



POLITICS NOW

## IGAD and Somalia

### Key points

- **IGAD's engagement with Somalia has helped to sustain international interest in Somali issues.**
- **IGAD is perceived by many Somalis as representing the interests of Kenya and Ethiopia rather than Somalia.**
- **Somalis would like to see more practical assistance from IGAD.**
- **Somalis are increasingly questioning AMISOM's military engagement in Somalia.**
- **There is a widespread view that a Somali-led security strategy, rather than one led from outside, is needed for the establishment of an enduring peace.**

### Panellists

**Ambassador Mahboub Maalim**, Executive Secretary, IGAD

**Dr Ibrahim Farah**, University of Nairobi, Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS)

**Halima Ibrahim**, Chair, Somali Civil Society Coalition; co-chair of the Technical Selection Committee for the nominated members of the National Constituent Assembly and Parliament

**Jan-Petter Holtedahl**, Counsellor, Somalia Affairs, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Nairobi (Chair)

### IGAD's Role in Somali Peace and Security

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was established to promote peace, security, prosperity and economic integration in Eastern Africa. Since 2004, it has been active in supporting the re-establishment of a sovereign government in Somalia.

**Ambassador Mahboub Maalim**, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, opened the discussion by drawing a distinction between himself and IGAD. He was there not to air his own personal opinions,

but to speak on behalf of IGAD. The single most important aspect of IGAD's involvement in Somalia, he said, was IGAD's consistency over time. Somalia is a member of IGAD, and IGAD's focus on Somalia had kept it on the international agenda for 22 years. As a regional body IGAD is able to bring together heads of state on a regular basis. As far as IGAD is concerned, stabilising Somalia is the first priority. Somalia has ceased to be simply a Somali issue, or even a regional issue; it is now a global one.

Ambassador Maalim outlined the current state of affairs in Somalia, reflected in five documents developed by the Somali government with the support of IGAD and its member states: the Provisional Federal Constitution of Somalia, ratified by 825 Somali elders in August 2012; the 6 Pillar Priority Programme for Somalia, which outlines the Somali government's main priority areas for development, and has been subsumed into the IGAD Regional Grand Stabilization Plan; the Somali government's 2016 Vision for Somalia, which outlines the process for creating a Somali federal system, removing al-Shabaab, and holding elections in 2016; and the December 2012 Addis Ababa agreement, which promotes Somalia's involvement in the international community and guides IGAD's involvement in Somalia.<sup>1</sup> Finally, there is the recently signed New Deal, which addresses Somalia's security, governance, social and economic needs, and its relationship with international donors.

Ambassador Maalim reiterated that peace and security in Somalia is IGAD's first priority. In the days following this meeting, he said, the heads of the defence forces of the IGAD region and of the East African Community (EAC) would be convening with the sole aim of preparing a strategy to rid Somalia of insurgencies. This was the only way the government of Somalia could function and become accountable. IGAD is committed to training a Somali military and providing it with equipment, he said and has

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<sup>1</sup>The Grand Stabilization Plan for South Central Somalia', IGAD, 6 December 2012.

helped to build the Somali army into a trained and integrated force of over 20,000. IGAD is also involved in assisting with Somalia's political recovery, including helping the Somali government with its foreign relations and assisting the government with its political agenda in relation to Puntland, Somaliland and the Jubba region.

Ambassador Maalim noted that it was also part of IGAD's role to hold its partners accountable to their pledges and to ensure that the international community follows through on its financial and aid commitments. IGAD, he said, is concerned about the recent pronouncements of some international banks in their attempt to close the *Hawala* system of remittances. The IGAD Council of Ministers had signed a communiqué protesting this action. For many people, he said, the system is the difference between life and death<sup>2</sup>.

In concrete terms, development in Somalia means the provision of water, building infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, agricultural development, and support to civil society, women and youth groups, the Ambassador said. One of the priority issues for IGAD is the drought resilience agenda. Somalia is a hotspot of drought, it is essential that resources are found to support drought resilience. Over 250,000 Somalis lost their lives due to drought in 2011, and there are 1 million people who require humanitarian assistance.

The Ambassador concluded by noting that federalism is a crucial issue for development, not just for Somalia but for the entire region. Federalism, he said, was not something that IGAD was trying to force on the Somali government. But government is something that people in the region, and in their villages, need to feel is close to them.



## A Sovereign Somali Nation?

Dr Ibrahim Farah of the University of Nairobi, IDIS, responded to the Ambassador's comments with a description of a trip he made to Mogadishu in early September 2013.

Although he witnessed a very determined government, it is one that is 'haltingly trying to deliver'. He also said that he had observed what he called an international mafia in Somalia, comprised of al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda, the AU, AMISOM, UNSOM, and disgruntled Somali politicians and business people. There were also other players: marauding militias answerable to none but themselves, a confused diaspora, a fragmented civil

society, various representatives of regional entities pushing for a bigger share of the national cake, private security and military companies, and foreign spy agencies. All of them were working, knowingly or not, against everything that the Somali government was trying to do in the service of the Somali nation.

Dr Farah questioned IGAD's ability to act on its own, as an independent secretariat, rather than following the line of its member states. The Horn of Africa region, he said, is facing a plethora of issues—in Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and, of course, in Somalia. He suggested that competing national interests might make it difficult for IGAD to pay full and appropriate attention to the problems of Somalia.

Despite a shift in the negative perception among Somalis that IGAD is synonymous with Ethiopia, the view remains that IGAD is not doing a good job on the ground. IGAD, he said, is seen as being 'neither hands on nor hands off'. It is seen as ineffective and as having no long-term strategic thinking. A major problem is the absence of a capable, competent and willing 'big brother' nation in the region that is able to help with capacity-building, statecraft, rehabilitating the local market economy, and the development of a Somali-led security programme.

<sup>2</sup> See also RVI – Nairobi Forum – Meeting Report – Remittance Transfers to Somalia, September 2013.

Dr Farah suggested that it would be wise for Somalia to look outside the region for examples of success. Turkey, he suggested, might present a good fit due to its religious affinity with Somalia. Instead of the current EU-led New Deal, he said, there should be a Somali-led Marshall Plan. There could be no development in the sub-region without peace. And no development or peace without respect for human rights and the rule of law. The recent Kenyan invasion of Somalia, Dr Farrah said, was not conducive to this. Just like the Somali government, Dr Farrah said, IGAD is not doing enough.

## The Role of Civil Society, Women and Youth

**Halima Ibrahim**, Chairperson of the Somali Civil Society Coalition (an organisation currently focused on Galgaduud), said that a strong civil society can promote economic and political development. This can include reducing the threat of terrorism. Somali women work harder than Somali men, as breadwinners, keepers of the family, and peacemakers. But political exclusion curtails the civil and political liberties of women and infringes on their freedom. She noted that most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Somalia are women. IGAD and others need to find better ways to repatriate women living in IDP camps and get female refugees back to their villages and towns so that they can resume their familial and economic roles.

A strong civil society is needed to tackle high levels of illiteracy, political intolerance, and a corrupt judiciary. Though civil society groups have done tremendous work during the transition period, Mrs Ibrahim suggested that many continue to operate for selfish ends and, as a result, civil society in Somalia remains fragmented. Now that some members of civil society are in power in Somalia, the question is: how will they ensure that civil society is not used as an instrument for sustaining bad government?

IGAD's presence, she argued, is only felt when there are political issues of high concern to IGAD member governments. When it comes to civil society, on issues of female empowerment, in places such as Hargeysa, Mogadishu, and the Central Region, IGAD is absent. Meanwhile, AMISOM continued to get the same amount of

funding and troops although their activities had been reduced.

## Discussion

A speaker from the floor said IGAD is perceived by Somalis as representing Kenya's and Ethiopia's interests rather than Somalia's. **Ambassador Maalim** acknowledged that IGAD could do more in Somalia, but rejected the notion that IGAD did not work for Somali interests. He noted that he has a mandate from the regional governments to work for all Somali people without discrimination and regardless of where in Somalia they reside. The president of Somalia, he said, is his 'boss'.

Another participant asked which IGAD programmes had had tangible results, apart from the IGAD-generated Country Programming Paper and the Resilience Programming Paper. Ambassador Maalim explained that the organisation implements road construction and food programmes among others.

A member of the audience, who identified herself as a member of the Somali diaspora, asked what civil society organisations in Somalia were doing to promote national reconciliation as a means of moving Somalis away from clan adherence.

**Halima Ibrahim** responded that civil society was at the forefront of efforts to bring clans together and to get them to resolve their problems peacefully. 'Wherever you find a clan reconciliation meeting' she said, 'there is an NGO behind it and community elders helping to resolve the situation'. At the conference where Jubbandal was formed, civil society composed the majority of those in attendance. 'But much of our work', she explained, 'depends on our ability to get help with food, water and health care.'

In response to a question about institutional training and development, the Ambassador answered that IGAD was implementing a great number of institution-building programmes including university development and student scholarship funds. He explained that IGAD has a civil society forum and noted that there were good civil society members and bad ones, transparent and not so transparent ones. Some made negative contributions but overall, he said, IGAD was supportive of their influence.

A member of the audience raised a question about IGAD's role in army training in Somalia.

How, he asked, could this be done in such a way that would build the national character of an army and not end up being associated with particular Somali communities. The Ambassador responded by saying that between 14,700 and 15,000 troops had already been trained by IGAD countries. IGAD engaged in areas that were relatively calm and trained as many people as they could. Some day there would be progress on a national programme to bring the country together.

**Ibrahim Farah** noted that many Somalis had started asking when AMISOM would disengage from the country. The force had been there for seven years, he said, and Somalia still had no cohesive national agenda. In the absence of a Somali-led security force, al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda had taken over in Mogadishu. Civil society organisations, he said, are increasingly asking when external military forces—the Kenyan Defence Force, the Ethiopian National Forces, or AMISOM—will be leaving.

In response **Ambassador Maalim** said that no country had entered Somalia unilaterally, but that if AMISOM withdrew today, there would be no federal government. AMISOM, he said, has not been in Somalia long enough to bring national unity. But in the few years it has been there it has built a 23,000 strong security force. He suggested that some responsibility for the set-backs lay with Somalis themselves, who needed to alter their clan-oriented mind-sets.

**Halima Ibrahim** also responded to the question of AMISOM's future by saying that civil society was not advocating that AMISOM should leave Somalia immediately. However, the question remains: what is AMISOM's exit strategy? The question, she said, was pertinent because AMISOM soldiers appear to be diverting resources, including food, from Somali forces. This, in a context where there is no improvement in Somalia's security environment, makes AMISOM's current position untenable. 'When', she asked, 'would Somalis have a Somali-led security force responsible for the nation's security?'

A member of the audience asked what proportion of Somalia was occupied by groups that IGAD considered to be 'partners' as opposed to 'opponents'. **Ambassador Maalim** said that IGAD is gaining support daily, but admitted that

significant areas of the country are occupied by insurgents. This is why, he said, IGAD is strongly focused on removing them.

Another question asked what IGAD was doing to nurture a regional identity, so that its member states come to see their individual security as being interlinked, not simply militarily but also in terms of human and economic security. Ambassador Maalim asserted that there is a regional identity and the fact that ethnic groups cut across national borders reinforces this. Dr Farah argued that being part of the East African region is part of the Somali identity and Somalis need to cultivate that. In response to a question about how independent IGAD is from its member states, the Ambassador said that the organization receives very little money from its members compared to what it gets from its development partners.

A member of the audience asked whether IGAD has plans to hold the Somali government accountable to international rights standards. Ambassador Maalim acknowledged that there were many international conventions and institutions that Somalia's government, like others, should adhere to. But, he said, their implementation, cannot be left solely to the government; it requires the broad support from Somali society.



## Credits

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