

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

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PRESS RELEASE

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Somalia: Open for Business conference was “best for many years” says diaspora

“This was the best conference on Somalia for years. It was about business and development, not politics!” said Sakariye Haji Abdi, former Minister of Information, at the end of *Somalia Open for Business* organised by a consortium of UK-based Somali organisations. Participants came from all over the UK and were linked to all regions of Somalia. Several embassies were represented as were many UK companies keen to open up business in Somalia.

It was standing room only in the large hall as Hugh Scott, Director, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund and Toaha Qureshi, Chairman, Forum for International Relations Development, outlined how partnership with the diaspora can generate development opportunities throughout all Somalia. Saad Osman, CEO, Thames Hr Solutions, identified sectors which should be pursued. During the day, twenty six speakers shared ideas with audiences in parallel commissions, addressing in the morning agriculture and fisheries, health and youth and in the afternoon, women, education and transport and infrastructure. Plenary sessions titled *Encouraging business and kick-starting the economy* and *Creating a safe environment for development* attracted great support, throwing up new ideas to take forward. A free business mentoring facility for Somalis was announced and the meeting room for 1-to-1 meetings was kept busy throughout the day.

A comprehensive conference report will be posted soon on the websites of the joint organisers. On 5 January, World G18 Somalia, a conference co-organiser, will host a follow-up meeting with Somali legislators to maintain momentum. “This conference was a successful diaspora production” said Ahmed Hersi, Chairman of World G18 Somalia, “We have shown that when the community works together, we can take great steps forward for the benefit of all.”

Consortium members include World G18 Somalia, Somali Economic Forum, Somali Diaspora UK, Puntland Diaspora Forum, RDI Charity, Galmudug Diaspora with support from the Horn of Africa Business Association, British African Business Association and the United Nations Association Westminster Branch.

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