

ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE 2024

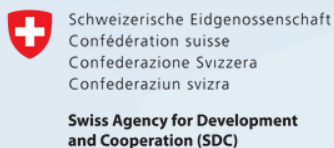


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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

- **APC** - Annual Peace Conference
- **FCDC** - Kenya's Frontier Counties Development Council
- **FMS** - Federal Member States
- **GALJA** - Gal-Mudug Journalist Association
- **IDPs** - Internal Displaced Persons
- **IGAD** - Intergovernmental Authority on Development
- **MAP** - Media Association of Puntland
- **MOIFAR** - Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation
- **PDRC** - Puntland Development and Research Centre
- **PL** - Puntland State of Somalia
- **PSU** - Puntland State University
- **SDC** - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- **SIDA** - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- **SWJA** - South-West Journalist Association
- **UN** - United Nations
- **UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme
- **WOSIA** - Waves of Somali Innovation Arts

Acknowledgment

The Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) expresses its deepest appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the 2nd Annual Peace Conference (APC) 2024, held in Garowe, Puntland. This important gathering would not have been possible without the invaluable support and collaboration of a wide range of partners and participants.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR) for their engagements in securing sponsorships for the conference. We also thank our generous funders, particularly the Government of Switzerland through (SDC), the Government of Sweden through (SIDA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose financial and strategic support made this conference a reality. Their unwavering commitment to peace-building, democratic governance, and inclusive dialogue in Somalia has been instrumental in advancing the goals of this initiative.

PDRC is especially thankful to the distinguished paper presenters, researchers, keynote speakers, and panelists who brought a wealth of knowledge, experience, and analytical depth to the conference. Their contributions provided critical insights into the complex and evolving role of media in both exacerbating and mitigating conflict in fragile environments. Through their thoughtful presentations and active engagement in panel discussions, they helped shape a meaningful dialogue that addressed both challenges and solutions in the media and peace-building nexus.

We are particularly honored by the presence of His Excellency Said Abdullahi Deni, President of Puntland State of Somalia, who attended both the opening and closure of the conference. His participation demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering peace, promoting responsible media, and supporting inclusive dialogue at the highest levels of leadership. We also acknowledge the participation of government ministers, members of parliament, local government authorities, senior advisors, and other high-level officials who contributed their perspectives and actively engaged with participants throughout the sessions.

Special thanks go to the diverse range of attendees who enriched the discussions through their presence and active participation. These included representatives from women and youth organizations, civil society groups, traditional elders, religious leaders, scholars, academics, journalists, and media practitioners from across Puntland and other parts of Somalia. Their collective wisdom and lived experiences added authenticity and inclusivity to the conference dialogue, reflecting the true spirit of collaboration and participatory peace-building. Furthermore, we acknowledge with gratitude the efforts of the PDRC organizing committee, technical teams, and support staff whose dedication ensured the smooth coordination and delivery of the event. Their commitment behind the scenes made it possible to host an inclusive, professionally executed, and intellectually stimulating conference. We also thank the local and national media who covered the conference and helped amplify its key messages to a wider audience, furthering the impact and visibility of this important initiative.

In essence, the 2nd Annual Peace Conference was not just an event, but a shared achievement made possible by the collaboration of partners, the trust of communities, and the dedication of all involved. PDRC remains committed to building on the outcomes of this dialogue and continuing its work to promote peace and responsible media engagement in Somalia and beyond.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation (SDC)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2nd Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) Annual Peace Conference 2024, held in Garowe, Puntland, brought together over 200 participants; 173 males and 27 females, including government officials, media practitioners, academics, and civil society leader to discuss and deeply reflect on the theme: “The Role of Media in Peace and Conflict in Fragile Contexts.” This theme was selected in response to Somalia’s unique blend of opportunities and challenges in the media space. It acknowledged the media’s dual capacity to either promote peace or exacerbate conflict in fragile contexts and underscored the urgent need for ethical, inclusive, and responsible media practices to help Somalia navigate its complex journey toward peace and stability. The conference provided a platform for exploring the intricate dynamics of media’s influence in shaping peace and conflict in Somalia and beyond.

Participants examined how traditional and digital media could either exacerbate tensions or serve as a force for unity. Balancing the freedom of expression with the need for regulation was another key priority, as attendees sought to establish ethical frameworks and best practices to mitigate harmful media content. Amplifying marginalized voices was also highlighted, showcasing the media’s potential to empower underrepresented communities and foster inclusivity. Additionally, the conference aimed to strengthen collaborative networks among media practitioners, policymakers, and peacebuilding stakeholders to enhance collective capacity in leveraging media for sustainable peace.

KEY THEMES & INSIGHTS

Media in Peace and Reconciliation

Participants explored the significant role of responsible journalism and media ethics in countering misinformation, supporting reconciliation efforts, and fostering societal cohesion. Presentations provided analyses of Somalia’s fragile media landscape and its impact on societal harmony. Case studies showcased how media has successfully de-escalated tensions in conflict-prone areas like Galkacyo, offering practical lessons for broader peace-building efforts.

Ethical Media Practices

The discussions centered on the challenges faced by Somali journalists, including safety concerns, economic constraints, and the absence of robust regulatory frameworks. Examples such as the Las’aanod uprising illustrated the impact of social media on conflict dynamics. Practical recommendations were proposed to strengthen ethical journalism and establish regulatory oversight, ensuring media serves as a constructive force in fragile contexts.



Social Media and Technology in Fragile Contexts

The transformative power of social media was a recurring topic, with papers examining its dual role in empowering grassroots activism and spreading misinformation. Proposed solutions included leveraging AI-driven hate speech detection tools and implementing media literacy campaigns to mitigate the harmful effects of unregulated digital platforms.

Climate, Peace, and Security

The conference highlighted the intersection of climate challenges and conflict, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to address resource-based tensions. The media's role in raising awareness and advocating for sustainable peace-building initiatives was a focal point, with discussions on how environmental issues intertwine with security concerns in fragile contexts.

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Introduction

The Somali media has historically upheld norms of journalism and ethical reporting, which has improved its beneficial impact on the country's efforts to rebuild peace. Despite this, social media, the internet, and technology have brought several positive and negative changes to Somalia's media environment. On the one hand, Somalis' reliance on traditional media for news and information has decreased due to the prevalence and increased access to social media and the internet, improving people's rights to free expression and information access. Furthermore, the unregulated and unethical use of social media has compromised social cohesiveness, privacy, and stability due to the lack of regulatory frameworks, filtering, and oversight.

In the fragility of Somalia's socio-political landscape, the Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) stands as a beacon of hope, tirelessly endeavoring to weave threads of peace and reconciliation. The centre has been engaged in peace-building efforts since 1999, making 25 years of peace-building, democratization, governance, human rights, and most recently, socio-economic development in Puntland State and Somalia in general.



With a steadfast commitment to peace and state-building initiatives in Puntland and Somalia, PDRC has been pivotal in addressing the root causes of conflict, strengthening governance frameworks, and overcoming obstacles to regional development. Through evidence-based research, assessments, dialogue forums, film-based screening & discussions, and policy advocacy, PDRC has brought together a diverse array of stakeholders including government entities, civil society organizations, researchers, religious scholars, women's groups, traditional leaders, and marginalized communities to promote conflict resolution and foster social cohesion among Somalis using Somali-led solutions and initiatives.

Drawing on more than two decades of experience in institutional state-building and peace-building, PDRC annually (since 2023) convenes its flagship event “The Annual Peace Conference” from September 21st to 23rd every year. This gathering serves as a testament to PDRC's unwavering dedication to promoting peace and stability in Somalia. The conference provides a unique platform for stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions, exchange ideas, and share experiences. By building on locally-driven methods for conflict resolution and peacemaking activities, the conference empowers interested parties, practitioners, and community leaders to spearhead initiatives that resonate with their respective communities. Peace conference explores emergent challenges to peace, conflict resolutions, and peace-building challenges, best practices, and innovations to address major challenges and inform the policy-making process. It holds an inter-disciplinary space to address the most pressing topics and transformative practices in peace, conflict, and innovation.



The second iteration of the PDRC Annual Peace Conference builds upon the success of its inaugural year, which focused on reflecting on Somalia's conflict dynamics and drawing from past experiences to inform future policymaking, planning, and decision-making. The APC2024 Conference focused was on the theme **"The Role of the Media in Peace and Conflicts in Fragile Contexts,"** highlighting the pivotal role that media, (including social media, the internet, and technology) plays in shaping narratives and influencing conflict dynamics. Somalia's decades-long experience with conflict and instability underscores the critical importance of understanding the evolving role of media in both exacerbating tensions and fostering reconciliation. While traditional media has historically upheld norms of journalism and ethical reporting, the emergence of social media and technology has introduced both positive and negative changes to Somalia's media environment. The conference aimed to bring together Somali peace-building practitioners and experts to share their successes, challenges, and best practices vis-a-vis the role of media in peace and conflict efforts in Somalia and beyond.

The conference was attended by approximately 200 participants, including the President of Puntland, H.E Said Abdullahi Deni, and the Deputy Executive Secretary of IGAD, Hon. Mohamed Abdi Waare. On the second day of the event, Mr. Waare was featured as the guest speaker for PDRCTalks29, addressing the theme "Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa."

In addition, President Deni held a separate meeting with intellectuals and political figures who participated in the conference to engage in discussions about the pressing issues facing Somalia. Following these consultations, the president made a significant announcement: his decision to pursue dialogue with the Federal Government. This marked an important step toward addressing the political disputes between Puntland and the Federal Government of Somalia and fostering a collaborative approach to resolving Somalia's complex political, constitutional social and juridical issues. To ensure the success of this initiative, a mediation committee was appointed to facilitate and guide the dialogue process (See Annex – Press Statement).

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

- Foster a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted influence and role of media, including social media, internet, and information and communication technology, in shaping conflict dynamics within fragile contexts. Through rigorous analysis and empirical insights, the conference delved into how media platforms can at once exacerbate tensions and facilitate peace-building efforts. are expected to emphasize the importance of inclusive approaches that prioritize the participation of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping media narratives and initiatives.
- Engage in scholarly exploration and exchange of strategies for balancing the imperative to regulate media content to minimize negative influences on conflict dynamics while safeguarding essential freedoms of expression and information access. It will identify best practices and ethical frameworks for navigating this delicate balance, drawing upon lessons learned from past experiences and global contexts.
- Recognize and celebrate the pivotal role of media, internet, and technology in amplifying marginalized voices, fostering dialogue, and promoting reconciliation in conflict-affected regions. Further emphasis will be put on instances where these platforms have served as catalysts for positive social change and community empowerment, whilst acknowledging the challenges and risks they present.
- Strengthen collaborative networks and mechanisms for knowledge exchange among stakeholders, including media practitioners, policymakers, civil society actors, and technology experts, to enhance collective capacity in leveraging media for peace-building in fragile contexts. The participants are expected to emphasize the importance of inclusive approaches that prioritize the participation of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping media narratives and initiatives.



Ali Farah Ali – Executive Director, PDRC

Ali Farah, the Executive Director of PDRC, delivered the opening remarks at the Second Annual PDRC Peace Conference, emphasizing the importance of the event, this year's theme, and PDRC's broader objectives. He stressed the need to understand and define the media's role in peace-building and conflict, highlighting the conference as a critical platform for generating actionable insights and practical recommendations. The director noted that these outcomes would be essential in shaping future strategies to effectively harness the power of media in promoting Peace and reducing conflict, particularly in fragile contexts.

Abdikarim Abdirahman Hassan – Member of Judicial Board, PDRC

Abdikarim Hasan addressed the opening remarks and provided a brief history of the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC). He highlighted the founding of PDRC and emphasized its critical contributions over the years, particularly in peace-building, state-building, good governance, and research. He underscored the Center's enduring commitment to these crucial tasks, which have played a vital role in shaping Puntland's development and regional stability.

Mohamed Abdi Waare – Deputy Executive Secretary, IGAD

Mr. Waare delivered an insightful address, drawing from his extensive experience to discuss the critical relationship between Peace and the media. Through compelling storytelling, he emphasized how media is pivotal in shaping narratives around Peace and conflict, particularly in the Somali context. He underscored the media's ability to simplify complex issues, making peace-building efforts more accessible to the public and fostering a deeper understanding of conflict resolution.

"A single negatively framed word from the media can endanger the Peace and progress of an entire community. In Kigali, Rwanda, in June 1994, a popular local radio station broadcasted a message calling for the killing of a segment of the population—the Tutsi ethnic group—who were suspected of assassinating the country's former president. This broadcast led to the death of over 600,000 people in less than 90 days. From this, one can understand media's immense danger to Peace and its potential to incite conflict".

Waare.



Mr. Johan Svenson – Counselor, Somalia Section, Embassy of Sweden

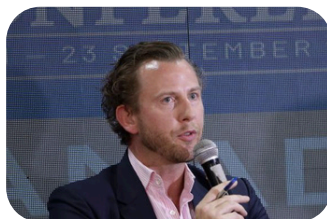
Mr Johan Svenson, Counselor for the Somalia Section at the Embassy of Sweden, delivered the opening remarks at the PDRC Annual Peace Conference, emphasizing the event's importance and the critical role of PDRC in Somalia's peace-building and reconciliation efforts. He highlighted the strong partnership between Sweden and Somalia, reaffirming Sweden's commitment to promoting inclusive governance, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Svenson also recognized PDRC's key role in facilitating dialogue among Puntland's diverse communities and along its borders with Galmudug and Somaliland, underscoring that these efforts are essential for the country's long-term stability and sustainability in Peace.

Evert Kets – Head of UNSOM Puntland Office

Evert Kets, the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Puntland Office, delivered an insightful opening speech at the Annual peace conference. In his remarks, Mr. Kets emphasized PDRC's pivotal role in driving research-based solutions to Puntland's most pressing development challenges. He highlighted the critical need for collaboration between local and international stakeholders to foster sustainable development, stability, and Peace in the region. Mr. Kets also underlined PDRC's significant contributions to addressing such key areas as governance and peace-building, which are vital not only for Puntland's long-term progress but also for Somalia's broader development. Furthermore, he acknowledged the crucial role that research and evidence-based policymaking play in shaping effective development strategies for Somalia.

Yusuf Mohamed Wacays (Dhedo) – The State Minister – Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization, Puntland

I would like to extend my gratitude to PDRC for organizing and coordinating this important conference focused on Peace in Somalia. This year's theme was thoughtfully chosen and carries significant relevance. Even in the most challenging times, the Ministry of Interior and PDRC have maintained close working relationships. As a recommendation, I propose that PDRC consider hosting future annual conferences in regions experiencing conflict. For example, Galkacyo is a city highly vulnerable to and frequently impacted upon by internal Somali disputes. Such efforts could have a transformative impact on communities most in need of peace-building initiatives.



Aidid Mohamoud Dirir – Puntland Ministry of Information, Communication, Technology, Tourism, Culture and Heritage

At this year's PDRC Annual Peace Conference, themed 'The Role of Media in Peace and Conflict in Fragile Contexts,' Puntland's Minister of Information, Mr. Aidid Mohamoud Dirir, spoke during the opening session. He stressed the importance of trained journalists who understand their reporting's impact and highlighted media's dual role in fostering peace or fueling conflict, especially in fragile settings. The minister noted that media's power to shape narratives and influence society should never be underestimated.

"I encourage journalists to remember that both Somali culture and the Islamic law hold Peace in the highest regard. In Somali culture, when one person greets another, they ask, "Do you come with news of Peace? Did you sleep peacefully last night and wake up in Peace this morning?" If there is no problem, the response is always, "I bring news of peace." This simple exchange underscores how deeply rooted the concept of Peace is within Somali society. The Holy Quran addresses the issue of false and harmful news that can cause discord within society, emphasizing that we should adhere to its guidance and avoid spreading harmful information"

Aidid M. Dirir.

Therefore, journalists are expected to report positive news that contributes to Peace. I urge them to refrain from broadcasting news that could incite conflict or fuel tensions.

H.E. Said Abdullahi Deni, President of Puntland State of Somalia



H.E. Said Abdullahi Deni, President of the Puntland State of Somalia, officially opened the PDRC Peace Conference with a comprehensive keynote address. He sincerely appreciated PDRC for convening a diverse group of experts and selecting a highly relevant theme for this year's conference. President Deni emphasized that the event was pivotal, as Somalia has endured 35 years of ongoing conflict and instability, underscoring the urgent need for Peace. He remarked that without Peace, there can be no development, education, or progress.

In addition, President Deni highlighted the severe security challenges facing Somalia today, including clan-related conflicts and the persistent threat posed by terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab and ISIS, which continue to undermine the country's stability and prospects for recovery. *"After the Cold War ended in the 1990s, the world turned its attention to peace-building and national development. However, during this same period, Somalia remained mired in a protracted conflict characterized by deep social and political fragmentation and a lack of Peace. While other nations progressed, Somalia grappled with instability and profound divisions within its society and political structures."* **President Deni**

Given the ongoing political tensions between politicians, federal member states, the federal government, and Somaliland—which has already declared secession and self-determination—President Deni urged PDRC and the attending experts to explore potential solutions to these deep-rooted political challenges. He emphasized the significance of addressing these issues across all levels of governance and among various stakeholders in Somalia's political contexts. The president stressed that finding common ground and fostering dialogue among these factions is crucial for Somalia's long-term stability and unity.

CONFERENCE DESIGN & APPROACH

The conference was structured around a comprehensive and inclusive framework, organized into nine key themes that formed the foundation of the program and related matters. Each theme encompassed a range of sessions featuring research paper presentations, case studies, success stories of peace interventions, film screenings depicting peace processes, and interactive panel discussions. This multi-faceted approach ensured a holistic exploration of the complex relationship between media and peace-building.

A participatory methodology was at the core of the conference design, encouraging active involvement from all participants. Attendees were not passive listeners but were integral to shaping discussions, posing questions, and contributing insights. This inclusive atmosphere fostered a collaborative environment, amplifying diverse voices and enriching the dialogue across different sessions. The conference outcomes, including session highlights and results, were meticulously documented and compiled into the conference findings report.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

An international call for contributions was issued and widely circulated across various platforms, including PDRC's website and social media channels months before the conference date. This call sought case studies, research papers, presentations, arts, photos, and multimedia submissions from researchers, peacebuilding practitioners, and academics in Somalia, East Africa, and other regions facing similar peace and conflict dynamics. Contributors were invited to share experiences, lessons learned, and best practices on utilizing media to foster communal peace and reconciliation.

In response to this call, PDRC received 21 submissions, including 13 research papers. To ensure a fair and thorough evaluation, a dedicated Review Committee was formed, comprising five members: four PDRC researchers and one external expert. The review process began with an initial assessment of the abstracts, allowing the committee to gauge the relevance and potential of each study. Following this preliminary review, the selected papers underwent a detailed evaluation, where each was assessed by at least two committee members. This collaborative approach not only enriched the review process through varied perspectives but also enhanced the overall rigor and quality. The PDRC also provided author guidelines to ensure the standardization/uniformity of the papers. Feedback provided to the authors to improve their papers ensured that the submissions met reasonable quality standards to be considered for publication.



Following this process, 10 papers (3 papers were rejected) and 8 presentations were selected to present during the conference. These selected submissions covered a wide range of topics aligned with the nine sub-themes, contributing to the depth and diversity of the discussions. After the conference, the papers were published on the PDRC website, allowing broader access to the research and insights shared at the event.

The thematic approach, coupled with the inclusive and participatory nature of the sessions, ensured that the conference not only facilitated knowledge exchange but also created a platform for continuous dialogue and collaboration on the media's role in peace-building.

PARTICIPANTS

The conference brought together around 200 attendees representing various sectors and organizations. Among the attendees were:



This diversity ensured that the discussions reflected a range of perspectives and expertise, contributing to the richness of the conference discussion sessions.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

KEY THEMES DISCUSSED

THEME 1: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

This was the first theme of the conference which delved into the significant influence media holds in shaping peace processes and fostering societal cohesion in Somalia. As a guest speaker, Ambassador Ahmed Abdisalan, Executive Director of the Horn Centre, explored the theme, drawing from his extensive experience. His speech set the stage for a broader discussion, followed by the presentation of four papers, each addressing different facets of media's role in conflict resolution, its potential to de-escalate tensions, and how responsible journalism can contribute to sustainable peace-building.

PAPER 1: THE IMPERATIVE OF JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE IN SOMALIA: NAVIGATING CLAN DYNAMICS, ACTIVISM, AND CHALLENGES TO A THRIVING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

by **Abdisalam Mohamud Jama Salwe**

Abdisalam Salwe's presentation addressed the critical role of media in Somalia's state and peace-building processes, highlighting how journalism can serve as both a force for unity and division. He emphasized the lack of professional standards in the media sector, pointing out that anyone can enter the field without training or qualifications, which mirrors the unregulated nature of Somali politics. Salwe stressed that the media's capacity to inform, monitor government actions, and foster public discourse is essential, but this potential is undermined by clan-based biases and the economic hardships journalists face. He called for enhanced training and professionalism within the media landscape, arguing that informed, responsible journalism is key to guiding Somalia toward stability and peace.

*"In Somalia, people engage in two professions without any requirements to restrict those involved: politics and journalism. Anyone can become a politician, and similarly, anyone can become a journalist. No questions are asked regarding their qualifications or whether someone has studied what they wish to work in". **Abdisalam Salwe.***

To harness the media's potential for peace, it is essential to promote ethical reporting, provide capacity-building opportunities, and ensure financial stability for journalists, enabling them to prioritize the broader public good over divisive agendas.



PAPER 2: THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION IN SOMALIA: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA'S IMPACT ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND SOCIETAL COHESION

Presented by Mahad Jama Koronto.

Koronto explored how Somalia's prolonged instability since 1991 has created a fragile media landscape often entangled in political manipulation, clan bias, and threats to journalists. While the media holds the potential to foster dialogue, counter misinformation, and uplift marginalized voices, Koronto highlighted how limited resources, sensationalism, and biased reporting hinder these efforts. The paper emphasized that in post-conflict societies, media can either exacerbate divisions or serve as a platform for reconciliation, depending on how responsibly it operates. Koronto underscored the challenges Somali media faces, including censorship, threats to journalists, and public distrust, which collectively undermine its role in peace-building. By advocating for ethical journalism and inclusive narratives, the paper called for strengthening the media's capacity to act as a unifying force, capable of bridging divides and promoting long-term peace and stability in Somalia.

PAPER 3: MEDIA POTENTIALITY IN CONFLICT SITUATION AND ITS ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Building by Professor Abdisalan Isse Salwe

Salwe's paper, "Media Potentiality in Conflict Situation and its Role in Sustainable Peacebuilding," highlighted the critical role of media in fostering long-term peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting social cohesion. Salwe emphasized that sustainable peace-building relies on resilient media systems that empower local voices, facilitate constructive dialogue, and disseminate accurate information. Drawing on U.N. resolutions and peace-building frameworks, the paper illustrated how media interventions, from traditional outlets to digital platforms, can prevent conflict escalation and aid in reconciliation. Salwe acknowledged the rise of peace-focused media programs while recognizing the challenges in their implementation and evaluation. The paper recommended fostering practical, locally-driven media initiatives, involving governments and civil society, and enhancing collaboration across various media sectors to ensure sustainable peace-building efforts. Salwe's insights underscored the transformative potential of media in conflict prevention and its indispensable role in achieving lasting peace.

PANEL 1 : SOMALI MEDIA ON PEACE AND CONFLICT

The panel discussion brought forward nuanced insights into the media's influence on Somalia's peace-building efforts and the challenges facing journalists. Moderated by Ayaanle Hussien Abdi, the panel featured Prof. Hussien Imaan, Nour Shire Osman, and Prof. Abdillahi Abdirahman "Baadiyow," each offering unique perspectives rooted in their professional experiences.



Prof. Hussien Imaan – "Courage and Truth in Journalism"

Prof. Imaan emphasized the media's responsibility to speak truth to power, despite the inherent risks in Somalia's volatile environment. Reflecting on his experiences, he noted: *"The situation needs pondering and boldness—telling the truth and pursuing justice wherever necessary. In Mogadishu, I have seen how fear governs what journalists say and do."*

He highlighted the media's paradoxical role in exacerbating tensions while holding the potential to promote peace: *"Journalists must be courageous. We often forget that the narratives we craft can either unite or divide. The same story can be told in a way that heals or harms."*

Nour Shire Osman – "Media's Contribution to Conflict"

Nour Shire Osman offered a sobering analysis of the current media landscape, underlining how political and clan-based conflicts are amplified by the press: *"The Somali proverb says, 'Someone who has seen the sea saw something but does not know what to tell.' This reflects our media today – contributing more to conflict than peace."*

Osman dissected the two primary conflicts shaping Somalia – political strife and clan violence – and noted how journalists are often driven to align with clans or politicians for protection: *"We cannot manage clan conflicts if we don't resolve political disputes first. Journalists are forced to seek refuge in political affiliations or clans simply to survive. This dynamic perpetuates bias and worsens divisions."*

Osman also called for structural changes: *"The media needs leaders who can steer it towards fostering peace. Until we invest in training and protect journalists from economic and physical threats, peace narratives will remain secondary to sensationalism."*

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

Prof. Abdillahi Abdirahman "Baadiyow

Prof. Baadiyow shifted the focus to the origins of the conflicts covered by Somali media, stressing the importance of historical context: *"Many talk about how to improve the media, but few address the root of the conflicts they report. We need to ask: Where do these disputes come from?"*

He identified two critical root causes:

- Colonial Legacy and Cultural Disconnect – *"The colonial state imposed on Somalia disregarded our clan system and Islamic values. This created a rift between the people and the government, breeding distrust and rebellion."*
- Incompetent Leadership – *"Our leaders were placed in positions of power without the people's support or the necessary skills. This led to electoral fraud, clan manipulation, and a cycle of political instability."*

Baadiyow further highlighted the role of media in perpetuating these conflicts: *"Journalists mirror the values of the society they live in. Unfortunately, Somalia's values today are shaped by corrupt politics and clan divisions. To change this, we must nurture a media culture that prioritizes citizenship over clan identity."*

Key Takeaways and Calls to Action from Panel

The panel concluded with a consensus on the need for:

- **Journalist Training and Protection** – Equipping journalists to report ethically and independently.
- **Narrative Shift** – Promoting stories that highlight shared national and religious identities over clan divisions.
- **Political Reform** – Addressing governance issues that drive conflict and destabilize the media sector.

In closing, Prof. Imaan remarked: *"Peace starts with the stories we tell. If we reshape the narrative, we reshape the future of Somalia."*



PAPER 4: PROMOTING AND PIONEERING MEDIA FOR PEACE MECHANISMS

Presented by Ahmed Awil

Journalist and media advisor in Somalia

Ahmed Awil presented this paper on *"Promoting and Pioneering Media for Peace Mechanisms."* The paper explores the critical role of media in peace-building and conflict prevention within the challenging context of Somali journalism, where journalists face numerous threats, including detention and violence, which limit their ability to report on vital issues. Despite these challenges, the media has played a significant role in amplifying citizens' voices and facilitating dialogue among various stakeholders. However, the lack of professional training and the tendency of journalists to align with specific groups hinder impartial reporting and effective advocacy for peace.

Awil highlights the potential for media to transform conflict into peace when practitioners are equipped with the right skills and resources. He emphasizes the dual nature of social media, which can foster community engagement and dialogue while also serving as a platform for conflict escalation through hate speech. To enhance the media's role in peace-building, he recommends training initiatives for journalists, the establishment of media resource centers focused on peace programming, and the development of supportive legal frameworks that enable effective media operations. Finally, Awil concludes that fostering a media environment conducive to peace is essential for establishing a sustainable, democratic nation in Somalia.

Another presentation by Dayib Sheikh Ahmed emphasizes the pivotal role of media in shaping narratives around peace and conflict, particularly within the context of Somalia. The media has the capacity to either promote constructive dialogue or exacerbate divisions through misinformation. To foster a positive impact on peace-building, it must adhere to fundamental journalistic principles such as verification, objectivity, transparency, and accountability. While Somalia's media landscape has faced challenges, including biased reporting and a lack of regulation, there is an urgent need for journalists to commit to fair and responsible practices. By highlighting untold stories of resilience and cooperation, promoting dialogue, and educating the public about peace initiatives, the media can become a unifying force that supports lasting peace and stability in the country.

Ahmed further illustrates the media's critical responsibilities in conflict situations, drawing examples from historical events like the Korićani Cliffs Massacre during the Bosnian War. He underscores the importance of accurate reporting in documenting war crimes and influencing justice efforts, while also stressing that the media should empower communities by providing essential information for civic engagement. Ultimately, a neutral and trustworthy media can enhance public trust, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to the rebuilding and reconciliation processes necessary for long-term peace. The presentation concludes that responsible journalism can play a significant role in healing societal fractures and fostering dialogue, as evidenced by the media's evolving role in post-conflict nations like Rwanda and the potential for Somalia to follow a similar path.

PDRCTALKS

The **Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC)** launched **PDRCTalks** in March 2019 to promote dialogue and influence perspectives across Somali society. This quarterly initiative invites distinguished scholars, and seasoned politicians, to share expert opinions on diverse themes, such as politics, economics, and social issues. By engaging audiences in meaningful discussions, PDRC Talks seeks to shape attitudes and contribute to societal advancement.

The platform has achieved widespread recognition, with monthly viewership ranging from 1,000 to 1 million, influenced by topic relevance and audience interest. Integration with social media has been instrumental in connecting Somali communities at home and in the diaspora, amplifying the reach of live-streamed discussions. This reflects PDRC's commitment to fostering peaceful coexistence and economic development within Somali society.

A recent highlight was the **PDRC Talks29** event, held on **September 22, 2024**, at the PDRC compound in **Garowe, Puntland**. The gathering featured a keynote address by **H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware**, followed by a panel discussion and an interactive Q&A session. This event not only enhanced local dialogue but also complemented the **PDRC Annual Peace Conference**, broadening the scope of engagement beyond Puntland's immediate challenges.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mr. Mohamed Abdi Ware, in his keynote address, discussed the fragile security landscape of the Horn of Africa, highlighting external pressures and foreign influences that threaten social cohesion and stability in the region. He emphasized the destabilizing impact of persistent interference by neighboring countries, leading to border instability and internal vulnerabilities. Waare identified a lack of regional cooperation and effective governance as factors contributing to fragmentation in the Horn of Africa, hindering a unified response to shared challenges. He emphasized the importance of regional unity and collaboration to achieve sustainable peace and security, calling for stronger structures and a shared vision across borders to address these issues.

FROM SURVIVAL TO GOVERNANCE

The Horn of Africa has transitioned from prioritizing survival to focusing on governance, recognizing the crucial role of stable political structures in navigating the region's complexities. This shift highlights the necessity of establishing effective governance systems to tackle urgent issues and uphold long-term stability, prosperity, and unity. Effective governance is vital for promoting peace, driving economic progress, and fostering social cohesion among diverse populations. By addressing internal challenges and bolstering resilience against external pressures, strong governance sets the stage for sustainable growth and cooperative relations. This move towards governance signifies a significant advancement in addressing historical issues in the Horn of Africa, laying the groundwork for a more united and prosperous future.

GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The Horn of Africa's geopolitical landscape is influenced by international interests, as global powers are drawn to the region for its strategic position and resource potential. Factors like proximity to vital maritime trade routes, natural resources, and global security and economic competition contribute to this external focus. This competition for influence brings both opportunities and challenges for local governance and security. While foreign investments can enhance infrastructure, economic growth, and institutions, external involvement can intensify tensions, deepen political divisions, and create new conflicts as regional players align with different global actors, disrupting power dynamics.

Global powers' strategic objectives may conflict with local interests, leading to proxy conflicts and prioritizing geopolitical aims over national stability and sovereignty. This external competition undermines local governments' control and sovereignty. The convergence of international influence and local governance in the Horn of Africa offers development and security prospects but also poses risks of instability and conflict. Effectively managing these dynamics is crucial for the region's stability and prosperity.

SOMALIA: A FRAGILE STATE IN GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Somalia illustrates the challenges faced by states dealing with complex global issues such as terrorism, piracy, and humanitarian crises, which not only destabilize the region but also pose significant threats to global security. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires coordinated international efforts focusing on stability, governance, and development in Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa to ensure peace and security in the region's future.

Mr. Ware, speaking on behalf of IGAD, highlighted how global challenges exacerbate Somalia's difficulties and emphasized IGAD's role in promoting stability within countries and fostering regional cooperation. He discussed IGAD's Tumaini Initiative for Peace, concentrating on peace-building and reconciliation efforts, particularly in South Sudan, with Kenya facilitating peace talks. Additionally, he emphasized IGAD's crucial leadership in mediating the Pretoria Agreement between Ethiopia and Tigray, a significant step towards resolving regional conflicts.

Emphasizing the significance of regional stability, Mr. Ware underscored that lasting peace in the Horn of Africa would benefit all involved countries by fostering broader regional cooperation, economic growth, and collective security. This peace would pave the way for sustainable development and a brighter future for the Horn of Africa.



PANEL DISCUSSION:

The question-and-answer session following Mr. Mohamed Abdi Ware's keynote speech at the PDRC Talks event was a crucial component, enhancing engagement with the discussed topics. This interactive segment allowed attendees to delve deeper into the issues, debate, and seek clarification on key points from the keynote. The panelists, including Mr. Mohamed Abdi Ware, the Deputy Executive of IGAD, Honorable Mohamed Abdirahman Dhamancad, former Puntland Minister of Finance, and Honorable Mohamed Abdirisak, former Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs, led the session.

The attendees' enthusiasm was palpable through the submission of over 40 questions, demonstrating a keen interest in the discussions. The range and depth of these inquiries showcased a collective eagerness to explore intricate themes like regional stability, governance, and security in the Horn of Africa. The session's high level of participation and dynamic exchanges between the guest speaker and the audience solidified its reputation as a highly interactive and productive event. The robust engagement emphasized the importance of the topic and the attendees' dedication to addressing the challenges facing the region. The key Issues Discussed:

GEOPOLITICAL INFLUENCES ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

Honorable Mohamed Abdirisak emphasized how external geopolitical interests have heightened conflicts in the Horn of Africa, significantly impacting the region's stability. He pointed to recent tensions in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, influenced in part by the Gaza conflict and the involvement of Houthi fighters. These events have disrupted global trade via the Suez Canal, causing supply shortages and global price hikes. Security challenges have led to the deployment of naval forces by global powers, adding complexity to the situation.

Simultaneously, IGAD member states, including Somalia, are contending with internal conflicts and regional rivalries. Ethiopia's recent Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland has further complicated Somalia's delicate political landscape. Ongoing tensions between Somalia's federal government and its member states have impeded crucial state-building efforts, exacerbating political discord.

PUNTLAND: A MODEL OF STABILITY

In contrast, Puntland exemplifies stability and autonomy within Somalia, embracing federalism as a solution to the historical pitfalls of centralization. Puntland's approach to security and governance is widely regarded as a model for preserving Somalia's independence and promoting stability. Former Puntland Minister Honorable Mohamed Dhabancad underscored the regional implications of current tensions and criticized the Somali central government for its ineffective management of foreign affairs and failure to prioritize national interests.

Since the collapse of the Somali central government, numerous reconciliation efforts have been undertaken, including more than 12 meetings hosted by neighboring countries. Landmark initiatives such as the Carta Conference and the Embagati Meeting laid the groundwork for Somalia's governance structure, even as divisions persist. These efforts, though imperfect, were essential in steering the country toward rebuilding.

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Reflecting on past reconciliation efforts, Prof. Badiyow noted their shortfalls in addressing deeper, systemic issues. He emphasized the need for principled reconciliation aligned with ethical and just solutions, particularly those rooted in Islamic principles. According to Prof. Badiyow, Islam offers a clear framework for resolving conflicts in an equitable manner, which could serve as a foundation for lasting peace. He also stressed the visible signs of ongoing oppression and called for a genuine commitment to reconciliation that addresses these injustices.

CONCLUSION

The Horn of Africa faces a confluence of internal and external challenges that threaten regional and global stability. Somalia's path to peace remains fraught with obstacles, but the example set by Puntland and the lessons from past peace initiatives provide a hopeful framework for progress. The discussions at the PDRC Talks underscored the need for collaborative, principled efforts to address the region's multifaceted challenges. By drawing on past experiences and adhering to ethical principles, there is potential to pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future.

THEME II: MEDIA ETHICS FOR PEACE-BUILDING IN SENSITIVE CONTEXTS

This theme focused on the critical role of ethical media practices in fostering peace and stability, particularly in fragile environments like Somalia. Two papers were presented, addressing key issues such as the importance of ethical journalism in peace-building and the impact of social media during conflict, with a case study on the Las'aanod uprising. These papers underscored the need for responsible reporting, balanced narratives, and the prevention of inflammatory or divisive content that could exacerbate tensions. The theme was further expanded through two panel discussions, one exploring the professional ethics, challenges, and capacity gaps within Somali media, and the other addressing media regulation, public interest, and the balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility. The sessions were engaging and thought-provoking, providing a platform for media professionals, policymakers, and academics to reflect on the ethical dilemmas faced by journalists and the role of regulatory frameworks in promoting responsible media conduct. Participants contributed actively, fostering a deeper understanding of how ethical journalism can be a catalyst for sustainable peace and reconciliation.

PAPER 5: ETHICAL MEDIA PRACTICES IN PEACE-BUILDING: LESSONS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS FROM SOMALIA

BY MOHAMED DAHIR CAYNSANE

The paper presented by Mohamed Dahir Caynsane, Chairman of the Media Association of Puntland (MAP), focused on the ethical challenges faced by Somali journalists in a divided media landscape. It examined the dilemmas related to bias, misinformation, and the safety of journalists operating within conflict-affected contexts. The presentation highlighted the significant impact that various media practices can have on peace processes in Somalia, showcasing both the positive and negative influences on public perception and conflict dynamics. Drawing from MAP's experiences, the paper emphasized the importance of ethical journalism as a means to foster peace, advocating for strategies that enhance media coverage and advocacy efforts. It proposed actionable recommendations to strengthen ethical journalism standards, ensuring that media serves as a constructive force in peace-building initiatives. Key concepts discussed included the critical role of media ethics in promoting responsible journalism, the necessity of addressing misinformation and disinformation, and the integral role of the media in supporting peace-building activities through accurate and collaborative reporting. Overall, the paper contributed valuable insights into the intersection of media practices and peace-building, offering pathways for future improvements in the field.

PAPER 6: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LAAS'ANOOD UPRISING

BY ABDIRAHMAN ISSE

The paper by Abdirahman Isse provided a contrasting perspective to the previous presentation on ethical media practices in peace-building by Mohamed Dahir Caynsane. While Caynsane's focus was on the ethical challenges faced by journalists in conflict zones and the importance of responsible media in supporting peace efforts, Isse's analysis centered on the empowering role of social media in grassroots mobilization and resistance during the Laas'anood uprising.

Isse emphasized that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, have become vital tools for the Sool community in their struggle against the Somaliland administration, which has sought to assert control over the Sool region since 2007.

Furthermore, Isse highlighted that social media has facilitated connections with diaspora communities, allowing for an exchange of support and resources that enhances the uprising's momentum. This connection not only broadens the reach of the movement but also helps to amplify the voices of those in the Sool region, giving them a platform to share their narrative and struggles with a global audience. Fundraising initiatives conducted through social media have also played a significant role, providing much-needed financial support for the movement and enabling further organization on the ground. This shift from traditional media ethics to the dynamic use of social media illustrates the complex landscape of media influence in conflict situations. While Caynsane focused on the need for ethical journalism to foster peace and prevent misinformation, Isse's findings reveal how social media can serve as both a liberating force and a potential source of ethical dilemmas. The ability of social media to empower communities to resist oppression contrasts sharply with concerns about the spread of misinformation, highlighting the dual nature of these platforms in contemporary conflicts.

Together, these papers underscore the multifaceted role of media in both conflict and peace-building. They reflect the challenges and opportunities presented by different forms of communication, emphasizing that while ethical journalism is crucial for fostering peace, social media can also be a powerful instrument for mobilization and resistance. This duality showcases the need for a nuanced understanding of media's impact in various contexts, as it can shape narratives, influence public perception, and either contribute to or detract from efforts toward peace and reconciliation.



PANEL 2 : PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, CHALLENGES, AND CAPACITY OF THE SOMALI MEDIA

In the third panel discussion, exploring the professional ethics, challenges, and capacity gaps within Somali media, the panelists including Mohamed Dahir Caynsane, MAP, Muhiyaddin Hassan, SWJA, Mohamud Osman Abdule, GALJA, Abdullahi A. Mohamed, JL Journalist Association and Muctar Abdi Jama, SSC-Khatumo. Mohamed Salah was moderating the discussion. Below are the discussions.

- **Current Media Landscape:** The panelists collectively addressed the pressing issue of media regulation within the Federal Member States (FMS). They noted a profound lack of comprehensive media laws at the state level, stating that while federal media law exists, many states are in the process of drafting their legislation. This gap has created uncertainty and inconsistency in media operations, affecting the ability of journalists to report effectively and ethically.
- **Media's Role in Peace-building:** A significant portion of the discussion focused on the media's dual role in society. The panelists emphasized that the media plays a crucial part in peace-building and reconciliation efforts across most districts. However, they also acknowledged instances where media reporting has contributed to unrest, particularly in the Sool region. Participants raised questions about how media can strike a balance between responsible reporting and the potential to incite violence. The panelists suggested that the core strategy should be grounded in truth-telling and the verification of information prior to publication.

- **Audience Engagement and Inquiries;** The atmosphere of the panel was energized, with audience members actively engaging with the panelists. Participants posed thoughtful questions regarding the challenges they face in reporting, including concerns about misinformation and the ethical responsibilities of journalists. The panelists responded with insights into the importance of media ethics education, suggesting that training could empower journalists to navigate these challenges more effectively.
- **Challenges Facing Somali Media:** The discussion also illuminated the myriad challenges that Somali media faces in FMS. Key issues included:
 - **Financial Constraints:** Many media outlets struggle with limited funding, affecting their ability to produce quality content.
 - **Fragmentation:** The media landscape is highly fragmented, leading to competition rather than collaboration among outlets.
 - **Fear of Persecution:** Journalists often work under the threat of persecution, which stifles freedom of expression and impacts reporting.
 - **Inadequate Professional Standards:** There is a notable lack of professional editing and journalistic standards, leading to the spread of unverified information.
 - **Misinformation:** The proliferation of fake news poses a significant threat to public trust in media.
 The panelists emphasized the need for media outlets to prioritize accurate information gathering to combat the spread of misinformation effectively.

Recommendations for Improvement: In response to the identified challenges, the panelists offered several actionable recommendations:

1. **Enhancing Media Professionalism:** Promoting standards of excellence in journalism is essential for building credibility.
2. **Ethical Practices:** Encouraging journalists to adhere to ethical standards can help restore public trust.
3. **Education and Training:** Providing comprehensive education and training for media practitioners will equip them with the skills needed to navigate the complex media landscape.
4. **Adherence to Regulations:** Emphasizing the importance of respecting media rules and regulations will foster a more robust media environment.

The panel discussion concluded on a hopeful note, with participants expressing appreciation for the insights shared by the panelists. The engagement from the audience highlighted a collective desire for improvement and a commitment to elevating the standards of Somali media. By addressing the challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, the Somali media landscape can evolve into a more effective and responsible force for peace and reconciliation.



PANEL 2 : PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, CHALLENGES, AND CAPACITY OF THE SOMALI MEDIA

The second panel discussion featured an insightful exchange among key figures in Puntland's media landscape, including Yacqub Mohamed Abdalla, the Deputy Minister of Information Puntland; Qaalib Baaruud, a Member of Puntland Parliament; and Saido Ahmed Ali, a Senior Legal Advisor in the Puntland Presidency. Moderated by Fadumo Yasiin Jama, this discussion provided a critical examination of media regulation and the implications for freedom of expression within the context of Puntland.

Media Regulation in Puntland: The panelists began by addressing the question of whether the Puntland media regulation has been effectively implemented. Yacqub Mohamed Abdalla noted that the Puntland media law was drafted during the regime of Abdiweli Gas and, although passed by the cabinet, it has yet to take effect. Qaalib Baaruud elaborated that while the law remains largely unchanged, minor adjustments have been made to include provisions related to advertisements, public awareness, and social media.

Saido Ahmed Ali emphasized the procedural aspects of lawmaking, explaining that the cabinet passed the law, which was then debated by the parliament before being sent to the president for consideration. She highlighted the significance of including social media and advertising in the law, recognizing the evolving nature of media in Puntland.

- **Defining Journalism:** A key question posed during the discussion was, "Who is a journalist?" Yacqub argued that in today's digital age, individuals with substantial social media followings—those who can influence large audiences—should be recognized as journalists. He posited that if such influential figures cannot be regulated, the relevance of the media law is called into question. In contrast, Qaalib Baaruud maintained that journalism is a profession requiring specific skills, asserting that social media influencers should not be classified as journalists under the law. Saido Ahmed Ali added that Somalia has a rich media tradition, and the violation of media rights stems from a lack of understanding of existing laws.
- **Regulation of Social Media:** The panelists reached a consensus on the necessity of regulating social media while emphasizing the importance of ensuring freedom of expression. They acknowledged that while the government has a responsibility to uphold this right, it must do so without infringing upon the rights of citizens. This discussion mirrored themes from the first panel, where the ethical responsibilities of media were highlighted as vital to peace-building and conflict prevention.
- **Audience Reflections;** The audience engagement was vibrant, with several attendees questioning the relevance and role of the Ministry of Information in a democratic society. Many expressed concerns that the ministry had historically been used as a tool for repression during military regimes, stifling freedom of speech and censoring dissenting voices. Some audience members suggested that the ministry's name should be changed to reflect a more democratic ethos.

In response, the panelists defended the role of the Ministry of Information in democratic states. They argued that with the right framework and ethical standards, the ministry can contribute positively to media governance. They emphasized the need for professional and ethical media that balances freedom with responsibility, reinforcing the idea that a robust media environment is essential for a functioning democracy.

- **Interconnections with Previous Discussion:** This panel discussion was notably different from the first, which focused primarily on the challenges and ethical considerations faced by media practitioners. The second panel emphasized media regulation which often highlights the need to balance competing priorities: protecting public interest, ensuring free expression, and adapting to technological and societal changes.

THEME III. INTER COMMUNITY CONFLICTS AND SOCIAL COHESION

The third theme explored the dynamic relationship between media, inter communal conflict, and efforts to foster social harmony. As guest speaker of the theme, Dr. Ali Malaq started his presentation by posing several questions to the audience regarding the root causes of conflicts in Somalia. He outlined how these conflicts have evolved, arguing that the main issue lies in the failure to adapt to changing circumstances. He remarked, "Conflicts have changed, the actors and methods have changed, but our understanding and approach have remained the same." One concept the Somali people have failed to question is the ongoing relevance of clan identity. While the state was destroyed, the clan system remained intact, indicating that clan foundations are more resilient than the state itself. Another question raised was why clans occupy distinct territories and do not share land. These points suggest that there are underlying factors we do not fully understand.

Ali explored the connection between land and people, emphasizing that land is invaluable to clans as their survival depends on it. Clans fight over land because, without it, people, resources, and an army, a clan cannot sustain itself. However, he argued that intra-clan fighting is not the primary driver of violence. Between June 2021 and June 2022, over 4,000 incidents of violence occurred, with clans accounting for only 7%, while Al-Shabaab was responsible for 63%. Various other actors played a more significant role. Ali used Mark Twain's analogy: "If you place 100 red ants and 100 black ants in a jar, at first, nothing will happen. But if you shake the jar and release them, they will start fighting, each group believing the other is the enemy, when in fact, the true enemy is the one who shook the jar." Dr. Malaq emphasized how powerful actors are driving the conflict, while clans, struggling for survival, are wrongly blamed. This analogy also illustrates the role of the media, shaped by evolving contexts, in fueling misunderstandings.

About theme three papers were presented, each shedding light on the media's dual role as both a potential driver of division and a powerful tool for promoting peace and cohesion. One paper provided a case study on the influence of social media in shaping social cohesion and conflict resolution in specific contexts, while another analysed the role of media in inter communal conflicts. The third paper focused on strategies to strengthen and enable the media's capacity to promote peace. Two engaging panel discussions complemented these presentations, delving into inter-clan conflicts, the role of media in these disputes, and how it can serve as a bridge for reconciliation. The sessions fostered open dialogue among researchers, media professionals, and community leaders, generating actionable insights on leveraging media to mediate tensions and build resilient, harmonious communities. The discussions were participatory, highlighting real-world experiences and offering practical recommendations to enhance the media's contribution to peace-building and social cohesion.

PAPER 7: CASE STUDY ON HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAS INFLUENCED SOCIAL COHESION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SPECIFIC CONTEXT

BY MOHAMED ABDULLAHI, HORN CENTRE

Mohamed Abdullahi's paper explored the dual impact of social media on conflict and social cohesion in Somalia, with a focus on its role in both escalating and mitigating tensions. The study, divided into three sections, examined how social media disseminates information and misinformation, often exacerbating conflicts such as the Xerale conflict, while also serving as a platform for dialogue and reconciliation efforts. Data from the study revealed that Facebook is the most widely used platform, with 80% of participants engaging daily and 65% acknowledging that social media worsens conflicts. Despite this, the study highlighted social media's potential in promoting peace, organizing reconciliation conferences, and fostering dialogue. The paper concluded with recommendations to harness social media for peacemaking, combat misinformation, and implement media literacy campaigns to mitigate its negative effects.

PAPER 8: THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICT

Ahmed Jama, Researcher

Ahmed Jama's paper explored the critical and complex role of media in shaping inter-communal conflict dynamics in Puntland state, Somalia, focusing on how various media forms can either escalate tensions or contribute to peace-building. Traditional media, such as print and broadcast outlets, were highlighted as long-standing pillars of communication that facilitate civic engagement, support roundtable discussions, and promote peace through the dissemination of accurate information. These outlets have historically been managed by skilled professionals who adhere to journalistic ethics, actively working to prevent hate speech and violence while fostering social cohesion. However, the paper underscored the transformative impact of social media, which has introduced new challenges by creating virtual communities that amplify misinformation and disinformation, contributing to the intensification of conflicts. Social media platforms have become spaces where citizen journalism thrives, empowering individuals to influence public opinion, often without the rigorous ethical standards upheld by traditional media. The study acknowledged that while some social media influencers and online figures promote dialogue and peace-building, others exacerbate divisions by spreading unverified information and inflammatory content. In a region prone to prolonged conflicts, this dual influence of social media underscores the urgent need for comprehensive regulatory measures and heightened media literacy to mitigate its negative effects.

The paper concluded with actionable recommendations aimed at different stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of enhancing access to information, verifying public figures' online identities, and promoting gender inclusivity within the media landscape. It stressed the necessity of strengthening journalistic ethics, encouraging civic engagement, and ensuring that media outlets consistently rely on credible sources to inform the public accurately. Furthermore, the paper called for increased capacity-building initiatives for journalists, equipping them with the skills required to navigate the complexities of conflict reporting and peace advocacy. By consistently covering peace-building and mediation efforts, media can play a pivotal role in resolving social conflicts and fostering harmony within communities. The research presented a compelling case for leveraging media as a tool for conflict resolution and social cohesion, advocating for a collaborative approach between governments, media professionals, and civil society to harness the positive potential of both traditional and digital platforms.

PPT 2 STRENGTHEN AND ENABLE THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING PEACE

By Mohamed Awad

Somalia, highlighting their dual capacity to either advance peace or exacerbate conflict. The presentation underscored the significant influence media holds in shaping public perception, promoting dialogue, and creating awareness around peace initiatives. However, it also acknowledged the risks posed by misinformation, political biases, and sensationalism, which can deepen societal divisions and fuel unrest. The paper explored the impact of election irregularities on national stability, emphasizing how flawed electoral processes can trigger political disputes and undermine peace-building efforts. It highlighted the persistent challenges Somalia faces in conducting direct elections, attributing these difficulties to systemic governance issues and the entrenchment of political rivalries.

Awad's analysis extended beyond electoral politics to examine broader obstacles to peace, including environmental degradation, poverty, human security concerns, and inter-state conflicts. The study stressed the importance of addressing rights violations, public health crises, and violence as part of a comprehensive peace strategy. By identifying these recurring issues, the paper advocated for breaking the cycle of political conflict through inclusive dialogue, media-driven conflict resolution, and community engagement. Ultimately, it called for enhancing the capacity of media outlets and social media platforms to act as agents of positive change, encouraging transparency, accountability, and cooperation to promote lasting peace in Somalia.

PANEL 4 DISCUSSION SUMMARY: INTER-CLAN CONFLICTS AND SOCIAL COHESION

The panelists were Said Salah Ahmed, Asha Gelle Dirie, and Shaki Hayir moderated by Dr Yusuf Omar. The discussion explored the critical role of media in either exacerbating or mitigating conflicts and fostering social unity in Somali communities. Panelists shared powerful insights and real-life examples, such as the transformation of Galkacyo's media from a source of division to a messenger of peace. Discussions highlighted the deep cultural value Somalis place on peace, the need to rebuild trust between the state and the public, and the importance of fostering horizontal connections between communities. The panel underscored the role of leadership in shaping collective identity and social cohesion, with calls for embracing maternal lineage as a unifying factor. Participants actively engaged with the panelists, sharing personal experiences and emphasizing the necessity of responsible media practices, community-driven oversight, and leadership accountability to sustain peace and unity.

Participant reactions reflected deep engagement and a shared sense of urgency regarding the role of media in influencing peace and conflict dynamics. Several participants shared personal stories about how media-driven conflict had affected their communities, reinforcing the importance of media accountability. Key points from their reactions include:

RECOGNITION OF MEDIA'S DUAL ROLE

Asha Gelle's narratives about Galkacyo's media transforming from conflict-inciters to peace-builders resonated strongly with the audience. Participants appreciated the tangible example of how shifting media practices can reshape community relations. This led to discussions among participants about how similar approaches could be replicated in other conflict-prone areas.

Cultural Reflection and Engagement

Prof. Said Salah's emphasis on Somali culture's inherent value for peace sparked reflective reactions. Many participants nodded in agreement when he highlighted that Somalis consistently greet each other with phrases about peace, underlining the cultural foundation for social cohesion. His reference to the popular series *"War jiraba Cakaaruu imaan"* drew nostalgic smiles and murmurs of approval, with some participants recalling how the program positively influenced public discourse.

CALL FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Shaki Hayir's breakdown of social cohesion into vertical (state-public) and horizontal (community-community) dimensions prompted several participants to raise questions about practical steps to rebuild trust in state institutions. There was a sense of urgency and calls from the audience for stronger government engagement and leadership accountability to foster a shared vision.

PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Dr. Badiyoow's remarks about maternal lineage fostering broader connections sparked emotional responses. Some participants voiced that acknowledging maternal heritage resonated deeply, suggesting it could humanize and soften inter-clan divisions. This led to informal side discussions about how Somali communities often overlook maternal lineage in conflict resolution processes, highlighting the need for a cultural shift in perspective.

PANEL 5 DISCUSSION SUMMARY: ROLE OF MEDIA IN INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The panelists were Prof. Ahmed Maalin, Director of the Institute of Peace and Security Studies, Garissa University, Dr. Ahmed M. Musa, Governance and Research Lead, Build-Up, and Peter Nordstrom, Head of the Somalia Joint Fund (SJF-UN), Moderated by Suuban Jama.

This Panel expanded upon the foundational discussions of the previous panel by examining the role of media not just as a local peacebuilding tool, but as a structural force deeply intertwined with Somalia's socio-political fabric. While Panel 4 concentrated on the ways media can foster inter-communal dialogue and social cohesion—focusing on case studies such as peace efforts in Galkacyo, this panel shifted to a broader exploration of how systemic issues like governance failures, economic instability, and social inequalities shape the media landscape and exacerbate conflict.

Prof. Ahmed Maalin opened the session by emphasizing the pervasive influence of media in Somali society, noting that while media serves as a crucial platform for information and discourse, it often amplifies existing communal tensions. He pointed to the psychological toll that media-driven conflict narratives inflict on communities, explaining how misinformation can spiral, creating widespread unrest and deepening existing fractures. This nuanced view connected directly to the discussions in Panel 4, which addressed the community-level impacts of media. However, Prof. Maalin's remarks broadened the conversation by examining the structural drivers behind such tensions, moving beyond immediate localized concerns to systemic vulnerabilities.

Dr. Ahmed M. Musa further contextualized the discussion by linking the prevalence of media-fuelled conflict to deeper socio-economic issues such as illiteracy, unemployment, and governance gaps. He argued that without addressing these underlying factors, media will continue to serve as a battleground for conflicting narratives, exacerbating divisions rather than bridging them. This perspective offered a vital contrast to the previous panel, where much of the focus remained on the cultural and social dimensions of conflict resolution. By addressing structural challenges, Dr. Musa underscored the need for holistic, policy-driven solutions that tackle root causes rather than surface-level symptoms.

Suuban Jama expanded the discourse by situating Somalia's media landscape within global trends, highlighting that the tendency for media to focus on negative or sensational news is not unique to Somalia. However, she stressed that in fragile states, the stakes are higher—negative narratives can escalate tensions rapidly, further destabilizing already vulnerable regions. Jama's observations drew parallels with the international experience while reinforcing the distinct challenges Somalia faces due to its political and security landscape. Her remarks complemented the more localized focus of the previous panel by demonstrating that while Somalia's issues are unique, they are part of a broader pattern that requires context-specific responses.

eter Nordstrom brought an international perspective to the table, discussing the role of the United Nations in strengthening media capacity and promoting conflict-sensitive reporting. He highlighted ongoing efforts to support local media houses in adopting ethical journalism practices that prioritize accuracy and impartiality, aiming to counterbalance the influence of extremist narratives. Nordstrom's insights on how actors like Al-Shabaab exploit media to spread radical ideologies resonated with Prof. Maalin's earlier points about the politicization of media. His contributions extended the conversation from community-based interventions to larger international strategies designed to mitigate the media's potential for harm.

Throughout the panel, recurring themes from the previous session such as the politicization of media, clan-based rivalries, and the need to empower local voices emerged, but with greater emphasis on the systemic reforms necessary to foster lasting peace. While Panel 4 highlighted the role of grassroots leadership, traditional values, and local peace-building initiatives, Panel 5 called for comprehensive approaches that integrate policy reform, economic development, and educational initiatives alongside community-driven efforts. The panels ultimately converged on key points: media is both a driver of conflict and a tool for peace and addressing this duality requires a blend of local knowledge and structural reform. By delving into different angles—Panel 4 from a community-based perspective and Panel 5 through a systemic and international lens—the discussions offered a multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing the role of media in Somalia's complex conflict environment.

THEME IV. SOCIAL MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE INTERNET IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

This theme addressed the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping conflict dynamics and fostering peace in fragile environments. Five papers were presented, reflecting a diverse range of topics. These included AI-driven hate speech detection for peace-building, the role of social media activism in conflict zones, and the potential of social media research to promote peace in unstable regions. Other papers explored interactive radio as a tool for sustainable peace and development in Northern Kenya and examined how social media influences conflict in Somalia. A panel discussion further enriched the theme by focusing on the transformative impact of media and technology on conflict and peace processes. The sessions provided valuable insights into how digital platforms can either fuel violence or serve as powerful instruments for dialogue, awareness, and reconciliation. Participants actively engaged in discussions, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges posed by social media and technology in fragile contexts, fostering a collaborative exchange of ideas on innovative approaches to peacebuilding in the digital age. Here is the summary of the paper presentations and panel discussions:

PPT 3: AI-BASED HATE SPEECH DETECTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PEACEBUILDING

DR. YAHYE AHMED, SIMAD UNIVERSITY

Dr. Yahye Ahmed's presentation on AI-based hate speech detection highlighted the pressing issue of rising hate speech on social media platforms in fragile contexts like Somalia. He explored how platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become conduits for harmful rhetoric that deepens societal divisions and threatens peace-building efforts. The paper defined hate speech as communication that targets individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or nationality, underscoring how it propagates misinformation, undermines social harmony, and exacerbates existing tensions. Dr. Yahye emphasized that hate speech fuels distrust, perpetuates inequality, and disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, posing a significant barrier to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. His presentation stressed the importance of leveraging AI technology to detect and mitigate hate speech, positioning it as a critical tool for fostering more inclusive digital spaces and supporting peace initiatives. By advocating for proactive intervention through AI-driven solutions, the paper added valuable insights to the conference discussions on addressing digital challenges in fragile societies, reinforcing the role of technology in promoting long-term stability.

PAPER 9: RESPONSE TO MARKUS V. HOEHNE'S PROPOSAL: ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGY IN A WAR-ZONE: THE COSTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM AND THE VIOLENCE OF "EXPERTISE"

MARKUS V. HOEHNE

This paper presented a response to Markus V. Hoehne's proposal, focusing on the complex political tensions in northern Somalia, particularly regarding Somaliland's pursuit of independence and the opposition from Lasanod town in Sool region. The study aims to uncover the deep-seated grievances and conflicting identities fueling instability in the area. By amplifying often-overlooked voices, it seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics.

Lasanod is the capital city of the Sool region in Somalia, bordered by both Somaliland and Puntland. Historically, Sool was under Puntland's authority until 2007, when Somaliland seized control by force. Since then, the region has experienced ongoing political confrontations between local residents and Somaliland. However, significant unrest erupted in Lasanod in early 2023, driven by a series of assassinations and growing dissatisfaction with Somaliland's governance. The protests escalated into violent clashes, with local leaders calling for self-administration and the withdrawal of Somaliland forces.

The research is rooted in theories of political identity and governance, informed by extensive ethnographic fieldwork in northern Somalia and real-time social media analysis during the 2023 conflict in Lasanod. It investigates whether the conflict is driven by political borders or deeper historical grievances. The study also examines the dual role of social media as a facilitator of peace and a potential instigator of conflict, emphasizing the importance of responsible use of these platforms.

Recommendations

- **Establishment of Inclusive Dialogue:** The study recommends fostering inclusive and empathetic dialogues that consider the diverse perspectives within the region to address the root causes of conflict.
- **Creation of Safe Spaces for Governance:** It calls for the establishment of safe spaces for local governance and community discussions to facilitate constructive engagement.
- **Collaboration with Marginalized Voices:** The research emphasizes the need to engage marginalized voices in the political discourse to ensure all perspectives are represented.
- **Responsible Use of social media:** It advocates for promoting the responsible use of social media, ensuring it serves as a tool for positive change rather than exacerbating tensions.
- **Support for Conflict Resolution Efforts:** The study highlights the necessity of collaborative efforts among policymakers and practitioners to tackle the challenges posed by the conflict, focusing on peacebuilding and reconciliation.

PPT 4 LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH TO PROMOTE PEACE IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

AHMED M. MUSE, BUILD-UP

Ahmed Muse's presentation explored the potential of leveraging social media research to promote peace in fragile contexts, specifically within Somalia's conflict-prone landscape. Drawing on definitions of fragile societies as regions, where the state lacks legitimacy and governance structures, are weak, Muse underscored the unique challenges posed by Somalia's political instability. He framed social media as a double-edged sword—while platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram foster connectivity, they also serve as battlegrounds for clan tensions and political disputes. Citing local proverbs like “Xog la helyaaba talo la hel” (Information leads to wise counsel), Muse emphasized the importance of research as a tool for understanding online discourse and trends. His analysis revealed that TikTok is the most widely used platform in Somalia (57.4%), followed by Facebook (47.2%) and Messenger (25.5%), reflecting the population's digital engagement. Muse's study found that clan tensions dominate daily social media conversations, surpassing even discussions about elections and foreign relations. By promoting research-driven insights into these digital dynamics, the paper advocated for utilizing social media data to design targeted peace initiatives, highlighting how informed interventions can mitigate online conflicts and foster reconciliation in fragile states.

PPT 5: AN INTERACTIVE RADIO SERIES FOR QUICK DIAGNOSIS OF SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN KENYA

BY DR AHMED MAALIN, GARISSA UNIVERSITY

The presentation on the interactive radio series for sustainable peace and development in Northern Kenya, led by Prof. Ahmed M. Mohamed and his team, highlighted the significant role of citizen engagement through media in addressing conflict and promoting peace. Conducted between May and November 2023, the project aimed to gather community-driven insights by broadcasting interactive radio programs across seven stations in Kenya's Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) region. Through this initiative, 12,783 individuals actively participated, contributing over 83,000 SMS responses to questions about peace, conflict, and potential solutions.

The study revealed that radio remains one of the most effective tools for reaching marginalized groups, with 81.9% of participants having access to radio and 79.1% owning mobile phones. Women, representing 42.6% of participants, were particularly engaged, reflecting the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and children. Youth aged 15-35 comprised 55.4% of respondents, driven by higher literacy levels and technological access.

Key findings indicated that poor leadership, corruption, poverty, and tribalism are primary drivers of conflict in the region. Many participants pointed out the lack of accountability for those perpetuating violence, while others highlighted how poverty compels individuals to resort to illegal activities, destabilizing peace further. At the same time, community-driven solutions emerged, including civic education, mediation, and peace initiatives led by local leaders and organizations.

The study recommended scaling up the positive use of media by integrating peace efforts into local governance structures. Additionally, the PDRC peace model was highlighted as a successful framework that could be expanded across the Horn of Africa. The findings underscored the importance of amplifying community voices through media, fostering inclusive dialogue, and promoting citizen-driven solutions to ensure long-term peace and development.

PAPER 10: IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN SOMALIA

BY ABDULLAHI ABDI SHEIKH

Abdullahi's paper investigated the role of social media in shaping conflict dynamics in Somalia, a country recovering from a civil war that began in 1991. The research aims to understand how social media influences perceptions of conflict, contributes to violence, and spreads misinformation. Utilizing Agenda Setting Theory, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews with local journalists and policymakers. His findings reveal that social media has a predominantly negative impact on inter-clan conflicts, particularly due to the influence of diaspora-based users who propagate divisive narratives. Significant legal and regulatory gaps exist in monitoring harmful content, but the study also identifies social media's potential as a tool for peacebuilding and community engagement. The methodology includes a survey of 312 participants, showing high usage of social media among young adults, with many perceiving its effects on conflict as detrimental. In-depth interviews with 32 key individuals further highlight the rapid spread of misinformation and the role of diaspora influencers in escalating tensions. international organizations to adopt best practices in social media regulation.

Recommendations

- **Establishment of Legal Frameworks:** The study recommends the development of comprehensive laws to regulate social media, specifically targeting the prevention of hate speech and misinformation.
- **Implementation of Public Awareness Programs:** It suggests creating social media literacy initiatives that empower users to critically evaluate the content they encounter online.
- **Fostering International Cooperation:** The study emphasizes the importance of collaborating with international organizations to adopt best practices in social media regulation.
- **Support for Peacebuilding Initiatives:** It calls for enhancing efforts that leverage social media to promote peace and reconciliation within communities.
- **Engagement of Diaspora Communities:** The study advocates for encouraging constructive dialogue among diaspora members to mitigate their negative influence on local conflicts



PANEL 7 DISCUSSION SUMMARY: THE NEXUS BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL, CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY

The panelists were Mohmed A. Faroole – PL Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Mohamed Abdirisak – former Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdikaream Hassan, and Najib Ahmed, Moderated by Abdisalam Mohamud Jama

The panel discussion on the nexus between environment, climate, peace, and security served as a vital extension of the papers presented under this theme, further deepening the exploration of how environmental stressors directly intersect with conflict dynamics and governance challenges. The preceding presentations highlighted a range of resource-based conflicts, including land tenure disputes, natural resource management issues, and the tensions arising from competition over water, grazing land, and forest resources. These papers provided critical insights into the ways environmental degradation, climate variability, and mismanagement exacerbate existing fault lines within communities, ultimately driving conflict and displacement.

Building on these findings, the panel sought to contextualize these issues within the broader framework of Puntland's ongoing experiences and governance efforts. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Puntland, Mr. Mohamed Abdirahman Faroole opened the session by drawing attention to the inseparability of environmental sustainability, peace, and climate resilience. He emphasized that these elements when addressed collectively, offer a pathway to preventing conflicts that are rooted in resource scarcity and environmental degradation. Faroole reflected on Puntland's strategic approach to managing these interdependencies, stressing the necessity of holistic solutions that prioritize equitable resource distribution and long-term environmental planning.

Faroole's address underscored the reality that Puntland, much like many regions globally, faces increasing vulnerabilities due to climate change and unsustainable land practices. These issues threaten not only the environment but also the livelihoods and stability of communities, creating a breeding ground for disputes over land and natural resources. His remarks resonated strongly with the themes of the earlier papers, reinforcing the notion that environmental governance must be central to peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies.

Mohamed Abdirisak expanded on these points by emphasizing the significance of pastoral livelihoods and the recurring disputes over access to grazing land and water. His comments reflected key arguments presented during the earlier sessions, where conflicts between pastoralists and farmers,

as well as tensions between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities, were cited as pressing issues exacerbated by climate stress and environmental mismanagement. Abdirisak underscored how these local disputes often mirror broader structural issues, highlighting the need for governance frameworks that ensure fair and sustainable resource allocation.

Najiib Ahmed's contribution brought attention to the disconnect between environmental needs and decision-making at the leadership level. Reflecting on his study, Ahmed noted that while Puntland's Ministry of Environment demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing environmental challenges, the lack of prioritization at higher levels of government, including regional administrations and national leadership, remains a barrier to progress. This misalignment, he argued, undermines efforts to implement comprehensive solutions, leaving communities vulnerable to recurring cycles of resource-based conflict.

The panel discussion ultimately underscored the pressing need to bridge the gap between policy, governance, and community-level initiatives. It reinforced the importance of fostering cooperation across all levels of government, civil society, and local communities to address the root causes of environmental and climate-driven conflicts. By linking the insights from academic research to real-world governance challenges, the session provided a comprehensive understanding of how integrated environmental management and conflict prevention strategies can shape more resilient and peaceful societies.

PANEL 8 DISCUSSION SUMMARY: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR MEDIA IN PEACEBUILDING

The panelists were Jessie Kariuki, Interpeace Programmes Manager, Somalia Section, Mohammed Mukhtar, Former Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources, Federal Government of Somalia, Jens Peter Dybrak, Chief Governance & Climate Advisor, Embassy of Denmark, Subaa Jama, Lawyer & Consultant, Subeida Mukhtar, Deputy Team Lead - Programme, Somali Dialogue Platform, Rift Valley Institute (RVI), moderated by Dr. Fardowsa Ahmed Gambol,

The panel provided a comprehensive exploration of how media can play a pivotal role in Somalia's peacebuilding efforts. The panelists presented diverse perspectives on the necessity of developing media frameworks, addressing misinformation, and investing in technology to leverage media as a force for positive societal transformation.

Jessie Kariuki, Interpeace Programmes Manager, Somalia Section Jessie Kariuki underscored the fundamental role of media in state-building processes, emphasizing that conflict is an inevitable aspect of governance but can be redirected toward constructive outcomes through media engagement. She stressed the importance of institutions, like PDRC, fully embracing the media's transformative potential. Kariuki highlighted the necessity for governments to invest in media technology, foster public engagement, and collaborate with legislative bodies to develop adaptive and responsive media laws. Reflecting on the rise of artificial intelligence, she urged the Somali government to consider new technological advancements as part of its media strategy. Kariuki also pointed out that while social media often exacerbates polarization, it can also mobilize positive change, referencing recent youth-driven movements in Kenya as an example.

Jens Peter Dyrbak, Chief Governance & Climate Advisor, Embassy of Denmark, Nairobi Jens Peter Dyrbak shared Denmark's experiences in incorporating media into their five-year governance program for Somalia. He noted that Denmark's support for civil society and governance initiatives, such as the Somalia Platform for Political Dialogue, is designed to amplify peaceful narratives through media. Dyrbak emphasized that working with NGOs and think tanks to promote peace-building creates a resilient media landscape, enhancing both governance and community cohesion.

Subeida Mukhtar, Deputy Team Lead - Somali Dialogue Platform, Rift Valley Institute Subeida Mukhtar highlighted the transformative journey of Somalia's media landscape, pointing out that media outlets in the past frequently served as tools of propaganda. She elaborated on initiatives aimed at building media practitioners' capacity by connecting them with universities and journalism programs. Mukhtar emphasized that grassroots-level engagement is essential to shaping a collective media vision for Somalia. By fostering local media literacy and ensuring that information is fact-driven, the Somali media landscape can gradually shift toward greater accountability and professionalism.

Mohamed Mukhtar, Former Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources Mohamed Mukhtar provided a pragmatic perspective on the media's role in Somalia, highlighting its potential in combating terrorism and promoting national cohesion. However, he cautioned that media alone cannot resolve the deeper societal issues facing the country. Mukhtar advocated for stronger investment in digital literacy and skills training, suggesting that addressing local community challenges is essential for media to generate meaningful and credible narratives. He encouraged PDRC to organize specialized forums focused solely on media development.

Suban Jama, Lawyer & Consultant Suban Jama concluded the panel by addressing the legal gaps in Somalia's media landscape. She pointed out the absence of clear regulatory frameworks governing media operations and stressed the need to balance freedom of speech with mechanisms to counter misinformation. Jama argued

Investing in legal frameworks that not only regulate but also protect journalists. Additionally, Jama recommended innovative approaches, such as producing peace-focused skits and broadcasts, to engage communities and promote reconciliation.

Overall Panel Reflection The panelists collectively agreed that Somalia's peace building journey must integrate media as a central pillar, with investments in technology, capacity building, and legal frameworks forming the foundation of a robust and resilient media ecosystem.

The research is rooted in theories of political identity and governance, informed by extensive ethnographic fieldwork in northern Somalia and real-time social media analysis during the 2023 conflict in Lasanod. It investigates whether the conflict is driven by political borders or deeper historical grievances. The study also examines the dual role of social media as a facilitator of peace and a potential instigator of conflict, emphasizing the importance of responsible use of these platforms.

ARTS & POETRY EXHIBITION AND COMPETITION



PDRC in collaboration with Waves of Somali Innovative Arts (WOSIA) collaborated in organizing a peace and conflict art workshop and art contest in Garowe, Puntland, which has laid a significant foundation for artistic expression in the region. WOSIA's commitment to supporting Somali artists aligns perfectly with the goals of the workshop, fostering creativity while addressing critical themes of peace and conflict.

The involvement of twenty-three talented school students from Gambol, Nawawi, Al-Waaxa, and Nugaal schools showcases the enthusiasm and potential of young artists in Puntland. The workshop provided these students with valuable knowledge and skills, empowering them to reflect on their perceptions of peace and conflict through their art. This hands-on experience prepares them not only for the upcoming Art Contest but also encourages them to engage deeply with crucial societal issues. In addition to the art initiative, the Poetry Peace Initiative aimed to amplify the voices of university students and provide a creative outlet for exploring the intersection of culture, peace, and conflict through poetry. The participation of twenty students from PSU, Bosaso, and East Africa Universities underscores the initiative's relevance and appeal among youth. By utilizing poetry, a medium rich in emotional resonance and complexity, participants were able to communicate their viewpoints on peace-building in innovative ways.

Both the visual arts and poetry competitions added a vibrant layer to the Annual Peace Learning Conference, infusing it with creativity and insightful reflections. By engaging both secondary and university students, these initiatives highlighted the potential for youth to play a significant role in peace-building efforts within their communities.

The success of these programs marks an important step towards future collaborations, emphasizing the vital role that creative platforms and media can play in promoting peace in areas experiencing fragility and conflict. Through continued support of artistic endeavors, PDRC and WOSIA are contributing to a brighter future where young voices can shape the narrative of peace and resilience in Somalia.

Press Release:

Welcoming of the call for neutral space for dialogue extended by Puntland's President Deni during the closing of PDRC's Second Annual Peace Conference

Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia - September 25, 2024: The Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) successfully concluded its Second Annual Peace Conference (APC) held from September 21st to 23rd, 2024, in Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia. The conference, themed "*The Role of Media in Peace and Conflicts in Fragile Contexts*", brought together Somali peacebuilding practitioners, experts, government officials, journalists, academics, and civil society representatives to deliberate on the critical role of media in fostering peace and reconciliation in Somalia and beyond.

In his closing remarks, President Said Abdullahi Deni underscored Puntland's readiness for a meaningful dialogue and a political resolution to the ongoing dispute with the Federal Government of Somalia. President Deni emphasized his willingness to share Puntland's stance openly and invited Somalis to assess whether Puntland's position is fair, calling for a neutral space where these discussions can take place. He expressed hope that such mutual dialogue would guide Somalia towards a future where peaceful resolution and understanding prevail over conflict and division.

PDRC warmly welcomes this call for peace and applauds President Deni's commitment to engaging in constructive dialogue. As a proud result of our conference, we stand ready to support and facilitate any neutral dialogue process that encourages peaceful political agreements. In the APC conference, media has been recognized as a critical player in shaping narratives that promote reconciliation, and we are encouraged that this powerful tool is being harnessed to drive positive change in Puntland and beyond.

Furthermore, PDRC emphasizes the critical role of dialogue and inclusivity in Somalia's state building process. Inclusive decision-making, where all voices are heard, is key to ensuring sustainable peace and development. By prioritizing dialogue, Somalia can foster a more united approach to governance and state building, addressing the needs and aspirations of all its citizens. It is through such inclusive engagement that the foundation for a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Somalia can be strengthened. We urge Somalis across all federal member states and their leaders to support this call, ensuring that meaningful dialogue takes place and peaceful agreements are reached. This is a unique opportunity for our nation to come together and chart a path toward unity and progress through dialogue and peaceful resolution.

In light of this, we hope and call on the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its leadership to accept this invitation for dialogue, recognizing its importance in resolving the political dispute.

As we look ahead, PDRC remains committed to fostering collaboration between all stakeholders, ensuring that inclusive dialogue is prioritized to steer Puntland and Somalia toward stability and peace. This conference has demonstrated the impact of informed discourse, and we are ready to contribute to any initiative that supports a peaceful, unified, and prosperous Somalia.

END

COMMUNIQUE

Puntland Development Research Center (PDRC) Concludes Second Annual Peace Conference

Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia - September 23, 2024: The Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) successfully concluded the 2nd Annual Peace Conference (APC 2024) held from September 21st to 23rd, 2024.

The Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) 2nd Annual Peace Conference is a multi-stakeholder event that brings together a diverse group of scholars, peace-building practitioners, policymakers, and religious and community leaders to engage in constructive dialogue, share innovative solutions and best practices for the promotion of peace-building and consolidation of conflict-resolution.

This year's conference theme is "The Role of the Media in Peace and Conflicts in Fragile Contexts", which aims to bring together Somalis and international peace-building practitioners and experts to share their successes and challenges, on the role of media in peace and conflict in Somalia and beyond. The conference participants came from the East and Horn of Africa region and around the globe.

The conference featured a diverse range of presentations and discussions, including:

- Keynote addresses by prominent figures in the Somali peace-building and media sectors.
- Paper presentations on topics such as the role of media in peace and conflict, media ethics, inter community conflicts, social cohesion, and the impact of social media and technology.
- Panel discussions featuring experts and practitioners sharing their insights and experiences on various aspects of media and peace-building.
- Poetry recitations
- Arts and poetry exhibition and competition, showcasing the role of culture in promoting peace.
- Documentary film screenings highlighting the impact of conflict and the power of media in shaping narratives.

Key Highlights:

- Opening: The conference was opened by H.E. President Said Abdullahi Deni
- Diverse themes: The conference explored various themes, including the role of media in peace and reconciliation, media ethics, inter-community conflicts, social cohesion, the impact of social media, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in fragile contexts.
- Presentations and interactive discussions: Participants engaged in insightful paper presentations, panel discussions, and interactive sessions, sharing their experiences, challenges, and best practices in utilizing media for peace-building and conflict resolution.
- Focus on solutions: The conference emphasized the need for ethical media practices, responsible reporting, and the promotion of social cohesion through media platforms. It also highlighted the potential of social media and technology in fostering peace and countering hate speech and misinformation.
- Cultural integration: The conference featured poetry recitation and a youth art exhibition, showcasing the power of culture in promoting media for peace
- Climate, Peace, and Security: The conference recognized the interconnectedness of the environment, climate change impact, peace, and security concerns, emphasizing the media's role in raising awareness and promoting sustainable solutions.

Key Outcomes and Recommendations:

- **Strengthening media capacity:** The conference underscored the importance of investing in media capacity-building, promoting media professionalism and ethics
- **Fostering independent media:** Participants called for the creation of a conducive environment for independent media to operate freely and responsibly, contributing to a more informed and engagements
- **Promoting social cohesion:** The conference highlighted the media's potential to bridge communities, promote dialogue, and foster social cohesion.
- **Harnessing Technology for Peace:** The conference recognized the need to leverage social media and technology for peace-building while addressing the challenges of hate speech and misinformation.
- **Addressing climate and security challenges:** Participants emphasized the importance of media in raising awareness about environmental and climate change-related impact on security and promoting sustainable solutions.

The Way Forward:

The Second Annual Peace Conference served as a vital platform for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among key stakeholders in the Somali peace-building and media sectors. The conference generated valuable insights and recommendations that will inform future efforts to harness the power of media for peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development in Somalia.

PDRC will continue to build on the momentum generated by the APC 2024, working with partners and stakeholders to advocate the conference recommendations advancement of the role of media in peace-building.

PDRC remains committed to its mission of promoting peace, development, and good governance through research, advocacy, and capacity building. We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants, partners, and sponsors for their invaluable contributions to the success of APC2024.

Together, we can harness the power of media to build a more peaceful, just, and prosperous Somalia for all.



