



IHASA

Institute for Horn of Africa Studies and Affairs

Press Release on the Jubbaland Agreement

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The Institute for Horn of Africa Studies and Affairs (IHASA) welcomes the recently signed Jubbaland agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the leaders of Jubbaland administration following their talks in Addis Ababa August 23–27th. While there are both pitfalls and promises in the signed agreement, we nevertheless believe it is a step in the right direction in what has been otherwise a strained relationship.

The art of conflict resolution entails give and take. In Addis Ababa, the two parties proved their willingness to compromise on contentious issues after what was an unfortunate and uncalled for events in the past few months in Kismayo. Consequently, the two parties are to be commended for their willingness to compromise and engage in constructive dialogue that led to the signing of this agreement.

Implementation has been an issue in past agreements between Somalia's warring parties. We therefore have our fingers crossed that this time around the parties will implement the agreement as signed. Failure to do so has negative consequences for both the federal government and the nascent Jubbaland administration.

Summarizing the Agreement

The signed agreement contained four broad clusters of articles with 23 sub-articles categorized in the following areas:

1. Establishment of an interim government
2. Management of resources and institutions
3. Management of security forces and militias integration
4. Reconciliation and confidence-building

In our view, the success and the failure of this agreement rest upon how the two sides interpret and implement the contents of Articles 1 and 2. These two articles contain the most contentious issues of the FGS-Jubbaland affair. That is not to say Articles 3 and 4 are unimportant but that the meat and potatoes in this agreement are mainly embedded in Articles 1 and 2.

Although the fact that FGS agreed to the establishment of an interim administration, as demanded by the inhabitants of the Jubbaland and Gedo regions, is refreshing news, there are areas that have the potential to lead to confusion with regards to roles and responsibilities. For example, while the government agreed to the establishment of an Interim Jubbaland Administration (IJA), Article 1 of the agreement calls for consultation with the federal government in all appointments the head of IJA makes. Moreover, Article 1 stipulates that the head of the IJA “shall be accountable to the Federal Government of Somalia.” This is unnecessary meddling of regional affairs by the federal government, and perhaps suggests the FGS did not entirely abandon its top-down approach to stabilize the nation.

The agreement on the Kismayo seaport and airport, to be managed by the new Jubbaland administration in the coming six months, and with subsequent talks on how to hand it over to the federal government, presents what in the world of politics is often referred to as “kicking the can down

the road.” This seems to contradict the spirit of the Provisional Federal Constitution of Somalia, and may pose challenges for the document’s implementation. Managing local and national resources and institutions will require an honest dialogue by the two sides to hash out a more durable agreement on this issue before the six month deadline is reached. This is an area that will require more compromise and willingness to swallow hard decisions.

The call for immediate commencement of a reconciliation meeting in a period of two weeks in Mogadishu to be followed by a subsequent meeting in Kismayo is rushing the process to achieve workable reconciliation. Given Somalia’s turbulent history, this agreement is a small and delicate step towards sustainable reconciliation, and in that spirit the process should not be rushed. Contrary to the call in the agreement, IHASA would suggest the right approach to a meaningful reconciliation would include several well planned and implemented steps starting with two important confidence-building meetings, one in Mogadishu and the second in Kismayo. The second meeting shall be exclusive for the SFG and IJA leadership, with the goal of solidly putting foundation for comprehensive reconciliation process that can serve as an example for the rest of the country. Such meeting can be followed by a third reconciliation conference in which other regional actors such as Puntland participate. This will go a long way in building a peaceful co-existence for the people of Somalia and the numerous clans that reside in the Jubas.

Given the complexities of the Somali conflict and the intricate issue of the Jubbaland, rushing the process or manipulating the reconciliation modalities is neither wise nor achievable. It almost invites derailment of the agreed upon accord. If that happens, the whole enchilada of searching for a peaceful Somalia would be in shreds, hence create major disappointment in the country and across the regions. We hope to be wrong on this issue and the parties agree forthright on the next steps in the upcoming Mogadishu meeting. We recommend the parties to take into consideration our suggestion in their upcoming meeting.

Looking forward

Somalia is in a dire need for stability, reconstruction of its institutions, and a bottom-up approach to its governance. The tool to achieve these common shared values is undoubtedly the Provisional Federal Constitution, the core of which calls for a federal system where power is divided between the federal government and regional authorities. Such a system of governance in our opinion does not weaken but rather strengthen national unity and the rebirth of Somalia. We hope that leaders both at the Federal level and at the Juba regional administration correctly and accountably implement the Addis agreement in the spirit of the Provisional Federal Constitution.

About IHASA

The Institute for Horn of Africa Studies and Affairs (IHASA) is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to document, research, analyze, publish and disseminate information on the political and socio-economic justice issues affecting the people in the Horn of Africa and in the Diaspora community. IHASA promotes peace, justice, equality, development and supports policies and actions that contribute to the advancement of good governance and the elimination of conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

IHASA’s vision is to work towards the attainment of a peaceful co-existence and prosperous future for the entire population of the Horn of Africa region. We are committed to building a foundation for greater justice and safety for people of the Horn of Africa region.

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