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PUNTLAND DIASPORA FORUM REPUDIATES MISLEADING ICG REPORT
For Immediate Release

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Puntland Diaspora Forum wishes to strongly refute the largely baseless propaganda like report '**Somalia: The Trouble with Puntland**', *Crisis Group Africa Briefing N.64, 12 August 2009*. The report is a hotchpotch of outdated, overly sensationalized facts and outright lies allegedly compiled with the help of largely anonymous sources in Puntland, Nairobi and in the diaspora. We regret to say, that the ICG missed an opportunity, given all the resources that went into the production of this grossly biased report, to depict a more accurate picture of the current realities in the Somali State of Puntland and, in the process, promote good working relations with the new administration in Garowe. Regretfully, it chooses instead, and again in collusion with these unidentified, almost entirely anonymous critics of doom and gloom, to manufacture non-existent social fragmentation, and portray a picture of imminent collapse.

Neither the government nor the people of Puntland are likely to be taken in or distracted by this kind of one sided, inexplicably adversarial reporting regardless of its authorship. Moreover Puntland's state building journey will continue unabated within the context of the existing federal arrangements. The resolve of the people of the Somali State of Puntland in this regard is indomitable. PDF strongly supports the Farole government's pronounced commitment to a fairer and more functional federalism and implores the TFG of Somalia to negotiate in good faith to that end.

The current presence in Puntland of the Prime Minister of the TFG, H.E. Omer Abdirashid A. Sharmarke provides an opportunity for both administrations to carve out practical working relations between the two administrations. Incidentally, a fairer ICG report might have noted that the Somali flag was proudly hoisted by President Abdirahman Sh. Mohamed Mohamud (Farole) in the Minneapolis Convention Center on 1 July 2009 at midnight past one minute in celebration of the 49th anniversary of the national independence and unity day during his recent working visit to the USA., while the Vice

President of Puntland Gen. Abdisamad Ali Shire presided over a similar ceremony in Garowe in the same day. Overlooking this could not have been accidental in our view.

PDF is not denying that there can be noteworthy problems in Puntland and is not as such dogmatic about their defence; we are however gravely dismayed by the lack of even a semblance of the kind of commitment to fairness and informational accuracy that one would naturally expect from an organization that purports to want to forestall the outbreak of violent conflict in war prone societies. Contrary to the ICG's stated objective of preventing conflict, it seems as though this particular report was written to encourage perhaps even incite social discord among the peaceful inhabitants of Puntland- a notable oasis of peace in our now much troubled nation.

While we agree that Puntland has experienced a period of decline during the last three years, the report is uncharacteristically liberal in its exaggeration of both the scope and reach of this decline and its putative impact to state/society relations in Puntland. ICG chooses also to ignore the national context of the decline and engages in cherry picking and selection bias. More important, the report fails, we think deliberately, not to paint the varying records of all the administrations that ruled Puntland since its inception with the same brush.

While ICG pays lip service to the 7 January 2009 free and fair election in the state which produced the current government, the great developmental strides made thus far by the Farole administration are either completely buried under the rug or presented as potentially ruinous political adventures.

PDF calls upon the government of Puntland to stay on course in its current efforts to improve governance, uproot the scourge of piracy that so maligned the good name of Puntland, combat corruption, nepotism and cronyism wherever they exist, protect the human rights of all citizens and non-citizens alike, improve the lives of all citizens by extending critical social services to the remotest parts of the state, and foster an atmosphere conducive to the holding of free and fair elections in the future. Such are the critical benchmarks against which Puntland's democratic development will be measured against not a partisan report by an apparently ill or uninformed fledgling think tank.

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