

PUNTLAND STATE OF SOMALIA

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Brief Introduction

- 1. Location and size:** Puntland lies between Ethiopia to the west, the Indian Ocean to the east and the Gulf of Aden to the north at the strategic cross-roads that is the Horn of Africa. Also known as the land of aroma, it had been the stamping ground of seafaring nations from the Mediterranean and as far away as ancient China. Frankincense and myrrh were its trade mark. With a land mass of 212,000 sq. kms and a coastline of 1,650 kms, it comprises about a third of Somali territory with a population of 2.7 million. It has 7 regions and 35 districts.

- 2. Religion and language:** Islam; Somali and Arabic (official), English and Italian also widely spoken.

- 3. System of government:** Puntland State Government (PSG), established on 1st August 1998, is a democracy with an executive, legislative and judiciary branches, an elected President, H.E. Mohamoud Muse Hersi, and Vice President, H.E. Hassan Dahir Mohamoud, and elected local councils running 22 districts, the formation of the other 13 local councils being in process.

- 4. Capital and climate:** Garowe; semi-arid, hot, averaging 32⁰ C.

- 5. Main port and business city:** Bender Qassim (Bossaso) in the Gulf of Aden.

- 6. Other major towns:** Galkayo, Las Anod, Badhan, Qardho and Buhodle.

- 7. Main export items:** livestock, meat, fish, frankincense, hides and skins.

8. Background:

The regions of Puntland State of Somalia had an ancient history. They had respected customary laws and centuries-old civilisation of their own based upon Somali culture and moderate Islam values prior to the scramble of Africa by European colonial powers.

The customary laws and religion were the main guarantors of peace, stability, brotherhood and friendly co-existence within Puntland and co-operation with other Somalis as well as the neighbouring countries.

The intervention of the European colonial powers in the Horn of Africa had a negative effect on both the culture and way of life of the people of Puntland in the sense that it diminished traditional confidence.

More recently, history confirms the leading role the people of Puntland played in the struggle for freedom to achieve independence of a sovereign Somali state.

Since Somalia gained independence and was renamed as the Somali Republic in 1960, there have been nine years of civilian governments elected under a democratic system and twenty one years of military rule from 21st of October 1969 until the collapse of the Somali central authority seventeen years ago.

It is worth noting that both the colonial rulers and the successive Somali governments excluded Puntland regions from their development plans.

This virtually placed Puntland outside the development map of the country, leaving these regions in a limbo of permanent backwardness in terms of infrastructure, social services or any other aspect that could directly or indirectly benefit society.

Despite the inherent background of neglect, the civil war years from 26th January 1991 and the subsequent turmoil, the people of Puntland again showed total determination and commitment to reconstruct new life in the absence of a central government.

Puntland must be proud that it has done at its best in distancing itself from the civil war that has touched almost every other corner of the country. The region has equally managed to prevent internal conflict by avoiding civil strife and hostility within its boundaries. This noble stand has been due to the mercy of Allah and to the wisdom of those who had the knowledge of the futility of armed conflict and hatred including traditional community leaders (Issims), elders (aqils), intellectuals, politicians and clergy (ulimaa'), men and women. The rationale of self-control in Puntland at a time of confusion in Somalia has been also due to its tolerant and peace-loving people who have demonstrated

time and again the principle to resolve differences through dialogue and negotiation rather than through the barrel of the gun. This has paved the way for the eventual possibility to form the Administration of Puntland State in 1998.

9. Strategic policies:

Puntland remains a strong supporter of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), whose President is the founder president of PSG. The PSG continues to pursue a pragmatic policy of maintaining peace, stability and friendly cooperation within the region, particularly with its neighbours. Puntland is a would-be state of an all-inclusive federal Somali national government under a constitutional framework which is not yet established.

The essence of PSG stands for three essential policy engagements namely (1) to save Puntland territory and waters from the hostilities created by the absence of central government and confrontations of political factions serving negative interests (2) to be part of the pursuit to restore a Somali central authority based on a federal system, the only system that would prevent totalitarianism and dismemberment and (3) to cooperate with the international community to find solution to the Somali crisis in general and to support the reconstruction and development in Puntland in particular.

10. Development and Investment:

Puntland hosts over 50 international organizations including 14 UN agencies. The Government has recently embarked upon a reform program to improve systems of governance in the areas of security, judiciary and the public sector. It has also begun a democratization process leading to a constitutional review, census taking and a multi-party system.

In pursuit of the realization of its Five-Year Development Plan that addresses social and economic development, the PSG vigorously seeks foreign investment to embark upon the exploration and exploitation of natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, development of fisheries, export of livestock, frankincense and salt to enable Puntland to develop its infrastructure, job creation and standards of livelihood.

In a sense the collapse of the central state enhanced the condition of the people of Puntland. Nearly 65% of the present-day urban population are returnees from Mogadishu and other regions after the collapse of the government. The huge internal displacement came with it new ideas and experience which tremendously changed and uplifted all aspects of life in these regions previously nicknamed as Gaari-waa (the unreachable). This was the reversal of 100 years of migration from these regions to other parts of Somalia, especially the southern regions. The new talents, Puntland State Government and the international

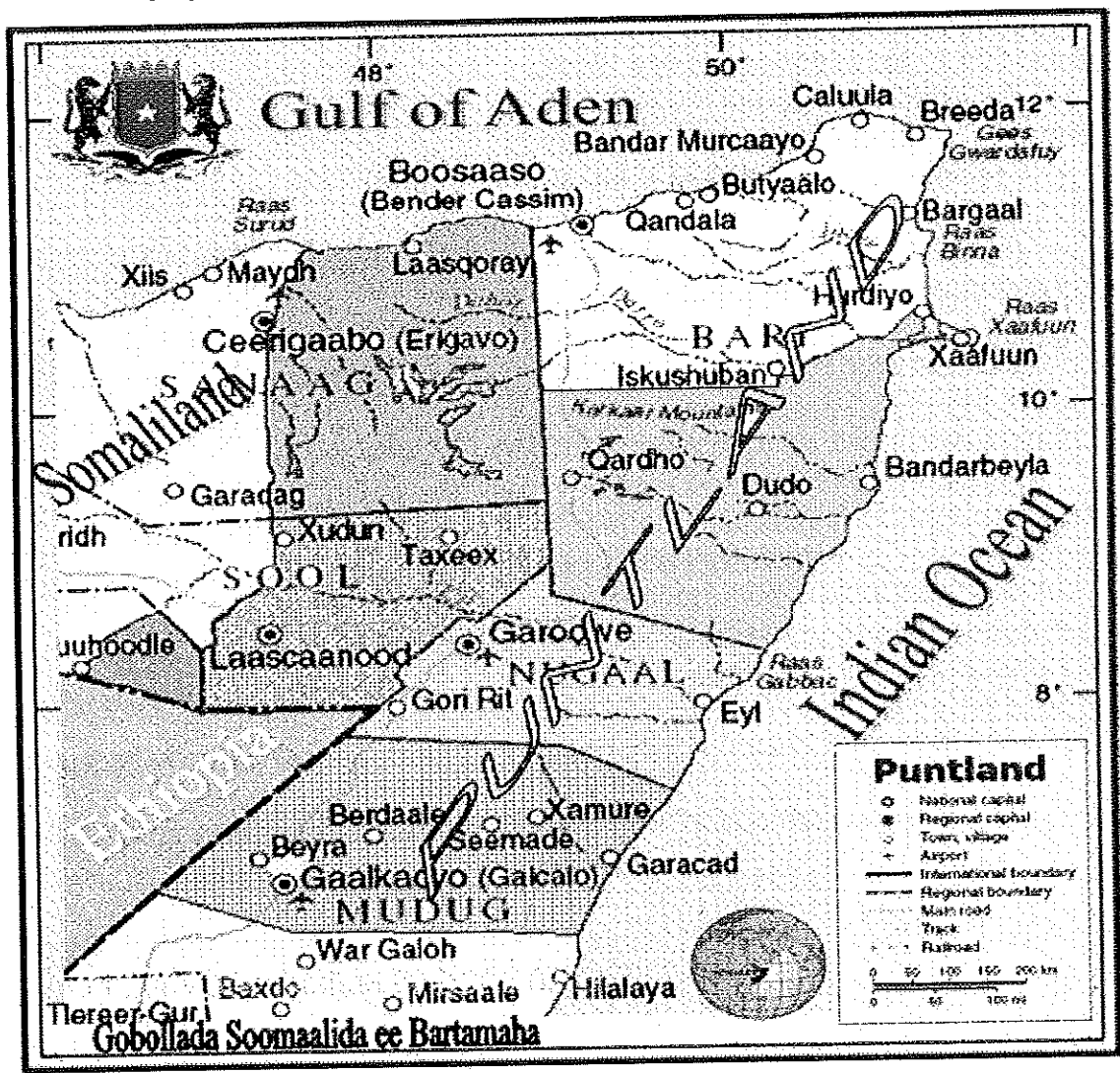
community now cooperate to build the new Puntland into a state of peace, stability and development.

The Government of Puntland State wishes to assure to the international investors that Puntland has potential natural resources waiting to be tapped. Lucky are those who come first like Range Resources and Africa Oil Company. As they say "The early bird catches the worm". Puntland is grateful to them for their early appearance and we hope we can together benefit from this first venture and others in the future.

In addition to the existing exploration and exploitation agreements, the Petroleum and Mineral legislation has been approved by the Cabinet Council and is expected to be passed by the Legislative Council in the coming few days.

A GLIMPSE OF PUNTLAND

Puntland State Government of Somalia



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