



United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

For Immediate Release

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**International Contact Group on Somalia to meet at UN Headquarters**

Nairobi, 14 December 2008 – The International Contact Group will hold an important meeting on Somalia on Tuesday 16 December at UN headquarters in New York. It is expected that the US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, along with several ministers will attend parts of the discussion. The new dispute between the Somali President and Prime Minister will certainly be condemned as a diversion from the real issues that the Somali people want to see addressed.

The Contact Group, which meets as a group of Friends of Somalia, comprises a selected group of countries and regional organizations including the African Union and League of Arab States. It is chaired by the UN Special Representative for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah and meets at least twice a year.

The day-long meeting at the UN will cover several key issues relating to the political, security and humanitarian situation in Somalia including areas such as political cooperation, human rights, piracy and reconstruction and development. It will be held shortly before a UN Security Council meeting which is expected to include piracy around Somalia on its agenda.

“We are expecting a large number of participants to attend the Contact Group meeting at a very senior level,” said Mr Ould-Abdallah. “This reflects the growing interest in Somalia both regionally and internationally and an increased willingness to help Somalis move towards peace and to address impunity, one of the main causes of the continued violence in the country.

“However the international community’s efforts will remain limited unless the Somalis themselves make major efforts to unite and work together towards ending the conflict. It is my understanding that the continued dispute within an already weak TFG, as reflected in today’s statements coming from Baidoa, is rejected by the vast majority of Somalis, as well as by the regional organization IGAD and all members of the international community starting with my Office.

“The Somali leadership within the TFG, ARS and other groups must know that peace is irreversible. The days of unnecessary confrontation are numbered and can only lead to more violence.

“The Somalis must grasp the opportunity offered by the current peace process and not let their people down. The infighting must stop for the sake of the people particularly at this key moment.

“This Contact Group meeting will put Somalia in the spotlight and work hard to come up with positive, concrete measures from the international community to push forward to peace process.”

(The Contact Group members are Burundi, Canada, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda United Kingdom, USA, Yemen, African Union, European Union, European Commission, League of Arab States, IGAD, Organization of Islamic Conference.)

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