

**Istanbul II Conference on Somalia
Plenary Meeting: "Preparing Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015"**

**Statement by Irene Khan, Director General,
International Development Law Organization (IDLO)
Istanbul, 1 June 2012**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

IDLO commends the government of Turkey for its leadership in convening this meeting and bringing together a wide range of stakeholders from Somalia and the international community. We thank you for inviting IDLO to participate in the conference.

This meeting comes at a critical juncture in the political process to end the prolonged transition, and the conflict that has led to the loss of thousands of Somali lives and displaced millions from their homes.

As the only intergovernmental organization dedicated solely to the promotion of rule of law, we see our presence here as an indication of the commitment of the international community to make justice and the rule of law an integral part of the peace, security and stability agenda in Somalia.

IDLO is a neutral, multilateral partner of Somalia. Our project to facilitate the constitutional reform process in Somalia was launched at the beginning of this year with the support of the Italian government. Using our international experience and comparative legal knowledge, IDLO has made substantive inputs to the draft constitution in particular on the security and peace chapter, and in the protocols to end the transition.

We have established strong working relationships with the Independent Federal Constitution Commission, the Committee of Experts and the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and Reconciliation. We intend to do the same with the Constituent Assembly and look forward to supporting the Assembly in concrete, practical ways to carry out its important work.

The real test of the draft constitution will not be determined by the quality of the text, but whether the people of Somalia have confidence in it. We believe that a transparent and consultative process is critical to the success of the constitutional process and the end to transition.

With this in mind, and building on our recent experience of constitutional reform in other countries in Africa, and in cooperation with Somali and international actors, IDLO is facilitating consultations among a wide range of stakeholders, ranging from clan representatives and former government members in Somalia to Somali refugees in Kenya and elsewhere.

We are encouraged by the requests from our Somali partners to continue the outreach and civic education. We hope to continue with more such meetings in the coming weeks, and will move beyond explaining the constitution's specifics to helping people understand the procedural steps that lie ahead.

Once the constitution has been provisionally adopted, IDLO stands ready to do more.

In a country like Somalia, devastated by years of conflict and natural disasters, the priority has rightly been placed on building the resilience of community and the infrastructure for future development. Equally rightly, emphasis is being placed on strengthening and consolidating security needs of the population. But alongside security, we believe strongly that justice is a major gap that needs to be addressed also.

Experience shows that countries in transition need to invest early in institutions of justice and rule of law if peace and security are to hold. In laying out the political process and the path to development, the international community must give more attention to mapping the justice sector needs and should consult with partners, local and international, to develop a step-by-step approach to re-building the institutions and systems for the rule of law and human rights in Somalia.

Clearly, much needs to be done in the justice sector in the near future. In cooperation and in full coordination with Somali actors, the United Nations and the Somali donor group, IDLO stands ready to assist the people of Somalia.

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