



## **Somali South Central Non-State Actors**

**(SOSCENSA)**

### **Young educated women's dialogue on:**

**"Realization of 30% Women Quota in the National Constituency Assembly  
and Parliament"**

**SOSCENSA headquarters in Mogadishu**

**May 28, 2012**

## **Background:**

As Somalia prepares to end the notorious successive transitions, it now seems important more than ever to give Somali people opportunities they can meaningfully participate the political process and women are an integral part of the process.

Under Garowe Principles Somali women should get 30% of Somalia's upcoming National Constituent Assembly (NCA) and the parliament but there is a growing concern inside Somali women that this quota will be denied or mismanaged as happened before. Therefore, there is a need to put pressure on Somali elders, government, the religious leaders and international community on the same page regarding the role of Somalia women in Somalia's current process, and this is one of the reasons this meeting was held.

In the light of this, Somali South Central Non-State Actors (SOSCENSA) which is a platform brings together the civil society organizations, professional associations and private sector groups that operate in South and Central regions of Somalia organized one-day meeting for Somali women at its headquarters in Mogadishu, to debate the current political process and get contributions on how best women could realize their quota in the National Constituency Assembly and new parliament.

## **Main Objective of the meeting:**

The main objective of the meeting was to ensure Somali women get the National Constituency Assembly and the Parliamentary 30% quota agreed by the signatories of the Roadmap in meeting Garowe II principles.

## **Somali Women and Politics:**

Women have the capacity to heal the world! Women are often the voiceless victims of war-ravaged societies, yet they find ways to contribute peace and reconciliation. Somalia is no exception. A woman's role is usually confined within the walls of her home, reflecting a cultural reality rooted in religion. Patriarchal and lineage based traditions have limited women's participation in education, economic and politics, and have kept them out of decision-making processes<sup>1</sup>.

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1. *Somali Women: Agents of Change report: The untapped pedigree of Somali women's political participation*  
By Yasmeeen Maxamuud, Nov 15, 2011.

Somali women have always been avid supporters or critics of Somali politics whether it be through aiding in any manner, poetry or monetarily. Personally, I feel that there needs to be space created for women to participate in the political realm. How are women not partaking in discussions that affect the future of their children, themselves and the state? It is a solid question!

Women carry the womb of life and should be given the opportunity to have a voice in the affairs of their future. Cultivating our Somali women to be leaders and giving them the tools to advocate for inclusion and demand social change should be on the top of our priorities. A good friend of mine said: " Women just don't understand how much power they have. You can stop all the chaos in the world. You're mother, daughter, and wife. Save the world from these crazy men."

During the meeting, a brief review on the state of affairs of Somali women political participation was given. The presentation was referred to a historical background that Somali Women overtake, starting from 1960 when the first Somali government was set up.

The participants then carefully listened to the wise words of Moalin Ahmed, SOSSENSA's Chairman who spoke about the importance of meeting as Somalia passes at critical cross roads which necessitate active participations of Somali people specially women.

The debate was heated and very sharp insights were given by the participants regarding the role of women, the challenges they face and potential solutions.

At end of meeting a committee was formed to do the follow up and finalize the draft declaration which will be circulated to Somali stakeholders.

### **The Meeting Process:**

On May 28, 2012, twenty young educated women and five men gathered at SOSSENSA headquarters in Mogadishu to discuss issues regarding Somali women specially the quota allotted to Somali women under Garowe II principles and how this can be translated into reality on the ground. The participants were drawn from universities in Mogadishu and professional associations as well as women organizations in the capital, Mogadishu.

The meeting which was attended by 25 people, 20 of them young educated women kicked off at SOSSENSA headquarters on Monday morning and debated over how Somali women would maneuver for their rights regarding their quota in the run up to the formation of Somalia's new parliament which is be formed in June 2012.

Hassan Ahmed Sadik, the executive director of SOSSENSA, made the welcoming remarks of the meeting and thanked participants for their acceptance to attend the meeting, as well as verses from the Holy Quran were recited by Said Birmad Igal, who also briefly discussed the rights that Islam has given women saying that Islam has truly protected the rights of women but that some people mis-interpreted represented it and used it for their ends.

The meeting was officially opened by Abdiraman Moalin Ahmed (Ablal), the chairman of SOSSENSA who gave a brief review of SOSSENSA's work. He said that SOSSENSA has been since its inception a policy dialogue platform for Somalia stakeholders and this is a part of that mission. "Since Somalia passes at a cross roads as it struggles to end the transition, there is a need for participation from Somali people for the process and women are the most important ones to be considered in this equation today and that is why these educated women were brought together," he told the guests.

He added that women should fully be engaged in the process to end the transition and those agreements that gave women 30% quota in the following should be honored by all stakeholders and the international community as well. He said that the great challenge ahead of the women is how they could ensure that the quota agreement is honored unlike previous times when pledges and quotas on women participation were broken and denied. Mr. Ablal pointed that he considers quota 30% for women as a national issue other than women's issue.

Then a brief presentation on the state of affairs of Somali women political participation since 1960 was given by Sucdi Daahir Dirie, SOSSENSA Admin Officer. In her presentation, she covered the extent of Somali women in the participation of Somali political arena as follows:

- Somalia's first parliament formed in 1960 was 123 members but there was no single female member.
- Somalia's first independent government formed in 1960 had no women minister among its cabinet.
- Former military regime that ruled Somalia from 1969-1991 was the only government that improved the rights of women, but despite that like its predecessors, there was no woman holding ministerial positions although there were female MPS, female ambassadors and female deputy ministers.
- In Arta (Djibouti, 2000) reconciliation conference 245 strong parliament was formed, 25 seats were allocated for women and extra prominent women has been appointed over their 25 seats.
- In the history of Somali political system, the government formed at Arta conference in Djibouti led by Abdikasin Salad Hassan, had for the first time women ministers.

- In 2004 Somali parliament formed in Embagathi, Kenya 12% quota (33 seats) were allocated for women out of the 275 strong parliament but women got only 22 seats (7%).
- The government formed in 2004, then led by late Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed, a Somali woman was appointed a ministerial position for the second in Somalia political history.
- In 2008 Djibouti reconciliation in which the current President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was elected, women were supposed to have 66 seats (12%) out of 550 strong parliament, but they got 39 seats (7%) only which is fewer than the allocated number.
- All governments formed since 2008 have had female ministers. At one time there were even three ministerial positions for women appointed by Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali in his government.

### **General suggestion:**

As we are all aware of Somalia is to end the transition by 20 August 2012. The Garowe II principles, the signatories of the Roadmap agreed to give women 30% quota from 825 delegates who will approve the constitution. Similarly the member of parliaments

Then, Sucdi put forward the following guiding questions to discuss the participating parts:

- How do you see the quota allocated to women in the NCA and the parliament? Is it enough or? What is your feeling towards that?
- What would you suggest to ensure that women get the 30% quota (67 seats) allocated to them to both the NCA and the Parliament?

### **Debates begin:**

The participants had a heated debate on whether women will get the number allocated for them, the challenges and the possible solutions. The participants most of whom young educated women fervently deliberated about the Somalia's political process leading to the end of the transitional period by August this year, about signatories and the expectation of Somali people in general and women in particular. They voiced their concerns and premonition relating to what could be the offspring of the ongoing political process in Somalia if representivity and inclusivity are not given paramount considerations as has always happened many times in the past endeavors. The participants also warned against marginalizing any group in the political process as such an act may serve a deadly blow to the roadmap and its outcome. The main theme of the meeting being the meaningful women participation in the ongoing political processes, most discussants were in unison that women participation in all government

institutions should be advocated and lobbied by not only women themselves but also by men.

In the course of the debate, some participants seemed to stress the role of the international community particularly UNPOS in the realization of meaningful women participation in the current political processes in Somalia. “Without joint efforts by all the local and the international stakeholders, one cannot jump to conclusion that women’s quota in the new parliament and the NCA will be materialized as written down in the Garowe II Principles”, a women participant remonstrated. During the discussion on the main theme of the meeting the following comments seemed to dominate most speakers’ speeches.

- I do not think we will get the quota allocated for us because the 4.5 power sharing clan formula is a challenge as elders will base their selection on this and we would like even more than this quota.
- To realize their goals women have to show unity of purpose. This quota is far from enough but let them give us what has been promised?
- I do not think the quota is enough... we deserve more than that but women need to be encouraged and they should realize how powerful they are. They should stop feeling hopeless and powerless.
- Women should fight for their rights in line with the Islamic religion and women have to help each in this critical time.
- Let them give us this 30% quota because they are not going to give us more.
- We do not think we will get the allocated quota in full because they will give the seats to men who have more economic resources than women.
- Men are giving us a simple lip service. Let them give us chance because we are young and educated and want make change and help Somalia.
- An elder may say: ‘Hey! You are married to a man from another clan. How can I give you a seat?’
- Somali women played key role in the liberation struggle. Remember Hawo-Tako who was killed by the colonialists while she was fighting for Somali independence while other members of women was prisoners and delivered in the cells, despite women never received good positions in Somalia successive governments.
- To get what we need, those of us who have the financial means have to support female politicians. Women have to come out because they are everywhere and can act as agents of change.
- We need to believe we can change and do not believe this quota is enough.
- There is no reason to be worried. We will get our quota as stipulated in Garowe principles and the international community is out there to support us. Somali

President, the Premier and politicians are on our side. No list will be accepted without female members. Let's stop making premature judgments. However, we need to be pressurizing men and lobbying for our rights. This is our right. We are not begging it.

- The women who are going to be nominated have to be qualified and professional.
- Women work in markets as primary breadwinners for families and men do not raise any religious objections towards this but when it comes to politics, men will come out and cite religious grounds. Does religion come into play when it comes to women holding political positions?
- It seems that a good progress has been made since 1960 when women held no positions in the parliament or the cabinet. From Zero to 12%, and 30% today..., that is a progress. However, you need to look the injustice in other places like districts in Mogadishu. Mogadishu has 16 districts, only one district has a female commissioner and to me the 30% quota is fair (comment from a man).
- Women should stop dividing themselves into groups like a women from diaspora and women in the country and we have to know that any woman holding a position is there for Somalia women and not for a particular clan.
- We will get what we want when political parties are formed and one man one vote is practiced.
- Education requirements must not be used as a barrier to prevent women from getting nominated because their male counterparts are not adequately educated.
- If elders do not add women MPs on their list, they should be held accountable.
- Women are not in politics for decoration but to work hard and raise children.
- Awareness of men should be raised so that they realize how useful empowering women can be.
- We should not look more rights than that religion granted us.

### **Challenges**

The participants identified the following challenges:

- 4.5 power sharing clan formula because the women might be married to man other than her clan.
- Women are economically under-resourced than their male counterparts.
- Women are not united and do not support each other.
- Traditional practices that question women's ability to rule or lead.
- Elders are unwilling to give seats to women.

- Women are not educated as men previously.
- Unstable political situation in the country.
- Women are not coming out for their rights adequately.

### **Recommendations**

The one-day meeting produced the following recommendations:

- Establish a technical committee to edit and prepare a draft report and develop an action plan
- Issuance of a declaration on ensuring ways women can get the allotted quota and the declaration is to be circulated to the EU, UNPOS, Somali president, the premier, constitutional affairs minister, religious leaders and elders.
- Adoption of a follow up strategy to be spearheaded by SOSSENSA and the commission.
- Undertaking of extensive media coverage to show the importance of this issue.
- Formation of women pressure group to ensure that women get allocated quota.
- Harmonization of recommendations of other organizations like civil society coalition.
- Meeting with religious leaders, Traditional Elders, the government, EU, and elders.

And finally, the following technical committee was formed to edit and prepare a draft report and develop an action plan:

- Mr. Mushtaq Mohamud Fidow
- Ms. Shukri Hassan Ibrahim
- Mr. Osman Hassan Salah
- Ms. Asli Ismail du'ale
- Mrs. Sucdi Dahir Dirie

The last meeting of above Technical Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012, they established Women Pressure Group in order to continue proposed activity plan accordingly and to conduct and finalize a declaration which will be circulated to Somali stakeholders.

### **Women Pressure Group:**

1. Ms. Xamsa Sheikh Hussein Olow
2. Ms. Ayan Abdullahi Ali
3. Ms. Faduma Ahmed Alin
4. Ms. Mushtaq Mohamud Fidow
5. Ms. Sucdi Dahir Diriyeh

**Annex.**

**Advocacy Action Plan:**

Activity	Is the activity an advocacy activity	If yes, specify advocacy activities	Who does what	When will the activity take place	Outcome evidence documents
<p>Young educated women’s dialogue on:                      - “Realization of Women Quota in the National Constituency Assembly and Parliament”                      “Meaningful Participation of the Current Political Process”</p>	<p>Yes, it is</p>	<p>Establishing a technical committee to edit and prepare a draft report and develop an action plan</p> <p>Undertaking of extensive media coverage to show the importance of this issue.</p> <p>Adoption of a follow up strategy to be spearheaded</p> <p>Formation of women pressure group to ensure that women get allocated quota.</p> <p>Harmonization of recommendations for other main organizations like civil society coalition.</p> <p>Meeting with religious leaders, Traditional Elders government, EU and UNPOS and sharing with the outcome Document.</p>	<p>Participating Members of the meeting</p> <p>SOSCENSA</p> <p>By SOSSENSA and the Technical Committee.</p> <p>By SOSSENSA and the Technical Committee</p> <p>SOSCENSA and Women Pressure Group.</p> <p>Women Pressure Group</p>	<p>28<sup>th</sup> May 2012</p> <p>28<sup>TH</sup> May 2012</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> June 2012.</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> June 2012</p> <p>In June 2012.</p> <p>In June 2012.</p>	<p>Final Report of the meeting which will be circulated to Somali stakeholders.</p> <p>Media coverage on the Life TV show</p> <p>Strategic advocacy action plan.</p> <p>Five members of Women Pressure Group</p> <p>Minutes of meeting with Civil Society Organizations</p> <p>Minutes of meetings with advocacy target groups including TFG and others.</p>