

**Summary**  
**Online Discussion from 26 October 2020**

**Somalia's Aspirations for Reconciliation, Sustainable Peace and Democratisation**

**Background:** In the last decade, Somalia has undergone a remarkable transformation. Labelled for many years as a failed state, the country in the Horn of Africa has witnessed the establishment of a federal system of governance and related institutions, as well as two peaceful transfers of power since 2012. These developments should have culminated in a long awaited “one person, one vote-election” in 2020, replacing the old clan-based power-sharing model.

Nevertheless, the country also continues to suffer tremendously from insecurity, violent religious extremism, competing clan interests, corruption and poor governance. These aspects of life in Somalia are also those that receive the most attention internationally. Yet, Somalia is much more nuanced than its reputation, with an active and motivated citizenry working to shape their country's future.

**Highlights:**

- **When looking at Somalia, the focus should be increasingly on the positive developments in the country.**
- **The clan conflicts are rooted in the lack of good governance and law and order.**
- **All actors in society, especially the youth, must be integrated in political processes in order to offer them perspectives and to prevent them from joining terrorist groups.**
- **Particular local concepts for conflict resolution could positively contribute to sustainable change.**
- **The implementation of a “one person, one vote system” can strengthen political participation.**

**Welcome Remarks**

**David Schwake**

Secretary-General,  
*German Africa Foundation*

**Discussion**

**Ilwad Elman**

Director of Programs,  
*Elman Peace Centre*

**Janel B. Galvanek**

Head of Unit, Sub-Saharan  
Africa  
*Berghof Foundation*

**Dr Thorsten Hutter**

Head of the East Africa,  
Horn of Africa Unio,  
*German Federal Foreign  
Office*

**Moderation**

**Andrew Gilmour,**

Executive Director,  
*Berghof Foundation*

## Looking at Somalia from a different angle

In addition to the many negative reports about Somalia, the country's progress in recent years was often overlooked, explained **Janel B. Galvanek** in the beginning of the discussion. It is therefore necessary to focus on the positive developments and to rely on encouragement instead of criticism. In this context, targeted support for actors who could have a positive influence in the country would be of great importance. **Dr Thorsten Hutter** agreed with these statements and pointed out that Somalia was considered a failed state 20 years ago and that many things had changed for the better since then. He confidently looked to the country's future and stressed that it was possible to make further progress. A central component in this context is the creation of a *"one person, one vote system"*, said **Dr Hutter**. For German engagement it was important to have the government's concession to establish such a system. **Hutter** also emphasized that elections should not divide Somali society further but should bring them together.

With regard to ongoing conflicts, not all ongoing conflicts could be traced back solely to clan conflicts, **Ms Galvanek** argued. Instead, deeply rooted problems such as the fundamental lack of law and order and good governance need to be taken into account, too. In addition, challenges such as climate change also need to be considered as conflict influencing factor. In this context, **Ms Galvanek** not only called for a change in the external perspective, but also for an adjustment of the discourse on the situation in Somalia.

## Integration of young people

According to **Iwad Elman**, the greatest threat in her home country was the exclusion of citizens, especially young people, from political processes. 78 percent of the Somali population are under 30 years old, 44 percent under 15. It is precisely this group that must be able to participate in the development of possible solutions, according to **Iwad Elman**. By investing in the younger generations, a decade of conflict could be overcome; but this would require a lot of energy. **Iwad Elman** reported on the work of the Elman Peace Centre which aims to act as a mediator between local communities and the government and to bring the wishes and demands of citizens, especially young people, to the fore. The Elman Peace Centre works both with actors from the private sector to create job opportunities for young people and with the government to develop preventive mechanisms. According to **Iwad Elman**, the involvement and promotion of young people was particularly important in order to create alternatives to groups like Al-Shabab, which young people would join due to a lack of prospects. What Somalis would be asking for in the first place is justice by the state. As long as justice does not exist, they would turn to groups like Al-Shabab, which would offer them some form of justice. Looking at the increased involvement of young people, formal processes and institutionalised rules must also be created, said **Iwad Elman**. In this context, **Ms Galvanek** reported on the work of the Berghof Foundation, which offers training courses on conflict resolution in local communities. She underlined how essential it is to involve people from all parts of society, especially actors who already have a platform in their community. **Dr Hutter** described the projects of the Elman Peace Centre and the Berghof Foundation as significant support for efforts on the political macro-level in which Germany is participating.

## The German and European contribution

Despite some shortcomings, **Dr Hutter** saw the *AMISOM* mission, which is supported by Germany and the *EU*, as an important success in establishing security in Somalia. This was a central requirement for further peace processes within the country. According to **Dr Hutter**, investments particularly in education would be needed to promote democratisation. In this context, Germany supports organisations such as the Elman Peace Centre, which follows this approach. **Ms Galvanek** highlighted Germany's good reputation in Somalia, on which it should continue to build on. Furthermore, as **Dr Hutter** pointed out, Germany was the third largest donor country in Somalia, but kept a low profile in its work and was therefore appreciated. However, he also explained the importance of multilateral approaches in terms of sustainable solutions for the country and the region as a whole. Assistance should continue to be provided, but Somalia should not be dictated to; change should come from within. **Ilwad Elman** also considered *AMISOM* as a success, however, she stressed that it also required long-term investments in Somalia. Germany indeed had a good reputation in Somalia and should not hide, but get more involved, she added.