

President Musa Bihi Abdi's Annual Address to Joint House of Parliament

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to deliver the 2020 Annual Constitutional joint House of parliament, especially members of the House of Representatives, who were elected in the recent one-man, one-vote elections.

2021 was a year in which the world struggled with the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, which is a type of outbreak which usually occurs once every hundred years.

It has been a year of armed conflict, with world peace engulfed in controversy.

For the Republic of Somaliland, however, it was a year of peace and elections. The dual elections of the House of Representatives and the Local councils, and the manner in which they were conducted have shown the political maturity of the people of Somaliland.

The New Year 2022 is no exception. It's a dangerous year, as the world moves towards war. Food security, oil and gas are already in crisis, and there is a strong suspicion that travel of people and goods around the world will be disrupted.

It is feared that this could lead to further disruption of global trade and commerce. And if this happens, Somaliland will be in a very vulnerable position as we import almost everything.

I recommend that the country's rich invest in our food production, so as to reduce our dependence on essential commodities. It is also important that pastoralists increase their efforts in animal husbandry and scholars to present ideas to the realization of this.

As a government we are taking the following steps: link

1. Promotion of local production.
2. Linking Scholars and Wealthy.
3. Encouraging the country's universities to innovate and find solutions to the problems we face.
4. Storage of food to the best of our ability.

Economy

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past two years, the world has been experiencing economic problems and decline in production, as a result of COVID-19.

- Despite the global economic crisis, Somaliland has partially succeeded in implementing the government's policies, such as: modernizing and improving revenue collection systems and infrastructure. We increased Inland Revenue, reduced dependence on customs revenue, achieved public confidence in taxation and economic growth, streamlining spending management and transparency in the use of the national budget.
- The government has implemented the International Anti-Corruption and Accountability Framework which regulates public accounting and financial management.
- Last year, 98 projects were funded by the National Budget. These projects were valued at 163.7 billion SL shillings (\$ 23.3 million). This is an increase of 3.11% more than last year's projects, and they were all subject to national procurement and open Competition.
- The 2022 Budget is projected to fund 122 projects, valued at 3293 billion, which is 79% more than last year.
- Foreign aid projects implemented in the country last year were estimated at 164.6 billion SL shillings (\$ 23.5 million). We are grateful for this, but the international community should know that the people of Somaliland, longs for more meaningful support or donations which befits and is appropriate to their dignity and sovereignty.
- The number of Civil Servants increased by 13% last year, bringing the total number of Civil Servants to 7,907 in the last four years, which is a total increase of 39% in our Civil Service, most of whom are employed by the successful National Service Program.
- The value of the Somaliland Shilling was maintained at 8,400 per dollar, and inflation fell by 3.5% last year. It is the lowest level it has ever reached in recent times.
- The government has implemented a number of measures that have enabled the exchange rate to remain stable during this period, which has boosted the economy, trade and investment in our country.
- The Central Bank of the Republic of Somaliland has also taken steps to improve people's lives. In 2021 it has invested more than \$ 13 million in infrastructure projects by a number of Institutions, the central government and some local governments.

1.1. Economic Infrastructure:

- The Maydh Fisheries Port Construction is nearing completion and will cost \$ 5 million.

- The first phase of the construction of the 400 meter Berbera Port is complete.
- The foundation of the second phase of the new 600-meter Berbera Port has also been laid.
- Upon completion and modernization of Berbera Port, Berbera Port will be one of the longest ports in Africa, with a length of 1,650 meters and the depth of the Port will be 17 meters. This will make the port Africa's second-largest port, capable of carrying the world's largest fleet, with 2 million containers per year, from current capacity of 500,000 containers per year.
- The main port of Berbera is currently connected by three cranes; On completion, it will be connected by 7 major cranes to the port, and the number of large cranes will be increased to 10 cranes.
- Berbera International Airport has been transformed into an international airport, capable of serving all goods and peoples of the landlocked countries of Africa, and is today one of the most interesting destinations in the world.
- The Burao-Erigavo Road is nearing completion, with only 10 km remaining. We have completed 262 KMs which cost us \$ 54,484,000, all of which was paid out of our National Budget.
- The construction of the Burao-Erigabo Corridor will significantly change the socio economic aspect, social and business mobility of our people (For example: Travelling between Burao and Erigavo used to take 9 to 10 hours of driving, but now it is less than 5 hours. The cost of transportation per person was between \$ 60- \$ 80 per person, but now it is only \$ 20.
- Construction of the first phase of the Berbera Corridor has been completed, and includes four main bridges.
- Construction of the Free Zone has recently begun and plans are afoot to build 54 Hectares of land, which will be divided into two phases. In Phase One, 34 Hectares of land will be constructed, including the Free Trade Zone Road to the rest of the country, the construction of Administration Offices, the construction of a large hangar for companies and a container inspection corridor. It is expected to house many local and international companies and employ more than 1,000 people.
- Construction of the Odweyne-Burao and Las Anod-Kalabaydh Roads has begun and will be completed in a short time, Insha Allah.
- The feasibility study has now been completed on the Lawyado-Borama road, which is funded by the African Development Bank, and will be launched soon.
- Reconstruction of the 82-kilometer Burao-Laalays road will begin soon, and the construction of the road will also include the rehabilitation of four bridges between Burao and Laalays.
- Feasibility Study has begun on the road between Mayd District and Erigavo Town.

2. Social Services:

- In education, 57 new schools were built last year, and 24 previous schools were renovated.
- 470 students received scholarships to study abroad.
- We have made it mandatory for 10% of University students and 12% of private university students to receive Scholarships, in order to increase access to higher education.
- A total of 654,330 children and 108,600 mothers have been vaccinated against various diseases.
- Government health facilities provided health services to 1,530,000 people, up 2% from last year.
- Seven COVID-19 Infection Awareness Campaigns were conducted, and 557,723 people were vaccinated, representing 30% of the population over the age of 18 years.
- In 2021, 18 clinics were built, including 5 new hospitals, and 23 clinics were renovated.
- 3 million livestock were vaccinated while 1.75 million of them were fed, which in turn benefited 75,000 pastoralists.
- The National Food and Drug Laboratory were built at a cost of 13,440,000,000 SLSH.
- 41 new boreholes and 6 new shallow wells have been drilled and 60 boreholes have been rehabilitated.
- 20 major boreholes have been drilled in different regions of the country.
- The Center for Constitutional and Patriotic Studies was established, and has so far educated 34,500 citizens.
- 50,000 copies of the Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland have been distributed, to enhance the legal education of the citizens.
- There are 90 teams competing in the national leagues, playing 485 matches, with 3,043 players and more than 1,800,000 people watching.

3. Security

In today's world, security is a global problem. We see that the Cold War has returned with a different color. The region and the continent of Africa have also experienced conflicts and violence that have claimed many lives.

The war between Russia and Ukraine is not just a war between the two of them, but a war of principle and security between the NATO and Russia, in other words it is an economic and political war between the East and the West.

It is a war that can last a long time. It is a war that has affected the lives of people around the world especially in the areas of food, energy, oil and trade.

But thank God that the competing powers have seen today the geographical and strategic importance of the Republic of Somaliland to the world, which has resulted in the world's largest economies seeking to engage with Somaliland today, albeit largely ignored.

The policy of my government is to engage with anyone who comes forward knowing that we are a sovereign and independent nation. The Republic of Somaliland is ready to cooperate and engage with all parties based on Respect, Justice and Equality.

Fortunately, in the face of international and regional conflicts, the people of The Republic of Somaliland enjoy stability and security that is protected by our armed forces.

The government acknowledges the Armed Forces bravery and self-sacrifice and as such has increased their salary by 30%. We know it is a small increase compared to the huge obligations they are entrusted with. It is essential and we are obliged to provide a better life for our armed forces. With the help of the Almighty God, we will achieve this.

I say to all members of the Armed Forces, their spouses and children “Whatever the circumstances in which you live today, know that a grateful nation stands behind you and will not forget your sacrifices.”

Social Security & Stability

The security and stability of a society is based on the fact that the community is cohesive, cooperative, trusting and united. This can be achieved by keeping the economic classes of our people apart, so that economic differences do not create social divisions, conflict and insecurity.

According to Article 11 the National Constitution mandates that the economic system of the country mustn't lead to prosperity for few groups or individuals, to avoid economic divisions that divide the rich and the poor.

- Therefore, in line with the above principles and the Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland, we have mandated that projects of more than 42,000,000 SLSH be implemented through a transparent National Procurement System, thus making it easier for the citizens of Somaliland to compete fairly. I hereby declare that any government agency that does not comply with this decision will be subject to appropriate action.

- For the first time in the history of Somaliland, in 2021, the Government has budgeted for all the 101 districts of the country, and the amount disbursed is 106,946,632,435 SLSH.
- The JPLG Local Government Development Project has been extended to Erigavo, Las Anod and Aynaba Districts. Plans are afoot to add more districts.
- The government by taking into account the condition of our people and the rising cost of living in the world has made a 10% tax cut on the country's food supply.
- Provided food for one month and limited financial assistance to more than 750,000 households in all regions of the country.
- 200,000 women in 16 cities across the country have also received \$ 640,000 in financial support.
- Our country is facing a severe drought that has affected nearly 1.5 million Somalilanders. The worst effects of the drought were water shortages. As a result, the Government, in collaboration with our country's major traders, has delivered 24,600 tankers to the worst affected regions by the drought. 72% of the tankers were provided by the Government and the people of Somaliland in partnership, while 28% were provided by aid agencies.
- With the aim of protecting against recurrent droughts and their effects, the government will drill 30 new dams in the worst affected regions by 2022, and rehabilitate 20 dams.

4. The WAAHEEN Market Fire

Join us again to share the grief and suffering of our people and traders whose livestock and property were burnt down in the WAAHEEN Central Market. It was one of the largest and most active markets in the Horn of Africa.

It has been a major market for our economy and trade, and has served many countries in the region.

It shows the weight of the market in the region and in the world, how the world reacted to the devastation caused by the fire that destroyed our market, albeit with minimal benefit to our world.

45 governments and 10 international organizations have expressed their condolences to the people of Somaliland on the Waaheen Market crisis which has shaken the hearts of millions of people around the world.

No matter how much we suffer from this fire and the loss of our livestock, I am glad to see that today the people of Somaliland have embraced this tragedy with the same heart, and stood side by side with one another.

Nearly 3,673 different businesses were burnt down in Waheen Market, and all the assets and resources under these businesses were lost.

It is an honor to see the resilience of our people despite this tragic fire. They have relocated around the burnt Waheen Market, and continue to trade with new goods and products.

The WAAHEEN Market Fire is not the only example of how resilient and resourceful our people are in times of crisis. It was yesterday when the major cities of our country were razed to the ground and turned into ashes. We have recovered, rebuilt our country and our destroyed cities together, with the help of no one but Allah.

What we have we achieved so far?

- We have appointed a National Committee to guide the recovery of the Waaheen Fire Damage. The committee has set up sub-committees from Waheen Market, business community, religious leaders and the Diaspora and they are doing a fantastic job.
- Four Provisional Markets have been set up: Freedom Park, Hadh-wanaag, Police Line and Inji. It will also soon be extended to seven temporary markets.
- A total of \$ 23,000,000 has been raised so far.
- The committee has thus far received donations from the Republic of Djibouti, Taiwan, Somalia and the World Bank.

Table 1: **Revenue and Expenditure so far received**

Revenue	\$23,000,000		Number of recipients
Cost	\$73 – 5,000	They were given 100% of their property	988 people
	<\$100	Up to \$ 500 per person	
	\$5,001 - 40,000	Given 25% of their lost property.	1,016 people
	\$40,001 -100,000	given 15% of their lost property	
	\$100,001 – 480,000	given 10% of their lost property	
Total People Reimbursed So far:			2,004 traders
Total amount paid so far			\$8,638,418

- One of the traders who lost their property in the fire came forward to the committee and said, "My burnt property is only worth \$ 73, despite the fact that he could've easily claimed thousands of dollars. I don't wish for anything more than that as Allah has given me all I need in life. " Such is the integrity and humility of our people.
- Hargeisa Municipality, in collaboration with the National WAAHEEN Market Rehabilitation Committee, cleaned up the burnt market and removed 1,879 load of rubbish and scraps.
- The biggest task for us as a Nation is to rebuild the Waheen Market, in line with international norms that ensure the safety of the property and lives of our people. Insha Allah, this market will once again stand for a symbol of unity, brotherhood and national determination.
- I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the victims of the Waheen Market fire, and thank them for their patience and strong faith as well their outstanding cooperation with the Committees tasked to address this fire.
- I would also like to thank all those who have stood with us in these turbulent times and offered their support and assistance. I am especially grateful to our neighbors, the Somali Regional State and their people for providing us with the first aid overnight and to the Federal Government of Ethiopia.
- I would also like to thank the Government and the people of the Republic of Djibouti for standing with us in our time of need. Djibouti has provided more than \$ 1.5 million to the Waaheen Market Emergency and Recovery Committee, and continues to raise funds for our people. I also thank the Government of Somalia and its people and the rest of the Somali people in general for their resilience in the face of adversity. Lastly, I thank the World Bank for providing the first relief package.

What have we learned from the WAAHEEN Market crisis?

- We have learned that we can always re-build, no matter what happens to us.
- We have learned to strengthen and support the work of the Fire Brigade which has shown its ability and patriotism.
- We have learned to open roads and corridors through the markets, so that the rescue can reach its target.
- We have learned the importance of commercial houses under construction having a housing safety system. I instruct the local government and the Ministry of Public Works, Lands and Housing to develop guidelines for the safety of public buildings.

5. Elections

Ladies and gentlemen;

Last year, I addressed the House of Representatives with only 83 days to go before the House of Representatives elections of Somaliland.

Former members of the House of Representatives are experienced men who have served the nation for 15 years or more. I said, “Your time at the House has ended, and we hope that you’ll work with us to make this transition go as smoothly as possible” They accepted, and they kept that promise. Today, thank God, we have had a series of elections that have won the admiration of the whole world. Somaliland has also once again had the opportunity to elect members of parliament for the next five years, mostly young men, although I regret that none of the women candidates in the House of Representatives have won.

Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, the new House of Representatives came as a result of the full cooperation and collaboration between the National Institutions, in order to realize the National aspirations of holding the bipartisan-elections of the House of Representatives and the Local Councils. It shows the good results that can come from good cooperation between the National Assemblies. It is a symbol of the beauty of our nation and the belief in the aspirations of our people.

It was an election that cost us a whopping 132.6 Billion SL. Shillings. Most of this cost was paid by our nation, because as a government we believe that elections are a national obligation that our nation must manage.

I thank the people of Somaliland for voting peacefully, for the House of Representatives, and for all those who supported us in holding the elections.

Also, I welcome the newly elected House of Representatives and Local Councils. And I urge you that our commitment is to work and to serve the people and the country together.

Ladies and gentlemen;

Somaliland is proud of its democracy and free and fair elections, and that requires the completion of its basic pillars, first and foremost:

1. That the elections take place on time.
2. The National Parties, which are the means by which citizens achieve their political aspirations, should be law-abiding, non-partisan, and within them a true democracy based on clear principles and policies that define the country's development agenda.
3. That the party's finances come from the party's supporters in every region, and avoid foreign interference. If foreign interference enters into the party, it will be seen as a threat to the sovereignty of our country.

Therefore, it is necessary to complete the remaining elections such as the opening of political parties on time and the election of the President, in accordance with the laws and the Constitution of the country.

As a government, we are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities in this year's elections on time, and any challenges we face will be addressed in a legal manner and in consultation with the National Institutions.

Politics is like a game of chess. Therefore, I advise political parties and organizations to cleanly put their hands in the dust.

Elections do not require a whirlwind. Your insults do not lead to political victory. Threats are cowardly.

Politics does not require false promises, uncertain political reflections and does not mean political victory.

I hope that those who do not win will be able to dust off their fingers and accept their loss with grace.

6. Foreign Policy

Somaliland's foreign policy is in principle based on good neighborliness, peace and international cooperation.

At the same time, Somaliland's foreign policy is based on a clear plan to focus more on African countries, in order to gain recognition for Somaliland and have full socio-economic cooperation with the rest of the world.

The past year has been a tumultuous year for Somaliland's foreign policy, followed by a concerted effort by the government to present Somaliland's statehood to many governments around the world, resulting in tangible results.

- **The US**

A large delegation led by me left for the United States on a 12-day working visit. The trip had two main objectives:

1. To make the United States truly understand the painful history of Somaliland in the failed unity of the search for the 5 Great Somalia and the brutal actions of Siyad Barre's regime that sent planes, tanks, artillery and heavy weapons to destroy all the cities of Somaliland.
2. Explain in detail the genocide perpetrated against this nation and the reasons behind the armed struggle in Somaliland and why the people of Somaliland have unanimously decided to reclaim their independence.
3. Explain that Somaliland is a democracy that has been overlooked by the international community for 30 years, but Somaliland has dedicated its small resources to the security of its country, to the stability of the Horn of Africa region and the world.
4. To discuss how to achieve full cooperation between the two countries. It is an initial partnership that we hope will bear fruit soon.

In fact, the US Government and the American people have welcomed us with open arms which shows that the US's understanding of Somaliland has changed dramatically. We met with 13 members of both houses of the US House of Representatives.

The highlights of this trip as a Nation are:

- The United States should re-evaluate US aid to Somaliland and how it reaches our country.
- Prepared and submitted the Somaliland-US Partnership Act Motion, which requires the US State Department, in collaboration with the Department of Defense, to develop the most appropriate form of cooperation between Somaliland and the United States.

Overall, the trip was a milestone and a great success for our country, Somaliland. I hope you will soon see the implementation of the decisions made during that trip.

- **United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom is a country with a long history of protectionism, making it the most knowledgeable country on the issue of Somaliland's independence and its past.

Therefore, as a Government we are determined to intensify our engagement with Somaliland Foreign Policy towards the UK.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Representative and the Somaliland community in the UK, created the Somaliland Friendship Council, which consists of 25 Members of the UK Parliament. You are all aware of the efforts made by the UK Parliament and the emphasis placed on the UK Government to pay attention to Somaliland, as seen from the recent visit of some of their MPs to Somaliland.

- **African Union**

We have appealed to most African governments to help bring the Somaliland issue to the attention of the African Union.

- **Arab countries**

Throughout the Arab world, we, as a government, have made requests for them to take a closer look at the reality of the Republic of Somaliland and the rights it has been denied.

Relations between Somaliland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have grown stronger and they have opened diplomatic missions in the country, facilitating the flow of people and trade between the two countries.

I expect trade between the two countries to reach millions of dollars a year. It is the only government that has made hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term economic investment in the country. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has always been supportive of whatever situation we have gone through, be it the drought, the SAGAR hurricane and the Waaheen market fire today.

- **Neighboring Countries**

We have strengthened communication and cooperation in the areas of security, trade and human movement in Somaliland and our neighboring countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

Ministerial-level committees have been set up to work on strengthening security co-operation, border security and promoting cross-border trade between Somaliland and those countries. Djibouti and Ethiopia already have diplomatic missions in our country, but I commend the Government of Kenya for opening a Diplomatic Office in our country recently, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two Governments in Nairobi, Kenya.

7. Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen;

Predicting and preparing for the future, both intellectually and financially is crucial to improving the lives and development of our people.

The hardships we face, such as the burning of the Waheen Central Market, the recurring droughts and the scarcity of resources, do not mean that we have to give up and go through difficult times, but that we have to redouble our efforts and achieve our goals.

The challenges facing our country should be an experience that paves the way for development and unity.

One can fall, but not getting up is absurd. Somalis say, "The state is weak, it is not broken".

Somaliland Vision 2030 is as follows:

"A democratic, law-abiding, peaceful and prosperous society, with a rich and inclusive society, that serves as a beacon of knowledge and civilization in Africa."

It is a beautiful vision, but needless to say, it is one that requires deep seated solidarity, unity and brotherhood. This is because it bears witness to the glorious brotherhood and solidarity with which we come to each other's aid in the face of adversity.

In the future:

- **Foreign Policy**

As a Government, we are committed to working with our partners, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United States in every way possible to secure the recognition of Somaliland. During our tenure, the Government has succeeded in elevating the prestige of this Nation, and today we have reached a point where our aspirations for statehood and nationhood are taken into account.

We present to the world that Somaliland is a reality that cannot be overlooked and that it is a country that can be trusted with a reliable partnership based on responsibility and respect.

- **The economy**

The government is implementing a clear policy that encourages public and private finances to unite in manufacturing and marine production, to meet our basic needs and reduce our dependence on imports.

- **Social Welfare**

1. The Government's Civic Protection Policy to prevent natural and man-made disasters such as: (Wars, earthquakes, fires, and etc)
2. The government has a clear policy to ensure that all government agencies, at the national, regional and district levels effectively implement the Health and Safety Standards. In addition, the Government will establish a Disaster Management Department in all regions and districts of the country.
3. The government is implementing the deployment of Civil Defense at the District and Village levels. Civil Defense is training people to be safe in their environment and their people to be on the lookout for potential enemies or infiltrators.

Finally;

I wish the people of the Republic of Somaliland Success, Prosperity, Development and lasting peace. And once again, I commend the good people of Somaliland for the maturity and growth they have shown.

Long live the Republic of Somaliland