Department Dr. Kwesi Aning; Somaliland Foreign Minister Mr. Abdillahi Duale and key Ghanaian businessman Mr. Steve Mawuenyega and Honorary Consul of Somaliland.

In attendance were Major General JK Attipoe Commandant of the KAIPTC, key policy-makers, including senior Ghanaian foreign ministry officials, military officials, Somaliland President Dahir Rayale Kahin, Ghana’s Nepad Peer Review members, Somaliland’s Minister of Planning and the President of the Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students. Numerous local and African institutions, such as South African TV and radio, graced the occasion and contributed towards an insightful and robust discussion.

This roundtable discussion attempted to present innovative policy ideas and engaging commentary on the issues of the day, as the African Union Commission and key African states grapple with taking forward the AU’s 2005 report on Somaliland and its current attempts to stabilize southern Somalia with the arrival of Ugandan and other AU troops in Mogadisho amidst mortar shells.

Opening the roundtable session with incisive preliminary commentary, veteran Ghanaian politician Mr. K.B. Asante, highlighted the need for a new approach to peace and stability. Holding on to old methods, he argued, did not bode well for Africa’s future prosperity. In this respect, he called for Africans to up-date themselves with ground realities so that appropriate policy steps can be taken which avoid war and fulfills the aspirations of the people for self-determination. Drawing on his extensive experiences, including serving in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s cabinet, Mr. Asante was of the view that the

union of former northern British Somaliland with the southern Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Democratic Republic was a disaster, which we needed to acknowledge and come to face, squarely. Avoiding reality creates further disasters, he added.

Horn of Africa specialist Iqbal Jhazbhay of the University of South Africa was called to address the topic: *'Somaliland – Africa's Best-Kept Secret?'*, *Unpacking recent Somalia & Somaliland Dynamics*. He suggested a framework of inquiry based on his two recent studies: "ETHIOPIA, SOMALILAND & SOMALIA AMID AN ISLAMIST RISING STORM ON THE HORN: The African Union & the Case for Urgent Preventive Diplomacy" (Centre for Policy Studies, Policy: issues and actors, volume 19, no 8 (December 2006) 1-43) and "Security, Governance and Development: The Braided Strands of Future Prosperity in Africa" (Written in association with Patrick Mazimhaka, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in Terrence Mc Namee (ed), *African Security, Commodities and Development*, Whitehall Report 4-06, London: Royal United Services Institute (2006) 1-5). (See : <http://www.rusi.org/commodities> and [http://www.cps.org.za/cps\\_pdf/pia19\\_8.pdf](http://www.cps.org.za/cps_pdf/pia19_8.pdf))

Jhazbhay argued that Somaliland had taken healthy, yet difficult steps towards actualizing the triple framework of a) security, b) governance and c) development - three central braided strands for Africa's future prosperity. Somaliland's security emerged with effective demobilization, a modern-cum-traditional-elders' compact of governance with nascent institutions of state building along with a home-grown/diaspora-led economy. Key challengers remain, as Somaliland works its way of balancing the executive and legislative arms of government. Currently, the executive arm is in the hands of the ruling Udub party while parliament is in the hands of the opposition Ucid and Kulimiye parties. The existing tension of media freedom remains, as the government over-reacts, while the media come to terms with covering the office of the president within a code of acceptable ethics of reporting, balancing the demands of a robust democracy and traditional norms of dignity. Clearly, Jhazbhay stressed that Somaliland's economic development prospects have been hampered by the lack of international recognition and has left Somaliland with further problems, which this nascent democracy can well do without. This innovative democracy is fragile and can well be threatened, less its home-developed efforts be supported, nurtured and protected.

Somaliland Foreign Minister Abdillahi Duale was a respondent to Jhazbhay's presentation. While he commended Jhazbhay's presentation and outlined Somaliland's survival amongst security threats such as the Union of Islamic Courts, he presented two specific proposals, as a response to Jhazbhay's point on the need to advance Somaliland's development trajectory via economic growth and international recognition:

\* 'to make known the African Union report on Somaliland, by every way possible and to encourage senior AU member states to visit Somaliland and see for themselves our home-grown democratic gains, challengers' and,

\* to encourage the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) to send a follow-up delegation and report back to AU's PSC (for the full speech see:

<http://africanpress.wordpress.com/2007/03/06/speech-by-the-foreign-minister-of-somaliland/> )

Dr. Kwesi Aning of the Kofi Annan Centre, in conclusion, pulled together the key strands of the presentations and alerted the audience to the key dynamics within the African Union Commission, which need to be taken into account for the project of advancing Somaliland's democracy and recognition. He stressed the need for Somaliland to engage the AU's Peace and Security Council secretariat, as a means to advance the African Union's 2005 report on Somaliland and the Nepad goal of advancing stability and good governance.

This roundtable forum was a profoundly thoughtful step to begin the discourse, where scholars and policy-makers from West, South and East Africa, come together to chart new avenues for post-conflict prevention and reconstruction and map out a creative way to advance the African Union's 2005 report on Somaliland. Indeed, such continental forums on the Horn of Africa are rare and need to be fully encouraged. The roundtable planted the seeds for a possible full-day roundtable policy seminar on Somaliland's future prospects in the context of a shifting southern Somalia and the AU report on Somaliland, which called AU member states to 'find a special mechanism and framework of dealing with the status of the Republic of Somaliland'.



**Map of the Horn of Africa, Source Economist, 18 January 2007**