

DRAFT NOTE ON SOMALIA

21 October 1994

During the 1992/93 humanitarian emergency in Somalia, hundreds of thousands of lives were saved, thanks to the massive relief operation undertaken by UN organisations and NGOs under the security protection of UNITAF and UNOSOM forces.

With the end of the acute emergency phase, Somalia has faded away from the world's media attention. The well-known "donor fatigue" has set in with increased disillusion towards an ever elusive national reconciliation process and the emergence of new dramatic humanitarian situations elsewhere.

UN humanitarian and development organisations and up to fifty international NGOs continue to work in Somalia. Their goal is to address the pressing needs of the most vulnerable groups, including nearly 900,000 refugees and internally displaced people representing close to twenty percent of the total population. Their hope is that the Somali leaders rapidly end their destructive rivalry so that the country can engage in rehabilitation and reconstruction under acceptable conditions of security and stability.

Unfortunately, this is not possible in most regions of Somalia. Even the very basic community services such as health, water supply and primary education are unlikely to be sustained much beyond the withdrawal of external financial or management support. Banditry and threats to life and property continue to take a heavy toll on the capacity of relief workers to deliver assistance and launch sustainable rehabilitation programmes.

In fact, the security situation in most part of the country has deteriorated steadily throughout 1994. The offices, staff quarters and warehouses of UN organisations and NGOs are regularly besieged and harassed by heavily armed gunmen who move freely in the streets of Mogadishu and in the countryside.

Should a total pulling out of troops be decided despite the absence of a political settlement, the entire humanitarian community in Somalia might be forced to withdraw staff and cease activities in most parts of central and southern Somalia. Under such a scenario, any natural disaster or any return to the generalised lawlessness of the pre-UNITAF period would rapidly

degenerate into a predictable new emergency and its intolerable consequences on human lives and internal and external displacement of population.

Relief and development workers in Somalia stress that security at major airports and seaports as well as rescue and evacuation capacity remain essential to their work and their ability to field staff and carry out programmes.

As the mandate of UNOSOM II draws to an end, the issue of an orderly transition from a special United Nations mission to the traditional mandates of the United Nations organisations need to be addressed in a timely and orderly fashion. This process should start as early as feasible so that new operational, security, coordination and management mechanisms can be put in place well before UNOSOM II completes its mission.

The Security Council must give consideration to supporting this process of transition by authorising the transfer to operational UN agencies and international NGOs of a good part of the equipment and assets now being used by UNOSOM. A core of UNOSOM humanitarian and security staff must also be made available without delay to UNDP in order to facilitate and accelerate the necessary transition to a new UN coordination formula. Alternative transport, communications and logistic means will also need to be financed and put in place as a substitute for services previously rendered by UNOSOM.

UN organisations and NGOs consider that their operations will come to a virtual standstill unless acceptable conditions of security and access are maintained and their staff is permitted to work free from threats, intimidation or violence.

Somali leaders must be reminded of their obligations towards the people of their country. They should be held fully responsible for any failure to ensure stability, security and proper governance required to protect the people of Somalia and allow humanitarian and development organisations to carry out their mandates.

[draft 3, 17:10:94]