



PDRCTalks



TOPIC

Puntland State of Affairs

and the federal elections of 2020/2021

Guest Speaker

H.E Said Abdullahi Deni

President of Puntland State of Somalia

PDRC TALKS DECEMBER **2019**



Garowe, Puntland, Somalia



(+252)907794231



info@pdrcsomalia.org
www.pdrcsomalia.org

Background to the PDRCTalks

In March 2019, the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC) initiated a monthly event dubbed PDRCTalks. This event is a new initiative to spread ideas, messages, and awareness on issues related to the betterment of Somalia. These issues cover topics ranging from governance, democratization, peace and development which are the key focus areas of PDRC.

PDRCTalks is an interactive platform in which prominent Somali scholars, veteran politicians and/or retired civil servants are hosted once in every month to serve as guest speakers and to deliver an expert presentation at a uniquely themed talk-event at PDRC. PDRCTalks aim to spark conversation within the Somali community and through this useful dialogue, change the attitudes and lives of Somalis. Social media is utilized to spread the messages throughout Somali communities living in the diaspora and within the country, through live streams. PDRCTalks has been received well and has featured prominent figures in Somali society to bring to the fore a multi-faceted number of topics in politics, economics, social issues as well as cultural themes.

PDRCTalks is a value-addition component to PDRC's vision as a solutions-oriented organization that prides itself on offering useful tools to bring about peaceful, coexistence and economic development by all Somalis.

About PDRCTalks 8

The PDRCTalks VIII took place in the evening of December 26th 2019, themed "Puntland State of Affairs and The Federal Elections Of 2020/2021". These talks were significant in the sense that the keynote speaker His Excellency President Said Abdullahi Deni who is an active participant and major stakeholder in both Puntland state affairs and the federal elections compared to other's who are just passive participants.

Puntland as State has been in existence for the last twenty-two years and was established out of the need to give Somalis a sense of order and continuity coupled with the fact that many who had been affected by the civil war had fled to Puntland and thus needed a safe haven. The president used this event to give a history of how Puntland came into being, the challenges and processes to make the state what it is today. Besides, he also provided an overview of Somalia's journey since independence, through the military regime, civil war, reconstruction and the expected 2020/21 elections.

Organization of the event

The PDRCTalks VIII was held on 26th December 2019 at the PDRC compound in Garowe, and was attended by over 250 participants among them government officials, opinion-makers/shapers, academicians, former government officials and representatives from UN, INGO, civil society groups, women and youth groups and community leaders – religious and traditional leaders.

The event commenced with opening remarks made by PDRC's Executive Director Ali Farah Ali who expressed gratitude to the President who despite his busy schedule, found time to grace such an event.

The event was streamed live on Puntland Television, Jubbaland Television, and Facebook, coupled with live updates on Twitter to reach a cross-section of audiences all over the world. PDRCTalks prides itself on giving ample time to the guest speaker, panellists and contributors, and, most importantly, the audience to exchange ideas learn from each other, and to further deepen their understanding of the subject in discussion.

Introductory Remarks

PDRC's Executive Director Mr. Ali Farah Ali opened the 8th PDRCTalks expressing gratitude to the president indicating how it was such an honour for PDRC to host the President as the guest speaker in these talks. The presence of the President was a clear indication of the traction and significance of the PDRCTalks in shaping the conversation about Somalia moving forward. The Executive Director extended gratitude to the panellists accompanying the president into the panel following his presentation. He indicated that having the President was a great opportunity for the people to hear from the man who has to make decisions that affect their day-to-day lives and also offer them a chance to ask the president on the progress he is making on the promises he made while in the campaign trail.

Keynote speech

In his introductory remarks, the President said that he was honoured and humbled at the same time to be invited to such a great event. He reiterated that he has immense respect for PDRC tracing its history since it was known as WSP. He then delved into his speech in which he covered two issues:



He gave an overview of Somali's history from the time the country got independence, from 1960 to 1991, when the government collapsed. The president mentioned the assassination of President Abdirashid Ali Sharmaake in 1969 which was followed by a military regime that had taken over which completely disregarded the constitution, good governance, democracy and arrested all politicians. The military rule had far-reaching consequences, as it was dictatorial arresting and jailing all those who opposed it. The President went into detail on the developments in the years that followed, the numerous disagreements, conflicts and eventual collapse of the nation-state in 1991. The tense situation forced people to flee to Puntland which was the only peaceful place by that time.

Numerous attempts to bring peace and order failed as vested interests drove the agenda of the involved parties and personalities. After years of strife, it was realized in 1997/98 that Somalis were not ready to reconcile and the situation was worsening. So, the elites of Puntland came together in Garowe and established the State of Puntland. He noted that this came out of the need to have a system of governance that served the people and to lead the way for a better and united Somalia. He noted also that in most conferences, it was agreed that Federalism was the only way to rebuild Somalia.

Puntland state of affairs

In his presentation, the president divided Somali's history into different terms as indicated below:

- Term 1 and 2: The Establishment and Nurturing of a Nation (Marxaladdi asaaska iyo gar-daadinta);

- Term 3: Building the government institutions (Marxaladii dhismaha Hay'addaha dowladda')
- Term 4: Implementation of the Building Infrastructure Agenda (Fulinta dhismaha kaabayaasha dhaqaalaha);
- Term 5: Less than a Year's administration (Marxalad aan sanad jirsan);

Term 1 and 2: The Establishment and Nurturing of a Nation (Marxaladdi asaaska iyo gar-daadinta)

This was an important period in the History of Somalia/Puntland and was led by the late president Abdullahi Yusuf whose government was expected to deliver several key issues that had been agreed upon in the Puntland Charter of 1998. The mandate of this administration was to conduct a census, conduct the democratic election within three years, unify the army, establish a uniform taxation system and collect revenue in collaboration with elders. This administration brought a sense of order in Puntland and was successful in fulfilling its original mandate apart from conducting the election due to time constraints.

The President noted that the constitutional crisis (Marxaladii dhib u ka cashada) as a difficult period for Puntland, the government and the elders were split into two factions, leading to the parliament's firing of President Abdullahi Yusuf who had intended to extend his term in office, which resulted in a brief clash in Bosaso. An election was held in Garowe where Jama Ali Jama was elected. President Abdullahi Yusuf again seized power through the military but called for dialogue eventually saving Puntland from the brink of collapse. This crisis was a result of the lack of a constitution (only a charter was in use) and the absence of a constitutional court which would have interpreted the legal provisions in Puntland's charter by then.

The dialogue was successful in two fronts, as it brought peace in Puntland and ensured that Puntland (the only federal member state) supported the process of the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). A process that on-going in Mbagathi, Kenya, where the TFG was formed headed by President Abdullahi Yusuf who had earlier on handed over power to President Adde Muse in Puntland. The people of Puntland, supported the TFG although the greatest challenge was the emergence of the Islamic Union Courts (IUC) that sought to bring in a new ideology based on religion rather than clan. It was fairly successful and began fostering division in the country.

For Puntland, the emergence of IUC posed a challenge but under the leadership of President Adde Muse, whose

military experience, expertise and knowledge were instrumental, the situation was well-handled. He was able to solve the constitutional crisis and lead Puntland into its support for the TFG.

Term 3. Building Government Institutions (Marxaladii dhismaha Hay'addaha dowladda'

The president stated that this was another significant period in the history of Puntland. He noted that under the leadership of President Abdirahman Mohamed Faroole, a period that coincided with the end of the uprising of IUC and Abdullahi Yusuf's resignation to end the rebellion in Mogadishu was a period of much development.

The president noted that it was during this time that government institutions were strengthened, legal frameworks put in place, classification/separation of the government institutions, mapping of government land, the adoption of Puntland constitution, the adoption of federal (provisional) constitution, and Puntland actively participated in the TFG's establishment process.

President Abdullahi Said Deni noted that President Faroole came into office at a better term after or during the consultations in Galkayo, Garowe I and Garowe II, which paved the way for him to deliver on the government's mandate and rebuild the country something that he did well despite that challenges of insecurity posed by Al-Shabaab and piracy.

Term4: Implementation of the Building Infrastructure Agenda (Fulinta dhismaha kaabayaasha dhaqaalaha)

The President noted that this was the duration of his predecessor, President Abdiwali Ali Gaas under whose leadership several infrastructure projects were initiated, notable was the construction of the Garowe and Bosaso Airports. The president was categorical that this term the government institutions had been greatly strengthened in terms of capacity to deliver and it was important to note, that at the same time, the NEW DEAL (The Somali New Deal Compact consisted of the five New Deal Peacebuilding and State building Goals (PSGs), and subsets of three to four priorities per goal. The five PSGs are: (1) legitimate and inclusive politics, (2) security, (3) justice, (4) economic foundations, and (5) revenue and services) had just been signed and the international community was pumping a lot of resources towards the realization of the goals of this new deal which emphasized the creation of a centralized system of governance.

Term 5: Less than a Year's Administration (Marxalad aan sanad jirsan)

President Deni while acknowledging that it was still too early to give a score-card of his first year in office, noted that his administration had crafted a vision, themed 'Enriching Puntland institutions and to quest for a stable system of government based on law and order'. His administration had further segmented the vision into 8 goals and 63 activities.

The focus of his government he noted was to enhance the states security (training, strategizing and provision of materials and equipment) enrich the economic sector (the country's financial system and generate new resources) improve infrastructure and enhancing the existing legal frameworks. Biometric registration of government employees is currently on-going and next will be improving the efficacy of civil servants.

Federal Elections of 2020/2021

President Abdullahi reminded the participants that elections aren't a new phenomenon in Somalia, in fact, in 1964 and 1967, multi-party elections were held which of course had some errors but had a clear system where people elected their leaders regardless of the clan but respecting their political agenda, based on multi-party's system. He also mentioned the 1984/5 elections during the military reign that occurred in Hudur which had a closed list, single constituent and proportional representation.

He reiterated that these previous elections must be studied as they offer great lessons to the clamour for the up-coming 2020/21 elections. He noted that since 1991, there haven't been any democratic elections but the clan-based system of 4.5 except for 2016, where the elections were quite different. In 2016, 135 clan elders selected 51 delegates (representing an electoral college with a requirement to have at least 16 women and 10 youth) for each of the 275 constituencies who then selected their members of parliament. Each state was also required to select at least two representatives who would then be elected by state assemblies who would be members of the Upper House. The president was then elected by both the Upper and Lower Houses.

As for the up-coming 2020/21 election, the president noted that there were two schools of thought regarding how these should be conducted. The first one, similar to

the military system which is pushed by the federal government and the second one being pushed by the parliament is a legally and constitutionally enshrined system. The president recalled that during the first election in 1964, there was a legal clause that had been passed in 1961 which set a legal base for elections where one could dispute. This he said, should be the way to go. He pondered how a country can conduct elections without any legal basis being approved by stakeholders.

He called on the people of Puntland to take an active role in determining how they want to be governed. He indicated that it was for their own benefit to reflect and think about the 2020/21 elections before anything is agreed and actively participate in the ensuing discussions. He opined that the people of Puntland supported a move from the clan-based system to a democratic system that is mutually agreeable to all stakeholders. Puntland has been at the forefront to push this agenda.

Panel Discussion

The PDRCTalks platform is designed a way in which the audience and the keynote speaker aided by a panel of experts have two-way interaction, which is central to the discussions. The second part of the session (panel discussion) offers an opportunity for the participants to interact with the guest speaker and ask questions. These participatory methodologies are instrumental in enabling a constructive avenue for the free exchange of views among participants and deepen local awareness on the theme of the day.



In responding to questions raised, the president's responses and the government's positions on several key issues are captured below:

On whether he had delivered on the promises, he had made on the campaign trail a year down the line, President Deni indicated that on his assumption of office, the first thing to do was the setting up of Puntland's political vision that sought to bring the

Punlanders together devoid of political divisions either internally or externally instigated. Besides, the president, noted in the few months he's been in office, government institutions have been reformed and improved, conducted an investment forum, reformed financial systems, reduced government expenses, cleared all government pending bills, passed the investment law, formed district administration and reconciliation in Bosaso and fundamentally increased Puntland's annual income by 23%.

On infrastructure, especially road construction between Bosaso to Galkio, the president indicated that the construction was in progress for the Bosaso and Garowe segment while the Garowe and Galkayo section was under review since there was a change in the funding partner from GIZ to EU with tenders expected to be advertised soon. On the Gardafuu blockade, the president reiterated his government's commitment to ease travel during the rainy season, and so a diversion was created towards that end. He also stated that two new agreements had been signed on Bosaso and Garowe airports' security and logistical services advancement, thus enabling daily flights to and from the said airports, in addition, the president also noted that the restrictions with Ethiopia had been removed thus enabling daily travel between Somalia /Puntland and Ethiopia.

The president indicated that he was confident on the progress being made in regards to the democratization process in Puntland and assured the public that TPEC III had the full support of his government. He reiterated that the March 2020 deadline for the registration and formation of political associations would be met.

On matters of the impeachment of the speaker, the president denied any state-house involvement and insisted that it is the role of parliamentarians to carry out their duties in the interest of the people.

In regards to the model for elections, the president was categorical that the time left wasn't enough to reach consensus, pass laws, and implement them and other constitutional review matters since federal members states had been denied an opportunity to participate in the constitutional review process. Instead, the president, noted with grave concern that the on-going constitutional review process being done by the lower and upper house was unrepresentative rendering the constitutional review committee moribund.

President Deni warned the people of Puntland to be wary of a scheme to constitutionalize the 4.5 clan-based

system which has been rejected time and again. The journey to full democratization in Somalia, he noted, was a tough one but urged the citizens to stay the course. According to the president, Puntland's position on the model for the 2020/21 elections has always been the one man, one vote option, which unfortunately might not be possible. A model that is agreeable by all needs to be adopted through dialogue and consultations involving Somalia's development partners, EU, UN and the AU, who have wholeheartedly supported Somalia in stabilization. Nevertheless, the president insisted, the decision must be taken by the Somalis themselves. He was also categorical that Puntland won't accept term extensions or a mix of the 4.5 clan-based power-sharing system with one man, one vote mechanism.

One perception that the president sought to correct was the supposed friction between federal member states and the federal government, he said that both collaborate on key issues and gave the example of the discussion on debt relief (Dayn Cafiska) which was successful, he also mentioned financial discussions in terms of international aid and grants, which he noted may be lesser than what Puntland used to get in the previous years but it gets what has been collectively agreed upon.

In regards to insecurity and the rise of Al-Shabaab and ISIS, the president reiterated his government's position that has two approaches, maintaining peace in the suburbs and controlling the movement and expansion of these two groups, by confining them to the mountains as further solutions are being sought.

The President noted that one of the greatest challenges that his government was facing was the failure by both the FMS and FGS in implementing the National Security Architecture project that was as a result of a security conference in London in 2017 which sought to establish mixed troops (FGS and FMS Troops). This agreement hasn't worked and currently, Puntland is training the Puntland Intelligence and Security Agency (PISA) with the support from the USA and with a little assistance from AU, it has embarked on training the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF).

On urbanization and proliferation of IDPs, the president was categorical, that this was an emerging phenomenon and that his government was working on modalities to provide lasting solutions to do away with cash relief which according to the president is breeding laziness among pastoralists who may have lost livestock due to drought. Part of the solution is to give these farmers livestock and urge them to go back to their original

homes or be supported to resettle in other less crowded areas as a way to safeguard livestock farming.

Key Messages

- Puntland as a state has undergone great changes since its establishment in 1998;
- Successive regimes have played important roles in the development of the nation/state, with each advancing a particular aspect of the State's dream;
- President Deni's government has made notable achievements within its first year in office most notable being the setting up and crafting of Puntland's political vision that will drive the state's agenda;
- The people of Puntland laud the president's efforts aimed at bringing peace and security in the Bari region;
- The desire to transition from the clan-based system has been elusive since 2002 but there is more commitment from the current regime:
 - The Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC III) has hit the road running and preparing Puntland for the transition;
 - Puntland is a key player in the development and progress of Somalia whose input is fundamental for Somali's future;
 - The Somalia 2020/21 elections model has yet to be agreed upon but all stakeholders prefer the one man, one vote model with the Federal Government advocating for mixed approach;
 - The current constitutional review process needs to be participatory and inclusive if it is to succeed;
 - Due to the limited timeframe, an appropriate model needs to be agreed upon since major timelines have either been missed or are unachievable.

Conclusion

PDRC's executive director, Ali Farah Ali expressed immense pleasure and pride regarding PDRCTalks as a platform that is instrumental in sparking conversations on key critical issues bedeviling the nation/state, thus significant element for policy and decision makers in government and the international community. He thanked the keynote speaker, panellists, contributors, and media team for their contribution in making the event a success.

He highlighted that the PDRCTalks is a neutral platform, where everyone is welcome to share their ideas,

knowledge, and experience with the citizens of Somalia. He also stressed that discussions on the platform do not limit themselves to Puntland but is for the wider country and that PDRCTalks is a Somali dialogue platform.

