

1. SUMMARY

During May, political tensions heightened further between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS), with the Garowe Conference of political talks stalling and finally ending without agreement. Relations worsened after the conference, with Galmudug and Jubaland leaders criticizing and denouncing FGS leadership and policies, and Puntland government finally announcing that it had “suspended cooperation” with the FGS in some key areas. Puntland also signed joint Cooperation Agreements with Southwest and Hirshabelle state presidents, and a separate accord was signed in Galkayo between Puntland and Galmudug states. These steps came after the collapse of Garowe Conference and opened a new federalization track prioritizing inter-state cooperation, with the FGS visibly absent from these political proceedings.

On security, Puntland state continued to face further threats to peace and stability from armed non-state actors including Al Shabaab and ISIS, especially operating in remote mountainous areas of Bari region. VEO activities particularly targeting Puntland government forces continued during the reporting period, with two police officers killed in guerrilla-style attacks in Bossaso. Unidentified gunmen shot and killed the second commander of the Joint Security Forces in Galkayo. The JSF is a joint force between Puntland and Galmudug which has been attributed to improving security cooperation between Puntland and Galmudug.

In May, the *Gu'* seasonal rains brought heavy rains throughout Puntland territories, leading to damaged roads and cutting off trade traffic temporarily. The government announced a committee to tackle the matter of rebuilding and reopening the roads. Meanwhile, Puntland President Said Deni traveled to China leading a government delegation, including Ministers of Civil Aviation; Commerce, Industry and Investment; Energy, Mining and Water; and Fisheries and Marine Resources. The delegation's week-long trip including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Puntland Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). The Chinese company completed construction of the tarmac runway at Bossaso International Airport in 2016, and signed a new agreement with the Puntland government in 2017 to build Eyl-Garowe Road and Galkayo Airport.

2. PEACE AND SECURITY

2.1 Key Developments: Open data sources indicate that total violent fatalities and casualties increased during the month of May, with a total of 33 fatalities reported in the media. There were a total of three bombing attacks reported in Bossaso during the reporting period; seven persons were wounded when a roadside detonated near the Bossaso courthouse. Violent deaths were attributed to US military airstrikes targeting Al Shabaab and ISIS armed groups in Golis Mountain Range of Puntland particularly Bari region (66.6%); sub-national conflict between Somaliland and Puntland forces in Sanaag region (18.2%); VEO attacks on Puntland government forces (12.1%); and other violent crimes (3.1%).

2.1.1 Violence Against Women: The new phenomena of gruesome cases of violence against women and girls in Puntland continued during May, with at least one young girl killed in a

stabbing attack in Galkayo.¹ On May 4, Puntland deputy prosecutor-general Mohamed Hared announced in Garowe that 3 suspects were found guilty of the rape and killing of 13-year old victim Aisha Ilyas in Feb. 2019.² The late Aisha's brutal killing provoked a public outcry and pressure on Puntland government to act against perpetrators of such crimes. In a televised trial, the prosecutor general presented a semen analysis that identified 3 of the 10 men on trial, two of whom are siblings. The newly established forensics department of Garowe analysed the semen found in Aisha and matched it with Abdifatah Abdirahman Warsame, Abdisalan Abdirahman Warsame and Abdishakur Mohamed Dige.³ All of whom were sentenced to death for their crimes against the 13-year-old Aisha.

On May 28, 22-year-old Nimo Omar Shire was stabbed and died from her injuries in Galkayo during the evening hours. Police said the perpetrators escaped the crime scene and there was no known motive for the crime. On May 29, local police announced they arrested an unnamed suspect "after finding evidence" linking him to the crime.⁴ During the early months of 2019, there was a spate of violent attacks against women and young girls, including murder, rape and other sexual crimes. The incidents occurred in different parts of Puntland and the gruesome crimes sparked international attention to the phenomena. The government expedited the justice process for Aisha's trial, as a response to the public outcry.

All cases of violence against women have resulted in police arrests. However, all the cases involving the recent spate of crimes against women and young girls are still pending in Puntland courts. Osman Abdi Maneno, Deputy Commander of the Criminal Investigation Department stated that the state is conducting investigations and will share details when possible.⁵ Deputy Maneno also stated that the citizens can expect that these cases will have public proceedings that will be open to the media.

2.1.2 Violent Extremist Organizations: During the reporting period, the number of VEO did not increase compared to last month, April 2019. However, there were a number of violent attacks during May, leading to at least three killings and seven injuries. On May 4, unidentified attackers threw hand grenades at two homes of Puntland security commanders in Bossaso.⁶ No one was injured in the night time attacks, but the two houses were badly damaged in the bombing. Puntland media reported the two homes were next to each other and belonged Puntland Darawish commander in Bari region Col. Abdirahman Qadafi and the deputy commander. On May 11, a car bombing occurred in Bossaso whereby 8 persons were injured and the vehicle destroyed in front of Bossaso court house.⁷ Media reports said the car belonged to Bossaso district judge Abukar Abdinur. Mr. Abdinur and the court security commander were both among the wounded.

In Galkayo, on May 12, Col. Khalif Nur Shiil was killed in the evening, after leaving a local mosque.⁸ He was commander of task force comprising of Puntland and Galmudug joint security forces. Col. Shiil was the second commander of that same position to be killed; the first commander and his bodyguards were killed in a bombing attack in Galkayo on Apr. 28, 2018. In a separate attack in Bossaso, unidentified gunmen shot and killed a Puntland police officer near Banadir Junction in Bossaso, with attackers fleeing the scene after the attack on May 21, reports said.⁹

In continuation of justice process, Puntland's Bari Regional Military Court -- Appeals Division -- issued verdicts on 16 men convicted of ties to Al Shabaab and ISIS group.¹⁰ Court deputy chairman Col. Mohamud Nur Muse told media that 4 men were sentenced to death, 5 were sentenced to life in prison, and 7 were sentenced to between 5 and 20 years in prison. On May 16, at least 2 police officers were injured when police convoy hit a

roadside bomb.¹¹ On May 23, unidentified gunmen attacked Puntland police officers on patrol in Bossaso. At least two officers were killed and the attackers escaped the scene.¹²

2.1.3 Counter terrorism Operations: During May, international counter-terrorism operations continued in parts of Puntland, with US military airstrikes particularly targeting Al Shabaab and ISIS militants in Bari region. During the month, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) announced five airstrikes, with total 21 combatants killed by airstrikes in Puntland, according to AFRICOM press releases. Moreover, the press statements said that the US military conducted the airstrikes in collaboration with the Federal Government of Somalia.

On May 5, the US military conducted airstrikes against ISIS militant targets in Bari region, in Mokore town about 75km east of Bossaso. Reports of casualties could not be ascertained in the remote area where ISIS group is known to be active. On May 9, US airstrikes "killed 13 fighters" from ISIS group in another town in Bari region, according to AFRICOM press release.¹³ The airstrike occurred at Ameyra village, in Iskushuban district, Bari region. The next day, AFRICOM announced new airstrikes in Bari region whereby 4 ISIS fighters were killed.¹⁴ On May 22, US airstrikes targeted ISIS militants in Bari region, in what AFRICOM press release said was the fifth time airstrikes were conducted in the Golis Mountain Range of Puntland since Apr. 14. The statement said 2 militants were killed and that no civilians were harmed in the airstrike.¹⁵ On May 24, the US military reported that its warplanes killed 3 Al Shabaab combatants in military airstrikes in an undisclosed part of Golis Mountains, according to the AFRICOM statement.¹⁶ Two days later on May 26, another US AFRICOM airstrike was carried in the Golis Mountains, that killed 3 militants according to an official press release. Again the specific area of the attack was not disclosed by AFRICOM. The successive airstrikes within 48 hours of each other was described as an opportunity to "successfully reduce terrorist influence and activity".¹⁷

The towns and villages in Bari region which became the target of US airstrikes are located in remote, mountainous areas, expanding from the interior outwards from Iskushuban to the coastal area towards Qandala. Given the remoteness of these villages, and that some of the area in question remain in the hands of militant groups, it is difficult to independently verify the casualty reports of airstrikes.

2.1.4 Sub-national Conflict: During the second half of the month of May, armed clashes occurred and military tensions heightened again in parts of Sanaag region between Somaliland and Puntland forces. Initially, the calm of the early days of May took an even more conciliatory turn when, on May 18, Somaliland President Muse Bihi declared at a public gathering in Hargeisa that Somaliland would "return to Puntland" all soldiers captured by Somaliland forces during the Tukaraq conflict in Sool region, in 2018.¹⁸ The temporary moment of peaceful overtures ended quickly when, on May 21, Somaliland forces attacked a delegation led by Puntland Education Minister Abdullahi Mohamed Hassan; the Puntland minister was traveling to address local communities in Damala Hagare town, in eastern Sanaag region.¹⁹ The Minister survived the attack, but local media reported at least 2 Puntland soldiers and 4 Somaliland soldiers were killed in the attack.²⁰

On May 22, Puntland Security Minister Abdisamad Mohamed Gallan and Police Commissioner Gen. Muhyadin Ahmed Muse arrived at Badhan, capital of Sanaag region, to boost Puntland government presence in the region.²¹ The next day, the Puntland Council of Ministers issued a press statement condemning the Somaliland forces' attack on the Puntland delegation in eastern Sanaag region. The statement alleged that "Somaliland forces attacked the [Puntland] delegation to disrupt the examinations and other public services in the [Sanaag] region". The statement also commended "the people of Sanaag region for supporting [Puntland] government delegation" in the region.²²

On May 26, local people in Elbuh town protested against Somaliland troops and military actions in Sanaag region.²³ Meanwhile, local media reported that Somaliland had sent more military reinforcements to Yubbe town, where a Somaliland army post was established in March, when the current standoff sparked.²⁴ By May 29, Puntland Parliament Speaker Abdihakim Mohamed Ahmed 'Dhoobo' arrived in Badhan, joining senior Puntland officials and security commanders already there.

Also, on May 26, Puntland and Somaliland agreed to a prisoner exchange. ICRC stated that the prisoner exchange was "facilitated" by the international aid agency with observer status during the agreement proceedings and that the aid agency has been monitoring prisoners' conditions.²⁵ The next day, Puntland Post reported that agreement between Somaliland and Puntland on prisoner exchange involved 14 Puntland soldiers captured by Somaliland during the 2018 conflict, and 3 Somaliland soldiers captured by Puntland. However, the report added that Puntland initially captured 19 Somaliland soldiers and released 16 soldiers "after rehabilitation and transfer to clan elders". In accordance with local clan traditions, which transcend the politico-military conflict between Somaliland and Puntland, all the released soldiers hail from Sool region.²⁶

In a separate but important development, on May 30, three Somaliland military commanders in Sanaag region mutinied against the Somaliland army and "joined Puntland forces".²⁷ The three commanders claimed to command a total force of 700 soldiers, with some local reports putting the figure at 200 soldiers.²⁸ The commanders met with Puntland government officials and security commanders in Badhan, where they warmly were welcomed by Puntland officials and granted new military credentials, awarded at a ceremony by Security Minister Gallan.²⁹ On May 30, Somaliland-appointed Badhan Governor resigned from his position and accused Somaliland government of "military aggression" in Sanaag region. He supported local forces who mutinied against Somaliland and declared to the media that he and his supporters "will join Puntland".³⁰ Puntland government's strong presence in Badhan, including Parliament Speaker, Security Minister and Police Commissioner, underscored the importance Puntland attached to resolving the Sanaag crisis, and to prevent further Somaliland expansion into eastern Sanaag region. Somaliland administration remained silent regarding the attack in Damala Hagare town against Puntland delegation, the mutiny of Somaliland troops in Sanaag region and the resignation of Somaliland-appointed governor.

2.1.5 Security Sector Governance: Last month, the new Puntland administration made efforts to reform the security sector through promoting ownership with local communities, enhancing the control of small arms, lobbying for external support from supportive governments, and advocating for change in the way security assistance is managed by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). In May there were a number of security reforms that were undertaken in Mudug region, which is discussed in section 3.3. Despite security reforms in Bari last month, soldiers in Bossaso mutinied and briefly took over the Central Bank.³¹ According to the soldiers who spoke the media, the reasons for the mutiny was due to unpaid salaries. Government officials intervened and the soldiers returned to their posts, after they were told that their demands would be met. Unpaid salaries have been an issue for Puntland for years, indicating underlying governance issues that impact state security. Unpaid salaries inherited from the former Puntland administration has put even more pressure on President Deni, who has vowed to ensure the regularity of salaries. However, this is the second mutiny since the Puntland election in Jan. 2019.

2.2 Security Forecast

- 2.2.1 **Sexual Violence Against Women:** Despite Puntland's recent ruling of Aisha's murderers, another case of violence against a woman was recorded this month. Although authorities suggest that it did not involve sexual abuse, it does signal a problem in Puntland that the administration is struggling to contain. Results in combating violence against women will require different approaches to the problem with attempts to understand and address the root causes. If the Puntland government relies only on harsh sentencing and public trials, the recent phenomena may not decline.
- 2.2.2 **Violent Extremist Organizations:** Despite reforms by the Puntland government and a distinct focus on countering VEOs especially in Bossaso, the presence of these organizations and the number of attacks, although the majority of them not claimed by these groups, signal an unwillingness to show weakness. The persistent barrage of drones on their strongholds has likely disrupted their operations which could lead to a change in strategy and may result in a renewed focus on urban operations. Puntland's capacity to improve preemptive measures will be tested in the coming months.
- 2.2.3 **Counter-Terrorism Operations:** Since Donald Trump's incumbency, there has been an uptick of airstrikes in Somalia to combat Al Shabaab and IS operations. Currently the number of US airstrikes in Somalia for this year is at 40 as of May 30, compared to 45 total airstrikes for all of 2018.³² Our forecast predicts the heightened trend of 2019 to continue as the US has reportedly taken out high level members of both Al Shabaab and IS.
- 2.2.4 **Sub-national Conflict:** Despite a quite first half of Ramadan, tensions heightened in Sanaag region reaching a boiling point. The defection of Somaliland soldiers based in Sanaag, however, might diffuse the conflict. The defection signals a disdain for conflict from the former Somaliland soldiers. Some security sources from the region tell NAI, the defection of these soldiers comes at a time where it seemed Somaliland was planning to move on the city of Badhan. As was our forecast in April it is unlikely that war between the two sides will break out in June. However our forecast does predict the continued protraction of conflict in the region, which will likely be dependent on the impact of this defection to both Somaliland and Puntland and the influence of traditional elders in the region.
- 2.2.5 **Security Sector Governance:** The Puntland administration has shown commitment to undertake security sector reforms within its territory focusing on Mudug and Bari. This security reform has largely manifested itself in the reshuffling of top security roles. However, the Puntland government will need to implement an integrated and comprehensive approach to security reform. This reform strategy should be developed with expert advice and incorporated in Puntland State Development Plan and the broader National Development Plan, whose formulation is currently in progress.

3. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

3.1 Garowe Conference: Federal-State Talks Collapse

- 3.1.1 **Key Developments:** On May 5, the much anticipated Garowe Conference between FGS and FMS leaders commenced in Puntland state capital. The conference lasted for a period of six days. Present were Somalia's federal and state-level leaders, namely: Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo; Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire; Puntland President Said Deni; Galmudug President Ahmed Haaf; Jubaland President Ahmed

Madobe; Southwest President Abdiyaziz Laftagaren; and Hirshabelle President Mohamed Waare.³³

It was the first high-level meeting among Somali federal and state-level leaders since the last National Security Council meeting in Baidoa, in June 2018. Information emerging from the closed-door meeting was sketchy and unreliable at best. Local media speculation was widespread and often contained misleading claims and counter-claims. The secrecy around the high-level meeting was compounded by reports of side meetings between the FGS leadership, especially Prime Minister Khaire, and different political and civil society representatives in Puntland. Local media speculated that the side meetings were focused on Khaire's political lobbying for the anticipated 2020/2021 Somali federal elections.

After days of tough political negotiations, the Conference concluded on May 11, in what can only be termed a deadlock; no official Conference communique was issued and all delegations departed quietly.³⁴ Media reports said the leaders of Galmudug and Jubaland regional states left Garowe Conference in frustration.³⁵ Before departing Garowe, the Galmudug leader told reporters that, "Somalia does not have a government".³⁶ Upon returning to Kismayo, Jubaland leader Ahmed Madobe held a lengthy press conference criticizing the Somali federal leadership: "It is unfortunate that we do not know who rules the country [Somalia] and who is responsible".³⁷ It became self-evident that the much anticipated Garowe Conference had collapsed and ended in failure. However, the two leaders of Galmudug and Jubaland did not provide detailed accounts of the reasons why the Garowe Conference collapsed. The FGS leaders, upon returning to Mogadishu, also did not offer the Somali public any clear reasons for the Conference's failure.

Then, on May 14, President Deni held a press conference at Puntland State House in Garowe. The Puntland leader clearly blamed the FGS for lack of consultation with regional states on major governance and security matters. According to President Deni, the federal and state leaders disagreed on a number of key issues, including a dispute over two recent FGS laws – namely, National Electoral Law and Petroleum Law – in addition to existing disputes over power sharing, resource and revenue sharing, national security, and the constitutional review process.

On May 27, Puntland government issued a document entitled "Policy Statement on the Failed Political Negotiations in Somalia". According to the policy statement:

"FMS leaders during the Garowe Conference proposed a new cooperation council, with a smaller membership of political leaders, decision-making authority and based on Somalia's constitutional and legal framework".³⁸

Further, the government's policy statement claimed that the, "Petroleum Law process was a blatant disregard for political inclusivity, constitutional power-sharing structure and limits State government powers to representative roles with no specified authority". The statement noted that the FMS leaders "demanded their constitutional rights to be consulted on national security and federalization matters". The Puntland statement concluded with key policy positions, namely:

1. "Puntland Government shall not recognize all new laws approved by the Federal Government of Somalia, pending the completion of the Federal Constitution in a transparent, inclusive and consultative process with Federal Member States.
2. Puntland Government hereby suspends all cooperation with the Federal Government of Somalia in the following areas/processes: a) constitutional review process; b) federal elections; c) national security"³⁹

3.1.2 Analysis: Political tensions between FGS and FMS increased, following the collapse of political negotiations at the Garowe Conference. The manner in which the Conference which was held in total secrecy, and culminated without any outcome, was symbolic of the very volatile nature of relations between the center (FGS) and the periphery (FMS). The Garowe conference lead up was inspiring as Somali political leaders met and discussed national issues and priorities in Garowe. The Conference's end without an outcome was not surprising, as the negotiating parties were strictly following pre-defined agendas. For example, FGS leaders had already submitted the National Electoral Law to Federal Parliament, prior to arriving at the Conference to the dismay of state leaders. This action foreshadowed the Conference's outcome, as FGS leaders seemed committed to implementing their political agenda – with or without a positive outcome in Garowe. On the part of FMS leaders, widespread reports that FMS leaders made it a “precondition” for FGS leaders to make amends with Galmudug President Haaf was a setback, and indicative of a tit-for-tat move between the parties.

On the wider matter of agreeing on power, revenue and resource sharing between FGS and FMS, it became self-evident that both parties were unwilling to constructively present their opposing cases for a stronger and more centralized federal model favored by FGS, or a decentralized federal arrangement preferred by FMS leaders. In either case, the finalization of the country's constitutional structure is left exclusively in the hands of select federal and state leaders. In the lead-up to the Conference, there were no official government studies on Somali federalism, no third party research and expertise offering recommendations to the leaders, and no public consultations with civil society, which would have made the process more transparent, inclusive and representational. This top-down policy negotiations approach has been used as a model in Somali politics for many years, yet the outcome of such processes has led to more problems and continued political deadlock. It remains to be seen, before re-launching the next round of political negotiations, if the FGS and FMS leaders will agree to a new federalization work plan, with political leaders' rooting their decision-making in sound legal research and evidence-based policy recommendations that is cultivated from public consultations.

3.1.3 Forecast: Given the protracted history of disputes between FGS and FMS, the current political dispute is expected to continue in June. The political deadlock is underpinned by constitutional ambiguities, combined with political machinations. This trend is unlikely to subside, and FGS and FMS leaders are expected to continue engaging in meetings in the coming months to resolve the contentious topics, including political power distribution and a framework for sharing resources in Somalia.

3.2 Somali Federalization Process

3.2.1 Key Developments: Somalia's ongoing federalization has undergone many phases since its inception in 2004, as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia. During the month of May, the Somali federalization process came to the forefront with different ideologies of federalism competing in the country's political landscape. The Garowe Conference, and the events before or after, formed a crucial part of the ongoing federalization process.

On May 3, Somali regional states of Puntland, Jubaland and Galmudug issued public statements rejecting the Federal Cabinet's submission to Federal Parliament of a new law: 2020/2021 National Electoral Law. The FGS Cabinet also submitted to Federal Parliament the revised Petroleum Law. The FMS accused FGS of failing to consult with regional states on lawmaking for major national issues, including federal elections.⁴⁰ Despite the FMS

sentiment for the two laws, on May 8, the Somali National Development Council, comprised of FGS and FMS Planning Ministers, met in Garowe and issued a communique agreeing to cooperate on national and state-level development priorities.⁴¹ The FGS Ministry of Planning is responsible for developing the National Development Plan, which ideally incorporates priorities and policies submitted by FMS Planning Ministries.

On May 13, after Puntland, Hirshabelle and Southwest leaders concluded a one-day summit in Garowe, they issued a joint communique calling for "increased cooperation", endorsing the outcome of the National Development Council meeting in Garowe, while jointly rejecting the FGS Taxation Law, which was submitted to Federal Parliament last month.⁴²

On May 22, Puntland President Deni and Galmudug President 'Haaf' met at the newly opened Puntland State House in Galkayo. The two Somali regional state governments signed a Cooperation Agreement at the meeting.⁴³ Both administrations jointly rejected Somali Federal Government's passing of Electoral Law and Petroleum Law (passed by Federal Parliament on May 20).⁴⁴

3.2.2 Analysis: The collapse of talks at Garowe Conference spurred a number of political activities within the Somali federalization process. Initially, there was growing interest in realizing an agreement on a federalization model between FGS and FMS leaders; however, with the signing of two inter-state cooperation agreements, the FMS leaders opted to launch a new track focused on strengthening state-to-state relations, even in the absence of FGS role. The FGS lost momentum when President Farmajo and Prime Minister Khaire could not agree with FMS leaders on key national issues. FMS leaders seemed to have realized the opening political space and launched inter-state cooperation processes to strengthen their own relations.

This inter-state track did not begin in Garowe; in Oct. 2017, meeting in Kismayo, FMS leaders launched the Council of Inter-State Cooperation (CIC), but the CIC did not produce the intended outcome of entrenched political cooperation.⁴⁵ This approach, running parallel to FGS-FMS dialogue, can possibly guide FMSs towards closer cooperation and political position, vis-à-vis the FGS. However, this scenario assumes that FMS leaders are united and committed to political ideals pursued uniformly by regional states, including regional autonomy within the federal system. As witnessed at the conclusion of the Garowe Conference, FMS leaders did not meet and hold a joint press conference in Garowe, indicating that FMS leaders did not have a shared consensus on the debate. It was evident that the FGS and FMS leadership did not agree on any notable issue, but what was more surprising is that it seems that within the FMS leaders there was no consensus as to the main reasons why the Garowe Conference talks collapsed.

3.2.3 Forecast: The Somali federalization process is an ongoing process that is expected to develop further over time. Somali political leaders agreed on federalism in 2004, and a National Constituent Assembly adopted the Provisional Federal Constitution in Mogadishu, in 2012. During this time frame, misunderstandings over federal vs. state powers, the roles of responsibilities of respective levels of government, while the constitution and legislative framework to guide relations is left incomplete. Instead, FGS and FMS leaders are expected to defend their different policies based on vague constitutional clauses, placing Somalia squarely on the same path as former Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, with the anticipated re-emergence of Somali Leaders Forum.

3.3 Reshuffle in Mudug Region

3.3.1 **Key Developments:** President Deni's first trip to Mudug Region occurred during the last third of May. The president visited government offices and public institutions in Galkayo, as part of his first-hand look at the state of security and public service in Galkayo.⁴⁶ He visited regional administration offices, regional courts, and even Omar Samatar High School in Galkayo. On May 21, President Deni met with the region's community elders, political, religious and business leaders to urge cooperation with government. He particularly stressed cooperation to improve security, justice sector and boost economic development. By May 23, the president nominated a new 8-member Institutional Reform Committee for Mudug Region, including 5 Cabinet ministers and 3 Puntland MPs. The Committee is chaired by interior minister, with finance minister as deputy chair. The Committee's tasks include reviewing and evaluating the government's mandate and services in Mudug region, and presenting recommendations to the Puntland leadership.⁴⁷

A presidential directive, dated May 25, effectively removed from office a number of Mudug's high-ranking district judges, appeals courts judges and the region's prosecutor-general. Mohamed Mohamud Jama, former judge of Harfo District Court, was named as interim judge of Mudug Regional Court. In a separate directive that same day, the president named a new Mudug regional governor, Ahmed Muse Nur, and two deputy governors, Hassan Abdullahi Warsame 'Wardhere' and Mohamed Hassan Hussein 'Walore', in the first major shakeup of a regional administration since the election in Jan. 2019.⁴⁸ Further, Col. Jama Mohamed Ahmed was appointed as the new Mudug regional police commander.⁴⁹

3.3.2 **Analysis:** Over the course of his working trip to Galkayo, and Mudug region more broadly, President Deni focused on key meetings with regional officials, security commanders, and local community leaders. His consultations, presumably, paved the way for major changes to the administrative, judicial and police institutions in Mudug region. President Deni and his ministerial delegation, including members of the Reform Committee, were committed to making immediate changes in Mudug region, after consultations with key stakeholders.

Galkayo, a city etched between Puntland and Galmudug states, is renowned for complex political and security considerations. Puntland media reported that local community leaders and the wider public expressed serious concerns over Mudug's weak institutional capacity to mobilize local support, strengthen and expand government services, and manage security threats. In particular, local communities expressed concerns over the weak capacities of the region's police and judicial organs. Speaking to Radio Daljir on May 28 from Galkayo, Puntland Interior Minister Mohamed Abdirahman Dhabanad, who chairs the Reform Committee, said President Deni had the "opportunity to collect facts" in Galkayo and that, during the meetings, local communities "voiced concerns over security and judiciary institutions in Mudug region" and "limited government services in Galkayo". Minister Dhabanad said the president's shakeup of Mudug regional officials was the outcome of meetings with local communities concerned about security and justice sector reforms.

3.3.3 **Forecast:** The Puntland government has long struggled to strengthen governance institutions in much of the territories, especially in Mudug region. The outcome of the new government's reform efforts is expected to come to surface later in the year or early 2020. However, naming new officials to government positions will not automatically resolve existing security, political, socioeconomic and historic complexities and challenge in Mudug region. For the reforms to take effect, the government's must empower law enforcement (in Mudug and throughout Puntland) and combine institutional efforts with economic investment, providing skills development and jobs to decrease the region's (and Puntland's) high unemployment rate. Without a comprehensive strategy, new faces in the governor's office or a new police chief will remain largely a continuity of status quo.

4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

4.1 Puntland Drought Situation

4.1.1 Key Developments: Throughout the month of May, the Gu' rains have come into effect, showering many parts of Puntland and the greater Somalia. The rains have been heavy at times, causing flash floods and road damage. Many parts of Puntland had to wait until the second week of May for a positive turn in the weather.⁵⁰ The last weeks of May and coincidentally Ramadan had heavy to average rainfall accumulation for Bari, Karkaar, Nugal and Mudug regions. In parts of Bari an estimated 10-150mm of rain was recorded.⁵¹ Heavy rains in Sool and Sanaag were also reported. During this period, Badhan in Sanaag region experienced torrential rains that destroyed 40 homes; less than 100 kms east in Armo, 11 homes were destroyed by the torrential rains and flash flooding.⁵² On May 13 it was reported heavy rains and flash floods reportedly destroyed 350 farms and property in Taleex, Sool, leaving many farmers destitute.⁵³ The optimism for weather felt in Puntland and Somalia, did not encompass all of Puntland and Somalia for that matter. As coastal communities in Puntland's east have had little to no rain. Banderbeyla, Eyl, Dangorayo and even Iskushuban areas have not received much rain over the past month, with estimates at less than 10 mm.⁵⁴

The late Gu season has led to the current rainfall for May to slide below 2018 averages for many parts of Somalia. Many international aid agencies have called for immediate action from donors as the "Gu' season has been poor" according to UNOCHA. On May 22, FAO's SWALIM produced a report that reiterated bleak forecasts for Puntland and Central States. The report stated: *Northeast and central regions remain under serious water stress conditions and given the rainfall forecast for coming weeks, the situation may get worse.*⁵⁵ A day later on May 23, Save the Children stated that 73% of surveyed children in Puntland were consuming "2 or less meals a day".⁵⁶ A Drought Response Plan was issued on May 20 for June to December of this year. According to the document the plan has a two-pronged approach that will rely on extending humanitarian assistance as close as possible to rural communities and improving response capacity in larger urban centers to service newly displaced persons. By the third week of May the Humanitarian Response Plan's budget had only been 19 per cent funded.⁵⁷

4.1.2 Analysis: Many regions in Puntland suffered from the delayed Gu' rains and the forecasts for May were grim. Current reports suggest that although there was a relatively good rainy month of May, it is still below averages of 2018, which may not immediately register with the government and the public alike. The rainy season which has alleviated drought symptoms for the time being may in fact be a mirage. The below average Deyr season of 2018, ensured that this Gu' season was of utmost significance to Somalia's food security. However, the current forecast despite being positive for Nugal and Sool regions in Puntland,⁵⁸ still warrants caution and the need for contingency measures. This is because experts find that the underwhelming Gu season is unreliable to water dependant sectors, because the distribution of the rains has not been "temporal" but rather sporadic.

The FAO report provides an anecdote: *"For instance, some stations have recorded only one day of rainfall since the start of the season with some exceeding 50mm in the one day rainfall. Such rainfall is rendered ineffective for crop and pasture growth while it would be effective for rainwater harvesting and refill of surface water reservoirs."* Given that this Gu' season is sporadic and the soil moisture throughout Somalia is at depleted levels⁵⁹, this could have serious impacts to rain-fed crops throughout Somalia. Puntland experienced food shortages in May, with flash floods affecting road networks in Hiiraan, one of Puntland's major produce suppliers. Central regions in Somalia like Hiiraan have enjoyed

rain that has helped cowpea crop development, but water resources still remain below average for many southern agropastoral and riverine areas.⁶⁰ This could further exacerbate the projected dire situation for Puntland and the country at large. A more thorough investigation by the government on the consequences of a delayed and yet lackluster Gu' season will be key, to informed decision making. Given that current funding as of May 30 is only 22 percent of the 1.08 billion costing⁶¹, which is less than half of what was raised by April of 2017 and 2018, it will be crucial that Puntland and other states try to develop alternative funding mechanisms to mitigate the risks of possible delays in humanitarian aid. Collective efforts from the public and private sector both locally and abroad, together with humanitarian actors, will be essential if the Gu' rains continue to disappoint.

In previous reports, NAI emphasized the need for long term strategies improved water management. The recent unveiling of multiple water catchments supported by UNDP and GEF in Nugal, Puntland⁶², are excellent entry points to improve water retention and water security. Given the current difficult situation across the country, planning and implementing long term projects led by state and federal governments that better manages water sources and rangelands will be essential. Managing fresh water from seasonal rivers will be a key area for Puntland as global climate change continues.

4.1.3 Forecast: International aid organizations have engaged in mass appeals and warnings of an impending food security crisis within the country. Current funding does not match the projected humanitarian situation in Somalia if the rains continue to falter. Bleak forecasts for May that were projected in April were not accurate, and it is likely that rains could continue to improve during the month of June. Whether or not a looming humanitarian crisis is avoided will rely on weather patterns and/or effective local and international partnerships.

4.2 Puntland President's Trip to China

4.2.1 Key Developments: On May 26, President Deni leading a delegation of ministers flew to China in what would be his second international trip. The trip had a two-day stopover in Addis Ababa, where the Puntland delegation met with Ethiopian officials. Before his departure, President Deni held a press conference at Garowe Airport where he stated that the agenda for the working visit was to discuss how ties between Puntland and a province in China could be developed.⁶³ Deni's trip had a particular emphasis on economic development and shortly after his arrival in China, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed. On May 29, Puntland Minister of Fisheries Farah Awash and China Civil Engineering Cooperation (CCEC) Chairman signed a MoU for a modern fishing port in Eyl, Nugal region of Puntland, Somalia.⁶⁴ According to the MOU, the deal entails conducting feasibility study for construction of a fishing port with export capacities in the coastal town of Eyl.

China and Somalia relations can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages, when the two sides traded wild game, incense, pottery, spices and ivory. China's relationship with Somalia was maintained since its independence, but ties grew stronger after former Somali President Siyad Barre expelled the Soviet Union in 1977. Since the collapse of the Somali central government in 1991, trade relations with China decreased significantly as trade was rerouted via Middle Eastern ports. However, there has been an uptick in trade with China over the past decade. China also took part in developmental aid throughout the various transitional governments that preceded the establishment of today's Federal Government of Somalia in 2012. In December 2014, China reopened its embassy in Mogadishu and vowed to continue supporting Somalia.⁶⁵ During this same month, a foundation stone for the construction of the Bossaso International Airport was laid. The tender winner for the construction of the airport funded by Italy was CCECC.

CCECC, according to its website, was formerly the Foreign Aid Bureau of the Ministry of Railways and was established in 1979. The establishment of CCECC came only one year after China underwent massive economic reforms that opened up the country, in a process known as “*gaigekaifang*”.⁶⁶ Over the years, CCECC would further grow as a state owned enterprise, with an incorporation of the China Railway Construction Corporation, which according to their website was a “strategic regrouping under the approval of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission”.⁶⁷ CCECC wrapped up construction of Bossaso International Airport in 2016. A year later, CCECC announced multiple projects in Puntland that included oil exploration. In a Puntland government press release, dated Mar. 30, 2017, the Puntland Cabinet then led by President Abdiweli Gaas, ratified the agreement signed with CCECC for a block with oil, gas and mining potential; in return, CCECC would fund and construct major infrastructure projects, namely Eyl-Garowe Road and a new Galkayo Airport.⁶⁸ CCECC has an office in Puntland’s capital Garowe and employs a number of staff throughout Puntland, and other parts of Somalia.

4.2.2 **Analysis:** CCECC company’s presence in Somalia and more specifically Puntland, has garnered international attention as the company has ramped up its economic engagement. Puntland has unapologetically continued to develop its relationship with CCECC to further the state’s economic interests. Fishing in Somalia’s coast has become an area of interest for China as a Chinese Offshore Fishing Association (COFA) signed a fishing license in Dec. 2018 for tuna in the EEZ, with the FGS in Mogadishu. As the political stalemate between the FGS and FMS worsens, FGS silence Puntland delegation’s China trip is indicative that the FGS either supports CCECC operations in Puntland, or is disinterested to interfere in Puntland economic affairs. Overall, as CCECC work in Puntland is underpinned by infrastructure projects, FGS has remained a silent observer, to the benefit of Puntland and CCECC relations. However, during President Deni’s trip to China, the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicly issued rejection of a “fake letter” purportedly signed by Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad. The Foreign Affairs Ministry’s statement came in the form of a tweet, which refuted the letter’s authenticity.⁶⁹ The Ministry did not go on to discuss the trip and its outcomes.

4.2.3 **Forecast:** The signing of a MoU for the fishing port in Eyl can be deemed as a launching document with a broad goal; but details of what steps will be taken to fund the project and when, will likely be disclosed after an extended period of discussions and fundraising. A former Puntland government official who spoke to NAI in anonymity expressed concern about “the pace of project implementation”, citing notable delays in construction phase for Eyl-Garowe Road and new Galkayo Airport projects. If precedence is indication, the proposed projects shall be developed over a long period of time, which allows Puntland government to strategize with the private sector and CCECC on how to maximize revenue from the proposed fishing port. The continuation of CCECC’s current commitments in Puntland is expected to progress. However, the pace of progress shall be determined by Puntland and CCECC working arrangements. Further, a comprehensive understanding of FGS perceptions towards the economic development in Puntland championed by CCECC will likely manifest itself over the coming months, as further talks to mediate the FGS and FMS will be likely.

New Access International (NAI Somalia), founded in 2012, is a development agency based in Somalia. NAI Somalia specializes in research, policy and organizational development as well as advocacy. NAI launched its **Somali Law and Policy Program** in January 2019, publishing the monthly **Puntland Situation Report** that focuses on collecting, observing, recording, and analyzing all major events and developments linked to matters of law and policy, and its impact on peace, politics and development in Puntland State, Somalia.

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