

SOMALI LAND

1. History of Somali Land

1.1. General History

British Somaliland, officially the **British Somaliland Protectorate** (Somali: *Dhulka Maxmiyada Soomaalida ee Biritishka*), was a British protectorate in present-day Somaliland. For much of its existence, the territory was bordered by Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopia.

From 1940 to 1941, it was occupied by the Italians and was part of Italian East Africa.

On 26 June 1960, British Somaliland declared independence as the State of Somaliland. Five days later, on 1 July 1960, the State of Somaliland voluntarily united with the Trust Territory of Somalia (the former Italian Somalia) to form the Somali Republic. The government of Somaliland, a self-declared sovereign state that is internationally recognized as an autonomous region of Somalia, regards itself as the successor state to British Somaliland.

1.2. Last 50 years

In 1960 British and Italian Somaliland were united to form the independent Republic of Somalia. French Somaliland (renamed the French Territory of the Afars and Issas in 1967) became independent as the Republic of Djibouti in 1977.

Following the civil war that began in Somalia in the 1980s and the subsequent overthrow of that country's government in 1991, a government opposition group, the Somali National Movement, secured the region comprising the former British Somaliland. In May 1991 they announced that the 1960 federation was no longer valid and declared their region to be an independent state, henceforth to be known as the Republic of Somaliland. Though not internationally recognized, Somaliland experienced relative stability—a sharp contrast to the civil war that continued to engulf Somalia. Taking advantage of that stability, the Somaliland government was able to rebuild much of the region's infrastructure, which had been damaged by years of warfare.

Since the late 1990s there has been tension between Somaliland and Punt land (an area in the northeastern part of Somalia, which declared itself an autonomous region in 1998). Each disputed the other's claim to the Sanaag and Sool regions, and armed confrontations have periodically ensued.

In 2001, 10 years after breaking away from Somalia, Somaliland still was not internationally recognized as an independent country. Undeterred, the government held a referendum that year, the results of which clearly showed that Somaliland's inhabitants supported the region's claim of independence. As it had in the past, in 2003 the Somaliland government rejected invitations to participate in peace talks

aimed at reunifying Somalia, maintaining that its independent status precluded it from being a party to such discussions.

Currently, Somaliland functions as an independent country complete with its own government, currency and military, even though it has remained unrecognized by the international community for over twenty years.

2. Defense:

2.1 Military structure

The **Somaliland Armed Forces** (Somali language: *Ciidanka Qaranka*) are the main military forces in Somaliland, with headquarters in Hargeisa. They are composed of two active military branches: the army and the navy. There is no air force. The Somaliland Police Force is also a part of the internal security forces, but is subordinate to the military. The Somaliland Minister of Defence currently oversees the armed forces.

The Forces currently have 30,000 active personnel and 5000 reserve personnel all between 18-45 years of age.

Somaliland spends more on its armed forces than any other item, allocating 25% to 30% of revenues to the military. An article on the 2006 budget cited approximately 41 billion Somaliland Shilling, which is approximately \$6 million allocated to the military. Due to Somaliland's lack of international recognition, the region is not allowed to procure weapons.

2.2. Dependency on other nations and membership of alliances

Due to a United Nations arms embargo on Somalia, which the semi-autonomous Somaliland region is internationally recognized as being a part of, the territory is not allowed to purchase weapons. Consequently, military officials from the region rely on repairing and modifying old equipment. Some also claim that weapons are at times delivered from Ethiopia and Yemen via the port of Berbera, usually during the night. Regular Somaliland soldiers have been seen with SKS carbines and various versions of the AK-47.

As part of a limited defense arrangement, Ethiopia is training a small number of Somaliland officers at its Defense Engineering College. Since 2008, 50 Somaliland officers have graduated under this program. Additionally, the UAE was to train Somaliland forces under a 2018 military base deal.

Somaliland's authorities have inked a deal with the United Arab Emirates for a \$442 million port upgrade and the establishment of a new UAE naval base. The project will also include the establishment of a free trade zone, which aims to deliver huge economic gains for Somaliland and the Horn of Africa more broadly.

3. Cultural factors

3.1. Ethnic groups

The Somaliland region has a population of about 3.5 million people where the largest clan family in Somaliland are the Isaaq clan who are Somalia's third largest demographic group.

The clan groupings of the Somali people are important social units, and clan membership plays a central part in Somali culture and politics. Clans are patrilineal and are often divided into sub-clans, sometimes with many sub-divisions.

Somali society is traditionally ethnically endogamous. To extend ties of alliance, marriage is often to another ethnic Somali from a different clan. Thus, for example, a recent study observed that in 89 marriages contracted by men of the Dhulbahante clan, 55 (62%) were with women of Dhulbahante sub-clans other than those of their husbands; 30 (33.7%) were with women of surrounding clans of other clan families (Isaaq, 28; Hawiye, 3); and 3 (4.3%) were with women of other clans of the Darod clan family (Majerteen 2, Ogaden 1).

The Isaaq constitute the largest Somali clan in most of Somaliland. They are concentrated in the Woqooyi, Galbeed and Togdheer regions, alongside the indigenous people of Gabooye and the Muse. The disputed eastern and western regions are predominantly inhabited by other clans. Sool's residents mainly hail from the Dhulbahante, a subdivision of the Harti confederation of Darod sub-clans. The Warsangali, another Harti Darod sub-clan, constitute the majority of residents in Sanaag. The Gadabuursi are also well represented in the Awdal region.

3.2. Religions

The major **religion in Somalia** is Islam. There is a small Christian community in Somalia mainly living amongst Somali Muslims in the Banaadir region. Additionally, some people in the southern part of the country practice traditional faiths, including Waaqism. Most residents of Somalia are Muslims, of which Sunnism is the strand practiced by 90% of the population, particularly of the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence. However, other denominations of Islam are also practiced, including, Ibadism, Non-denominational Islam, Quranism, and some adherents of the Shia Muslim denomination. Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, is also well-established, with many local *jama'a* (*zawiya*) or congregations of the various *tariiqah* or Sufi orders. Article 3 of the Provisional Constitution of Somalia defines Islam as the state religion of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and Islamic sharia as the basic source for national legislation. It also stipulates that no law that is inconsistent with the basic tenets of Shari'a can be enacted. Article 11 guarantees equal rights and freedom from persecution for all citizens before the law regardless of religion. Additionally, Article 17 protects freedom of religion.

3.3. Cultural History

Originally, Somalis probably hail from the southern Ethiopian highlands, and have been subject to a strong Arabic influence ever since the 7th century, when the Somali coast formed part of the extensive Arab-controlled trans-Indian Ocean trading network.

In the 19th century much of the Ogaden Desert – ethnically a part of Somalia – was annexed by Ethiopia (an invasion that has been a source of bad blood ever since) and then in 1888 the country was divided by European powers. The French got the area around Djibouti, Britain much of the north, while Italy got Punt land and the south. Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan (known affectionately as ‘the Mad Mullah’) fought the British for two decades, but it wasn’t until 1960 that Somaliland, Punt land and southern Somalia were united, which wasn’t altogether a good idea.

Sadly, inter-clan tensions, radical socialism, rearmament by the USSR and the occasional (often disastrous) war with Ethiopia helped tear the country apart. Mohammed Siad Barre, Somalia’s last recognized leader, fled to Nigeria in 1991 after the forces of General Aideed took Mogadishu. At the same time the Somali National Movement (SNM) moved quickly and declared independence for Somaliland. Puntland also broke away.

4. Political Structure

4.1. Origin of political structure

For its first twelve years, Somaliland had no political parties but instead followed more traditional clan-based forms of political organization. Political parties were introduced during the presidential elections and it was hoped that the recent parliamentary elections would help to usher in a representative system without allowing representation to be overtly clan-based.

District elections then held determined which parties were allowed to contest the parliamentary and presidential elections, where a party was required to demonstrate at least twenty percent of the popular vote from four out of the six regions. This was designed to ensure that parties would not organize around ethnic lines. Three parties were selected to submit presidential candidates: the United Democratic Peoples’ Party (UDUB), Kulmiye, and the Party for Justice and Welfare (UCID). On April 14, 2003, 488,54 voters participated in the presidential elections, which ran more or less smoothly. The result was a slim eighty vote controversial victory for UDUB over the Kulmiye, complicated by allegations of ballot stuffing against the incumbent UDUB. Despite calls for the Kulmiye to form a rival government, the party’s leadership did not do so, instead choosing to abide by the Supreme Court ruling that declared UDUB’s victory. Despite minor demonstrations, the transition to the presidency of Dahir Riyale Kahin proceeded peacefully. A traditional system of governance consisted of clan elders who go by titles such as sultans, guurti or akils. They usually ordered the

paying of diya, which is a payment system for any grievances, or dealt in arbitration matters.

4.2. Constitution and Government

Somaliland has a hybrid system of governance combining traditional and western institutions. In a series of inter-clan conferences, culminating in the Borama Conference in 1993, a *qabil* (clan or community) system of government was constructed, which consisted of an Executive, with a President, Vice President, and legislative government; a bicameral Legislature; and an independent judiciary. The traditional Somali elderates (*guurti*) was incorporated into the governance structure and formed the upper house, responsible for managing internal conflicts. Government became in essence a "power-sharing coalition of Somaliland's main clans," with seats in the Upper and Lower houses proportionally allocated to clans according to a pre-determined formula. In 2002, after several extensions of this interim government, Somaliland finally made the transition to multi-party democracy, with district council elections contested by six parties.

The **Constitution of Somaliland** was adopted by the Houses of the Parliament of Somaliland on 30 April 2000. The constitution was approved in a referendum held on May 31, 2001 when 97% of the voters voted in its favour. Its re-published version consists of a Preamble (Arar) and five main chapters (Qaybo) each of which is sub-divided into Parts (Xubno). There is now a total of 130 Articles (Qodobo) as compared to the previous 156 Articles.

Somaliland has had other constitutional documents of historical importance which range from the international treaties signed by the various Somaliland communities with the British government, and the various constitutional arrangements prior to independence in 1960 to the Declaration of Re-assertion of Sovereignty in 1991 (in Burao) at one of the earliest grand conferences of the Somaliland communities. Although the Republic of Somaliland was independent for a short period in June 1960, it later unified with Italian Somaliland to form Somalia. During that short period no comprehensive constitution was adopted. The State of Somaliland had its own Constitution which was drafted in early 1960, and was briefly in place.

The first main Constitutional document of the independent Somaliland was the National Charter (Axdii Qaran), which was signed by the Conference of the Somaliland Communities in 1993 in Borama. This was followed by the first Somaliland constitution, which was adopted at the conference of the Somaliland Communities in Hargeisa in February 1997. Under article 151, the constitution shall be implemented for a period of three years from its approval in February 1997 and shall come into force fully once a referendum has been held. There was a provision for this interim period to be increased by the two Houses of Parliament, and in early 2000, the two Houses voted that the period be increased by one year. This was primarily to give more time for the completion of the revision of the constitution (before its submission to the nation at a Referendum)

and for putting in place the laws and mechanisms for changing the current “representative” democracy in Somaliland to a popular democracy based on the direct elections of the President of Somaliland and the Parliament of Somaliland.

Although initially the Somaliland government proposed fairly extensive amendments to the constitution in 1999, the final revised constitution is not very different from the last one and the reduction of the number of articles from 156 to 130 has been largely achieved by the amalgamation of some articles, rather than by extensive repeals. Unlike the earlier draft proposals, the parts of the constitution relating to directive principles and to human rights have all been retained. On the whole, the revisions tidied up the constitution and no fundamental changes have been made.

4.3. Stability and Policy of Present Government

Despite setbacks in 1994 and 1996, Somaliland has managed to prosper, assisted by its trade in livestock with Saudi Arabia. According to *The Economist*, it is East Africa’s strongest **democracy**.

It faces some significant problems to its continued survival. Like other Somali governments, it lacks a consistent taxation base and receives most of its support from private actors. Corruption remains a problem, women are virtually unrepresented in government, and there are growing concerns about voting patterns based on ethnic lines as well as the majority that UDUB has gained over both the regional councils and presidency as well as the parliament.

5. Natural resources

5.1. Basic commodities produced

Since Somaliland regained its independence from the rest of Somalia there has not been a meaningful export of natural resources of Somaliland such as precious stones or minerals. Somaliland is rich in minerals, has one of world’s largest gypsum deposits and has clean coastline of 850 km, which are all important investment opportunities. The potential mineral resources, fishing, forestry, agriculture and tourist opportunities of the mountain ranges are hardly exploited as a result of lack of transport infrastructure. Gemstones and industrial minerals which are abundant in Somaliland include any kind of gemstones like Emerald, Sapphire, Ruby, Aquamarine, Opal and any kind of Garnet. There are also plenty of other minerals in Somaliland such as industrial minerals like iron ore, Titanium, Aluminium, Tungsten, Tin, Galena and other rare earth metals like Columbite Tantalite, Molybdenum and many other rare minerals which are only found few places in the world.

5.2. Trade Agreements

Somaliland has political contacts with its neighbours Ethiopia and Djibouti, as well as with Belgium, France, Ghana, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In 2007, a delegation led by President Kahin was present at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala, Uganda. Although Somaliland has applied to join the Commonwealth under observer status, its application is still pending.

In 2002, Germany refused to recognize Somaliland as a precursor in establishing a military base in the region. It instead established a naval base in Djibouti. German naval ships already operated from Berbera. In September 2012, at the mini-summit on Somalia on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, the German government also re-affirmed its continued support for Somalia's government, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

In February 2010, there were rumours that Israel might recognize Somaliland, and Israel is still interested in maintaining a diplomatic relationship with Somaliland. The rumours turned out to be wrong. Additionally, there was an arms smuggling affair involving Somaliland and an Israeli arms dealer. In November 2009, a Pakistani delegation of three visited Somaliland: Mr. Sheikh Mansoor Ahmed, Secretary General of PPP of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan ruling government; Mr. Shafiq Ahmed Qureshi, Peace Rep., former diplomat and Sr. Consular Officer; and Mr. Abdul Razak Dinnaari, Ambassador. There was a proposal to open a trade office of Somaliland in Pakistan.

In 2011, the foreign ministers of South Africa and Tanzania said that they were not ready to recognise Somaliland and that they preferred to see Somalia remain as a single country. In 2012, South Africa and Ethiopia also re-affirmed their continued support for Somalia's government, territorial integrity and sovereignty at the mini-summit on Somalia in New York on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.

In April 2014, the Sheffield City Council in the United Kingdom voted to recognize the right to self-determination of Somaliland, the first city council to do so. The gesture was purely ceremonial and carried no legal weight. On 26 March 2015, Cardiff City Council followed suit. On 18 May 2015, the UK independence Party announced support for international recognition. Nevertheless, the Conservative UK government officially recognize Somaliland as an autonomous region of Somalia.

In February 2017, both houses of parliament of Somaliland accepted the bid from the government from the United Arab Emirates for Union Defence Force (UAE) to establish a military base in Berbera, however, the UAE maintained that it recognizes the sovereignty of Somalia over Somaliland. In January 2018, Somaliland gained attention from the Philippines, and later Timor-Leste, after it passed its first ever anti-rape law. The Philippines has minimal relations with Somalia as the country views Somalia as a 'failed state'. Somaliland currently has no diplomatic contacts with any non-Middle Eastern Asian country, except for minor talks with Taiwan.

5.3. Degree of Self-Sufficiency

Somaliland has gradually gained self sufficiency over the years. Since the late 1990s, service provision has significantly improved as a result of limited government provision and contributions from non-governmental organisations, religious groups, the international community (especially the Diaspora) and the growing private sector. Local and municipal governments have been developing the provision of key public services, such as water in Hargeisa and education, electricity and security in Berbera. In 2009, the Banque pour le Commerce et l'Industrie – Mer Rouge, based in Djibouti, opened a branch in Hargeisa, to become the first bank in the country since the collapse in 1990 of the Commercial and Savings Bank of Somalia.

Various telecommunications firms also have branches in Somaliland. Among these is Golis Telecom Somalia, one of the largest such operators in northern Somalia. Founded in 2002 with the objective of supplying the local market with GSM mobile services, fixed line and internet services, it has an extensive network that covers all of Somalia's major cities and more than 40 districts in both the Somaliland and Puntland regions. Golis also offers among the cheapest international calling rates, at \$0.2 USD less than its nearest competitor. Other telecommunication firms serving the region include Telcom and NationLink. Livestock is the backbone of the Somaliland region's economy. Sheep, camel and cattle are shipped from the Berbera port and sent to Gulf Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia.

Agriculture is generally considered to be a potentially successful industry, especially in the production of cereals and horticulture. Mining also has potential, though simple quarrying represents the extent of current operations, despite the presence of diverse quantities of mineral deposits.

The Ministry of Tourism has also encouraged travelers to visit historic towns and cities in Somaliland. The historic town of Sheekh is located near Berbera and is home to old British colonial buildings that have remained untouched for over forty years. Berbera also houses historic and impressive Ottoman architectural buildings. Another equally famous historic city is Zeila. Zeila was once part of the Ottoman Empire, a dependency of Yemen and Egypt and a major trade city during the 19th century. The city has been visited for its old colonial landmarks, offshore mangroves and coral reefs, and its towering cliffs and beach. The nomadic culture of Somaliland has also attracted tourists. Most nomads live in the countryside.

6. Economy

6.1. Monetary System

The Somaliland shilling, while stable, is not an internationally recognised currency and currently has no official exchange rate. It is regulated by the Bank of Somaliland, the central bank, which was established constitutionally in 1994.

Since Somaliland is unrecognised, international aid donors have found it difficult to provide aid. As a result, the government relies mainly upon tax receipts and remittances from the large Somali diaspora contribute immensely to Somaliland's economy. Remittances come to Somaliland through money transfer companies, the largest of which is Dahabshiil, one of the few Somali money transfer companies to conform to modern money-transfer regulations. The World Bank estimates that remittances worth approximately \$US 1 billion reach Somalia annually from emigrants working in the United States, Europe, and the Gulf states. Analysts say that Dahabshiil may handle around two-thirds of that figure, and that as much as half of it reaches Somaliland alone.

6.2. Dependency and debt

As a result of lack of international recognition, Somaliland is largely dependant on her neighbours and a few alliances for military equipment among others as earlier elaborated. However, Somaliland is not recognized by international economic authorities such as the World Bank and all debt is solely regarded as that of Somalia hence issues of debt regarding Somaliland are unclear.

After the World Bank declared debt relief for Somalia, Somaliland President Musa Bihi Abdi who happens to be also the Chairman of the ruling KULMIYE party and both the Chairmen of WADDANI and UCID parties Mr Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Irro and Eng. Faisal Ali Hussein decried the Booker institutions of going about their duties on freeing Somalia from international debts without consulting Somaliland.

He continued by cautioning, "If the assertion is de jure nature requirement, then your bilateral ties with Somalia do not concern us as Somalilanders hence we shall never accept issues conveyed indirectly to us."

6.3. Membership of Economic and Trade Organizations

As emphasized in earlier sub sections above, Somaliland is largely internationally unrecognized by many trade organizations. As a result, it is not officially part of most trade organizations. It however has alliances with many European countries among others as earlier elaborated. As earlier iterated, Somaliland has applied to join the Commonwealth under observer status, its application is however still pending.

7. Views on world problems

7.1. Role and influence in the world

Despite being largely unrecognized across the world, Somaliland exports various commodities across the world as iterated in [5.1](#)

7.2. Membership of blocs and geo-political groupings

For many years, the Horn of Africa has been characterized by wars, anarchy, terrorism, piracy and instability. Amid the chaos and uncertainty in the region, Somaliland managed to maintain cordial relations with its neighbouring countries. Somaliland has always accomplished its affairs in accordance with the interest of the region. Additionally, Somaliland has carefully avoided any action or utterances that may negatively affect the stability of the region as well as its relations with the countries in the region. Yet, Somaliland's neighbouring states have dithered to grant Somaliland its well deserved recognition. Since Somaliland's immediate neighbours are not willing to facilitate the long-awaited recognition of Somaliland and are not expanding their diplomatic relationships with Somaliland, they have made it easy for policymakers in the West to defer the issue of recognition and maintain the status quo of the diplomatic limbo-status of the country.

Ethiopia has maintained close relation with Somaliland since its re-emergence in 1991. During the liberation struggle against the Siyad Barre dictatorship, Ethiopia was the base of guerilla movement Somali National Movement (SNM), from which the military campaign against the regime was launched. In addition, Ethiopia was the principal haven to which Somaliland's civilian refugees fled during the period 1988 - 1991. In 2000, a Somaliland delegation led by the second president of the Republic Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal visited Addis Ababa and signed agreements aimed at enhancing trade and communications. Ethiopia was the first country that established diplomatic relations with Somaliland's capital Hargeisa by opening a consulate which issues visas to Somaliland passport holders, while Somaliland also maintains a diplomatic office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In addition, Ethiopia Airlines flies to Somaliland several times per week. Nevertheless, even though Ethiopia is considered as being directly supportive of Somaliland's independence claims, there are no signs that Ethiopia is ready to recognize Somaliland as Ethiopia has stated several times that it would be the second country to recognize Somaliland.

The relationship between Somaliland and Djibouti has never been successful due to Djibouti's proverbial antagonistic policy towards Somaliland. Djiboutians had received widespread and sustained support from the people of Somaliland during their struggle for Independence in the 1970s. However, when the Siyad Barre's regime initiated its policy of internal war against the people of Somaliland during the late 1980s, which led to the massacre of civilians in Hargeisa and other cities in 1988, the Djibouti government was not receptive to the flood of refugees that poured out of the country seeking shelter and safe haven. Therefore most of the refugees sought asylum in Ethiopia rather than Djibouti.

Djibouti is an important neighbour to Somaliland for several reasons. Firstly, Djiboutians and Somalilanders have common ancestral lineage and geographical tenancy since the people of Somaliland live both in Djibouti and Somaliland. Secondly, most recently, Djiboutian businessmen, especially from the circles of the ruling family, have hugely invested in Somaliland with large scale business projects.

Since the re-emergence of Somaliland in early 1991, relations with Djibouti have been unstable. There have been a number of military confrontations between SNM fighters based at the border and the Djibouti military. The late President Egal tried to establish better relations with Djibouti and he initiated several measures in this regard, e.g. during a visit by Egal to Djibouti in January 1994 President Abtidon requested President Egal that he remove Somaliland forces based at the border between the two countries. President Egal complied and ordered the removal of the Somaliland forces at the border.

Presently, Somaliland maintains a diplomatic office in Djibouti confined to minor activities such as welcoming Somaliland delegates to Djibouti. Many political observers argue that Djibouti is very much engaged in thwarting Somaliland's political maneuvers. For that reason, it is necessary that Somaliland re-assess its diplomatic relations with Djibouti.

The people of Somaliland and Somalia share many things which are very unique; they share language, culture, religion and ethnicity. The Somali people who live in these two states also reside in other countries from the Horn of Africa such as Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Somaliland was the first Somali state that got independence on 26 June 1960. Somaliland and former Italian trust territory united on 1 July 1960 and became the Somali Republic. It is important to remember that Somaliland willingly and voluntarily surrendered its sovereignty in 1960 without preconditions in the cause of Greater Somalia. The main dream of that union was to bring all Somali speaking people into one state. Unfortunately, that dream never materialized. On the contrary, the union of two Somali territories was unable to establish peace and justice between them. The former Italian trust territory (South Somalia) had dominated the politics of the new republic and marginalized the people of the former British Protectorate. Successive governments of Somaliland have considered relations with Somalia as a critical and sensitive matter. Unlike the incumbent government of President Silanyo, all preceding governments were very sensitive and reluctant to commence official or formal relations with Somalia. The main arguments of the preceding governments of Egal and Rayale were twofold:

- That there was no credible, capable and functioning government with which Somaliland can deal and negotiate on the critical issues interested by the two parties,
- That there was no reason for Somaliland to meddle itself with the divergent warring political functions of Somalia.

However, the incumbent government of Somaliland shifted the longstanding policy of abstaining from any “deal with Somalia” and agreed to start talks with Somalia for the first time in 21 years. The first time that Somaliland and Somalia had “official talks” was July, 2012. These talks came about after the “London Somali Conference”— in which President Ahmed Silanyo participated. This conference had a great impact which drove Somaliland and Somalia to participate in subsequent bilateral meetings that were held in Dubai, UK and Turkey respectively. President Silanyo as the elected Head of State of Somaliland and

President Sh. Sharif as the head of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia signed an agreement that was facilitated by the UAE government in Dubai providing for further talks and negotiations between the two entities. Interestingly, President Silanyo argued that these talks with Somalia will pave the way for the long overdue recognition of Somaliland. Those opposing talks with Somalia argue that it is a waste of time as there is no democratically elected and strong government that has the legitimate authority to negotiate and decide upon the critical and key issue of Somaliland's independence. One of the key factors such opponents cite to challenge the ongoing dialogue between Somaliland and Somalia is that not a single point of these agreements, understandings and principles that have so far been reached has been implemented.

8. Geography

8.1. Bordering countries

Somaliland is situated in northwestern Somalia. It lies between the 08°00' – 11°30' parallel north of the equator and between 42°30' – 49°00' meridian east of Greenwich. It is bordered by Djibouti to the west, Ethiopia to the south, and the Puntland region of Somalia to the east. Somaliland has a 740 kilometres (460 mi) coastline with the majority lying along the Gulf of Aden. The region is slightly larger than England, with an area of 137,600 km² (53,100 sq mi).

8.2. Topography

Somaliland's climate is a mixture of wet and dry conditions. The northern part of the region is hilly, and in many places the altitude ranges between 900 and 2,100 metres (2,953 and 6,890 ft) above sea level. The Awdal, Saaxil and Maroodi Jeex (Woqooyi Galbeed) regions are fertile and mountainous, while Togdheer is mostly semi-desert with little fertile greenery around. The Awdal region is also known for its offshore islands, coral reefs and mangroves.

A scrub-covered, semi-desert plain referred as the *Guban* lies parallel to the Gulf of Aden littoral. With a width of twelve kilometers in the west to as little as two kilometers in the east, the plain is bisected by watercourses that are essentially beds of dry sand except during the rainy seasons. When the rains arrive, the Guban's low bushes and grass clumps transform into lush vegetation. This coastal strip is part of the Ethiopian xeric grasslands and shrub lands ecoregion.

Cal Madow is a mountain range in the northern part of the country. Extending from the northwest of Erigavo to several kilometers west of the city of Bosaso, it features Somalia's highest peak, Shimbiris, which sits at an elevation of about 2,416 metres (7,927 ft). The rugged east-west ranges of the Karkaar Mountains also lie to the interior of the Gulf of Aden littoral. In the central regions, the northern mountain ranges give way to shallow plateaus and typically dry watercourses that are referred to locally as the *Ogo*.

The Ogo's western plateau, in turn, gradually merges into the Haud, an important grazing area for livestock.



Location of Somaliland