

Unisa at Washington Somaliland Conference



Unisa' College of Humanities academic, Iqbal Jhazbhay, delivered recently the keynote address at the Washington Conference on Somaliland (8 September 2006).

Convened by the Somaliland Policy and Reconstruction Institute, a US-based Somaliland diaspora umbrella organisation, Jhazbhay's opening presentation examined creative ways of consolidating the evolving African agenda within Somaliland and the Horn of Africa.

This well-attended Conference of some 650-persons was held at the Doubletree Hotel, within stone-throwing distance of the US navy and Pentagon headquarters.



Various interest groups attended, notably students, Somali studies specialists, political and international relations scientists, workers, Somaliland's National Electoral Commission, Somaliland's three political parties, diaspora professionals, women's activists, Somaliland and Canadian MPs, US congressman, NGOs, poets, policy-makers, US state department representatives, and businesspersons. (Detailed programme, see: <http://www.sopri.org>)

Drawing on his recently published paper on Security, Governance and Development: The Braided Strands of Future Prosperity in Africa, co-authored with the African Union Commission's Deputy Chair, Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka, Jhazbhay explored the three inter-linked strands for possible future prosperity within Somaliland and ways to consolidate its young, home-grown democracy (see paper at: <http://www.rusi.org/publication/other/ref:O44E3708613E05/>).



Celebrated author of *Queens without crowns* and Director of the Somaliland woman's umbrella organisation Nagaad, Mrs Amina-Milgo Warsame

Ambassador Welile Nhlapo, former Director-General of the South African Presidential Support Unit and South Africa's acclaimed former special envoy to Burundi

Iqbal Jhazbhay of Unisa with veteran Somaliland diplomat, Ambassador Abby Farah (right), former Director of the UN Centre against Apartheid

The prime strand of security was explored and included new ways to secure Somaliland's security and hard-earned peace amidst the rise of political Islam in the Horn of Africa: will the methods to advance Somaliland's security be one of well-timed dialogue and appropriate engagement with the Union of Islamic Courts as equals or, the failed and tried foreign military option as evident in the invasion of south Lebanon and in southern Somalia? Or will it require a wait-and-see approach? Are labels such as 'moderate' and 'radical' Islam helpful as policy conceptual positions in reducing world tensions or do they create further heat and tensions?

On the enabling strand of governance, the on-going global and continental challenge of developing accountable, transparent governance systems was examined. In this respect, friends of Somaliland were encouraged to help each other as friends to review neighbouring systems and advise each other on better governance systems to avoid decay, stagnation and ultimate disappearance. Friends are generally concerned of each other's well being and subsequently can speak to each with care and empathy for each other's advancement.



Mohammed Yassin Olad (left), CEO of Somaliland's Daalo Airlines in discussion with Ambassador Abby Farah

Iqbal Jhazbhay delivering his opening paper

Ambassador Lange SChermerhorn (right), former US ambassador to Djibouti and head of the International Republican Institute's observer delegation to the 2005 Somaliland parliamentary elections, Miss Asma-han Musa, a worker-activist of the Somaliland Toronto community and Iqbal Jhazbhay



The third principal strand of development was explored in the Somaliland context of attracting African diaspora, international investment and development support, in the priority domains of post-war infrastructure development of airports, ports, roads as well as hospitals, schools and housing. Clearly, Somaliland's development trajectory is impeded by the slow movement of African states to see the urgency to finalize its legal international status either as an interim authority, such as the Palestinian authority, or its international recognition as a country such as the unique cases of Western Sahara or Eritrea.

Jhazbhay's paper called on African states to remain committed to the strategic goals of the AU's official development programme of NEPAD by affirming Somaliland's nascent security, democratic governance and development. The paper argued that African states need to table the AU's Somaliland fact-finding report at the earliest AU Summit for meaningful follow-up action, in the context of a new and dynamic African Union.

A number of internationally acclaimed personalities were in attendance and included, founder of the Somali Studies International Association, Prof Hussein Adam; Director of the Somaliland Nagaad Umbrella Organization, Mrs. Amina-Milgo Warsame; Daalo airlines CEO, Mr. Mohamed Yassin Olad; Northwestern University's African Studies programme Director, Prof William Reno; Council for Foreign Relations Africa programme Director, Ambassador Princeton Lyman; founding Director of the Somaliland Academy of Peace and Development, Dr. Hussein Bulhan; Professor of International Affairs at George Washington University, Ambassador David Shinn; Japan's Josia International University's economist, Prof. Ibrahim Megag Samater; Vice President of the world's largest New York-based insurance-investment conglomerate, Mrs Yussur Abrar; Somaliland Parliament's Deputy Speaker, Mr. Abdi'aziz Samaale; US State Department representative, Miss Nole Garey; and Somaliland's beloved composer of the famous poem on Watergate (on US veto misuse as neocolonialism) and Nelson Mandela, Professor Mohamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaariye'.

This 2006 path-breaking Washington Somaliland Conference, drawing on the lessons from the 1st Sopri 2005 Los Angeles Somaliland Conference -judging from the evaluations of some academics, policy- makers and students- was an overall resounding success (minor logistic blemishes aside). Organisers indicate that here is a strong likelihood that the 3rd Somaliland diaspora Conference will be convened in either Minnesota or Toronto, home to a sizeable Somaliland diaspora community. Until, then, the Somaliland Policy and Reconstruction Institute, has its work cut out to better tailor in the best way possible, the next Conference. Its bound to receive much support for its priceless efforts.

Map of Somaliland and Somalia, Economist, July 2006