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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	Summary record of the joint meeting of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Committee on Development (DEVE) held in Brussels on 31 January 2013 Chairs: Mr Brok (EPP, DE), Mr Deva (ECR, UK)

Exchange of views with Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia

Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud outlined the progress made towards democracy in the last few months by Somalia. He explained that after 20 years of conflict and anarchy Somalia now had a legitimate government and parliament, as well as a new constitution. His country was no longer in transition and, as such, it was in a position to move ahead. The Somali President said that his top priority was to consolidate the State, reaching out to districts and regions, so as to make the stabilization process a reality for the whole country. He also insisted on the importance of education as a means of diverting young people from the appeal of terrorism and piracy. On this issue of piracy, he acknowledged the seriousness of the problem and he reassured the Members that while Somalia

lacked the resources and the capacity to pursue the pirates, it had the political will and the commitment to tackle the problem.

The Somali President thanked the EU for the humanitarian assistance it had granted to Somalia over the past decades but affirmed that Somalia now needed a different approach, more focused on reconstruction and development. He concluded by saying that the Europeans were the best placed to understand Somalia's needs because his country was now in the same situation as Europe in 1945, with two additional problems, i.e. extremism and piracy.

During the debate that ensued, Ms Gomes (S&D, PT) and Ms Sargentini (Greens/ALE, NL) raised the issue of Somalia's relations with its neighboring countries, notably Ethiopia and Kenya. On Ethiopia, Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that relations had not always been good, but under his presidency he wanted to look for a new beginning based on good neighborly relations. A joint cooperation commission with Ethiopia had been set up, tasked with issues such as border security, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges etc.

A number of Members (Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES), Mr Tannock (ECR, UK), Ms Gomes (S&D, PT)) asked the Somali President for an assessment of EU CSDP missions. He welcomed the positive contribution made by those missions, saying that, for example, the decrease in piracy attacks was mainly due to the ATALANTA operation. But at the same time he said that the Government was perfectly aware that, to defeat piracy, its root causes had to be addressed and they had to be found on land. Concerning the protection of Somali waters, Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that illegal fishing and dumping of toxic waste were two major problems to be tackled. The creation of Somali security forces was an step in that direction and in no way were they intended to be a threat to neighboring countries.

To those Members who insisted on the importance of protecting human rights and, in particular, women's rights, the President emphasised that his background as an active member in civil society organisations and his proven record as a human rights defender were a guarantee for his future action. But he also said that true cultural change was needed in his country and that could not take place overnight. He pointed out that many women were participating in the government. As far as specific cases of alleged abuse of human rights were concerned, he said that proper investigations had to be carried out and that the best guarantee of protection of human rights was to have a credible judicial system in place, which was one of the objectives of the government.

Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES) encouraged Somalia to accede to the Cotonou agreement, and Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that Somalia's return to the "ACP family" was indeed his intention.

Concerning development aid (Mr Mitchell (EPP, IE)), Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that Somalia hoped to receive more aid from the EU, but more important than that was Somalia's commitment to use that aid mainly to build and consolidate functioning State institutions.
