

MISSION REPORT

**JOINT UNEP/DHA ENVIRONMENTAL UNIT
AND THE UN COORDINATION UNIT (UNCU) FOR SOMALIA**

**ASSESSMENT MISSION TO SOMALIA
IN CONNECTION WITH
ALLEGED DUMPING OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**

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10 May through 8 June 1997

Background

Somalia has one of Africa's longest coastline which stretches from the Indian Ocean in the South to the Red Sea Gulf of Aden in the North. The coastline extends for about 3300 Km from Ras Kiamboni on the Kenyan border to lawya-addo on the Djibouti border. The Indian Ocean side of the coast is almost 2000 Km long while the Gulf of Aden section is about 1300 Km long. Somali waters are rich with marine and other natural resources that represent an important primary production sector and have the potential of assuming a much greater role in the future development of Somalia. Because of its geographical position, Somali waters are characterized with unique tropical marine ecosystem and an extraordinary biological diversity.

There are four major deep-sea ports, namely Kismayo and Mogadishu on the Indian Ocean, Berbera and Bossaso in the Gulf of Aden. In addition, there are several other smaller anchorages that accommodate the bulk of the artisanal fishermen's fleet and much of the commercial dhows. Generally the coastline is composed of long sandy beaches, occasionally interrupted by rocky cliffs and sheer mountain faces (characteristic for eastern section of the Gulf of Aden, and the northern part of the east coast). The continental shelf rarely exceeds 15 Km in width, except in the vicinity of cape Guardafui (the tip of the horn of Africa). However, it covers a total 19400 Km. There are only two main groups of islands along the entire Somali coast. The Bajuni and the Zeila Islands in the southern and northwestern extremes of the country respectively. Small and insignificant creeks form at the mouth of the dry river that pour their seasonal torrential waters into the sea. There are two permanent rivers (Juba and Shabelle rivers) that cross the southern regions of Somalia with only the Juba feeding the Indian ocean at around the equator-line village of Sunguni near southern port city of Kismayo.

The long coastal stretches of Somalia's shorelines are exposed and the community settlements along the coastlines are often far apart from one another, thus making most of the coast scarcely populated. Consequently, out of an estimated population of 7 million people, only less than 5% are recognized as coastal settlers, according to certain statistical figures. Moreover, the traditional nomadic life style of the Somalis has contributed to the low population density of the coastal zones. The meager population consist of fishermen and their families with seasonal influx of other population chapters who are engaged in the fishery on a part-time basis. The climate of the coastal zones is generally (hot and humid in the north, windy and cool in the south) influenced by the two monsoon winds which blow during the summer and winter with two mild inter-monsoons in spring and autumn. Relatively strong currents are also characteristics, at least seasonally, for the Somali waters which greatly influence the resource levels and productivity patterns.

In the early nineties, Somalia went into a devastating civil war with itself on top of a series of recurring natural disasters and emergencies. As a result, the national government disintegrated and gone with it are all public service facilities and infrastructure. Nothing is spared by the war of attrition that engulfed the nation as a whole. During these horrible years, most of the coastal infrastructures (ports, anchorages and navigational equipment-light houses) were destroyed and the remaining few were abandoned to decay. The coastal roads were either mined or cut-off by inter or inter-clan conflicts. Inter-factional conflicts continued unchecked with little or no

international means to maintain the security and watchful safeguarding of the vast Somali coastline.

As a consequence of the above facts, over-fishing, illegal commercial marine exploitation and other fishing practices that are prohibited under the international law are taking place in Somalia's territorial waters, depleting the country of its natural wealth. In addition, coral habitat and populations of sea mammals and marine turtles in these waters have been reportedly destroyed while other reports indicate possible incidences of dumping of toxic waste and other harmful substances in Somalia's territorial waters.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the mission include investigating/determining evidence of alleged hazardous material dumping that occurs in Somalia, evaluating the available information and data concerning this alleged dumping. Also, site assessment of the situation will be carried out in order to better understand the magnitude and the extent of the issue, and conduct interviews with local authorities, where available, community elders and fishermen.

In accordance with the set objectives, the following methodology has been adopted for the purpose of achieving maximum and reliable factual data and information with respect to the issue of the alleged dumping of hazardous wastes into Somali waters/beaches:

- a) Determine possible dumping sites along the entire coast. This has been based on inaccessibility and remoteness is determinant factors of vulnerability;
- b) Subdivided the coast into sections that has similarities in terms of logistics arrangements, security and traveling possibilities (see attached map);
- c) Ranked the sections in relation to their magnitude again based on the available information;
A temporary schedule and itinerary has been set-up as follows:-
- d) Zone I from 10th to 14th May - Barava, Marka Area.
- e) Zone II from 15th May to 19th May- Eldheer (through El-ma'an, Warshekh and Adale) to Mareeg and Ige.
- f) Zone III from 31st May to 8th June, 1997 -Northeast Coast (Bossaso, Las Qorey, Kandala, Alula and Hafun).

FIELD TRIPS

KANDALA, ALULA, BOSSASO, LAS QOREY TRIP

The distance between Kandala and Bossaso, along the seaside, is only 84 Km but to travel between them by sea is hard, at least this time of the year. Overland travel involves rough and arduous road more than 460 Km long. Similarly, the coastal strip between Kandala and Alula is only accessible by land. Huge mountains and promontories break right into the sea on both sections, thus making most of the coast inaccessible. Nevertheless, the mission decided to hire a

small fishing boat, however precarious mainly because of the rough seas, to travel to these areas to reach Kandala.

Highlights of the trip

- Fisherman of Kandala, Buur (a coastal village-midway between Bossaso and Kandala) and other settlements within this range were interviewed and the trips to Alula and Las-Qorey were also so harsh and difficult despite the success of the mission. NO SIGNS OF WASTE DUMPING WERE REPORTED, but the coastal settlers were apprehensive of possible OFF-SHORE DUMPING.
- Significant amounts of tar balls on the beaches reported by many fishermen are confirmed by site inspections but no major environmental changes observed. The beaches were relatively clean with health implications of tar balls not readily determinable and this warrants the need for close observation of the situation.

MARKA -BARAVA TRIP

Barava and Marka are ancient historical towns, which are located south of Mogadishu. The two towns have in the past maintained thriving fishing activities. The communities in these coastal towns mainly depend on fishing and sea-bound commercial activities as they keep up good links with the Arab world, the eastern parts of Africa and the far east.

Highlights of the trip

In an interview with members of the district authorities, community elders, fishermen and NGOs, following information was gathered:

- Some months ago a sealed plastic container was seen on the shore about 30 Km south of Brava, but later it was washed out to sea. In the vicinity of Kuyun Barow village (near Brava), more of similar objects were washed to shore. The interviewees reported that with increased frequency debris are found at the beaches. To verify this, the mission traveled there by boat but no evidence was found.
- One Morning, a Fisherman roaming for survival on the shore found a safety bag filled tight with air washed into the shore in the vicinity of Brava. Upon opening the tap, the fisherman suddenly collapsed and died due to intoxication by the unknown contents of the container bag.

ELDHHEER- MAREEG TRIP

The mission visited a number of coastal fishery villages that stretch between Eldheer and Mareeg, about 349 Km north of Mogadishu on 16TH of May 1997.

Highlights of the trip

- During this visit, a peculiar object, a TANK container was sighted dumped on the beach between Ige and Mareeg fishing camps (9 Km from both camps). It is located about thirteen meters from the main land and seven meters from the sea shore. The dimensions of the container are 6 x 2.5 m and about 3 cm thick. It is made of a badly corroded iron and appears to be sealed very attentively. On its sides, wood blocks are fixed. A very particular characteristic are the two rings for the loading and off-loading. No marking, label or sign could be seen on the tank and it is coated with a white material, most probably, against corrosion. Fishermen in these camps earlier noticed the number SIX (6) written on one of its edges and this only mark has since been buried by the sand. When drummed up with a stick, one could hear no sound but hard concrete sound. Due to corrosion, it cracked severely and might leak the content in the near future (see the picture).
- Several fishermen interviewed in Ige and Mareeg reported a similar tank in the vicinity was seen dipped into the sea. On the other hand, unknown symptoms that range from etching, allergies to other strange phenomena are continually experienced by some of fishermen and the community at large. Some of the fishermen underlined that they sleep and wake with fear, sorrow and unpromising future due to the presence of such unclassified tank in their fishing area. This needs an urgent and appropriate action to be taken. Other rumours of similar tanks were reported around Mogadishu and Adale beaches but site inspection could not substantiate these alleged dumping.

CONCLUSION

Wide spread illegal fishing is constantly going on in the surveyed coastal areas. The absence of a national government and the availability of huge natural marine resources in Somali waters attracted the international poachers and also motivated the illegal fishing and the damaging of the previously unpolluted ecological system.

The beaches throughout the surveyed coast line from (Brava to Maid) are generally clean. Some indigenous fishermen indicated that signs of oil pollution were observed on the coastline but its believed that both the Indian Ocean maritime traffic and the tankers sailing to and from the oil ports of the gulf are the main causes of it.

Tankers routinely discharge oily waste (with annual discharges resulting from these operations were estimated at around 33000 tons, UNEP report 1992). Tar balls are regularly found at the Somali coastline with estimates of around 25 - 30 mg per/meter square. Marine vessels normally receive sewage facilities at the ports and since there is no guaranteed security and such services are not in place in the Somali ports at the moment, ocean-going vessels and ships dispose of their waste offshore while at sea.

As a result of the foregoing, Somali territorial waters are deprived of effective legal protections and institutional framework necessary to protect its marine resources, let alone to effect

surveillance and monitoring systems for 3300 Km long coastline. It is a stark reality and unfortunate that Somalia today continues to be literally a free ground for many poaching vessels of different sizes, capacities and using in-adequate methods of fishing.

CURRENT PROBLEMS

In order to allow coastal areas and water resources to fulfill their potentialities, several looming and immediate difficulties need to be addressed:

- Environmental damage that is hazardous to human lives emanating from the discharge of untreated vessel wastes;
- In-adequate environmental assessments and lack of information regarding locations;
- There is no systematic programme for monitoring marine or land-based source of pollution in the marine environment;
- Tar originating from offshore tanker operation is a potential threat to Somalia beaches. An effort could be made to quantify the extent of the problem by carrying out a beach tar surveys in the coastal line of the country;
- Widespread illegal fishing in Somalia's waters is severely endangering the Somali marine reserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To take the appropriate action on the TANK located at Mareeg - Ige area. The community expressed their fear on this matter.
2. It is recommended that a marine pollution monitoring group be established to monitor critical areas where sustainable resources use or human health may be endangered by current sources of pollution (Representatives From UN Agencies, International Agencies and local experts).
3. To stimulate the growth of public awareness about wastes and hazardous substances at all levels of society, of the valuable interest and vulnerability of Somali marines and coastal environment through mass media(Journals and Radios like Radio of peace in Addis Ababa).
4. On behalf of Somalia, the United Nations should issue a strong appeal to the international community against illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping into Somali waters.
5. The United Nations should devise ways of providing protection, monitoring and/or surveillance of the Somali Waters against abuse.

ATTACHMENT I

CONTACTED PERSONS

1. Ali Farah Ali - National Fishery expert UNOPS Bossaso
2. Yusuf Abshir - Community Elder
3. Abdillahi Abdi- D/Councilor and Fisherman
4. Abdillahi Ali Issa - D/Councilor and Fisherman
5. Ahmed Farah Issa - Fisherman
6. Omar Abdillahi Ahmed - Fisherman

ELDHEER - MAREEG TRIP

1. Sheikh Amir Sheikh Ibrahim - Community Elder
2. Ali Abikar Shador - Social Affairs ,DC.
3. Abdi Mohamed Ahmed - CISP - Chief Administrator
4. Dr. Ali Abdule Butugay- CISP- Health Section
5. Ali Salad Sabriye - National Fishery Expert
6. Shino Nur Sheikh - Fisherman
7. Yassin Sheikh Mukhtar - Fisherman
8. Mohamed Ali Agey - Fisherman

BARAVA TRIP

1. Abdullahi Halane - D/Commissioner
2. Abdi Egal - Chairman Fish./Commission.
3. Sayid Ali - Police Commander
4. Said Bana Sharid - Fisherman
5. Sharif A/Ahmed - district Commission; Marka
6. Sharif Ali Mohamed - District Councilor
7. Mohamed Ahmed Jiin - District Councillor
8. Abdo Osman Ahmed - Fisherman
9. Abdillahi Sheikh Hassan - Fisherman

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to convey my best cordial regards and so many thanks to all those who gave me their full assistance to fulfill the success of the mission. Special thanks to the following individuals - Gary Helseth Of UNOPS Bossaso, Ali Farah Ali, Ali Salad Sabriye, Abdi Mohamed Ahmed, and all local authorities and community elders of all the areas covered during the survey mission.

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