



PUNTLAND SITUATION REPORT

Somali Law & Policy Program

April 2019

1. SUMMARY

Puntland State experienced another month of relative stability. Violent fatalities decreased this month as the government increased security presence in Bossaso, although there was a marked increase in the number of attacks on security personnel within the city, coinciding with Puntland's emphasis in improving security by reforming security apparatuses in Bossaso and Bari region. Puntland has yet to effectively tackle sexual violence against women and was dealt another high-profile case of young mother to be, who was found murdered and raped in her home. Puntland has apprehended five suspects, however, their case has yet to be taken to court. Somaliland and Puntland armed confrontation in Sanaag region has yet to dissipate and despite traditional elders interjection in the dispute, both sides have yet to relinquish their forces from the region.

Puntland kicked off its international reengagement strategy into high gear as the newly elected President Deni visited the UAE and Kenya. The president also welcomed a number of international representatives on their official visits to Puntland. All of these developments came at a period when the Federal Government of Somalia and Puntland are on shaky grounds. The Federal and Puntland State Ministries of Education got entangled in a row after Puntland was criticized for not taking part in the National Examinations, which led to counterclaims by Puntland. But the row underscored the poor working relations between the two levels of government and only forecasted more areas of dispute. Despite this, it seems that the much-delayed FGS-FMS conference in Garowe could possibly commence in May. The proposed conference and the results may dictate the political discourse of Somalia for the months to come.

Economically, Puntland looked to engage key international stakeholders to reignite development projects within the state. Specifically, President Deni's trip to UAE looked to restart the Bossaso port expansion deal as the project took a hiatus due to the assassination of the port manager in Feb. 2019. The Puntland leader also supported the port deal and requested community support for the project, which has had mixed public receptions. During April, Puntland also focused its efforts on improving existing economic sectors such as livestock and fisheries. However, livestock trade sector is facing a period of uncertainty as Puntland's forecast for seasonal rains remain dismal. Puntland's response to the drought crisis will be one of grave importance as current projections do not favor indecision or delays. Puntland also engaged in fisheries development were a conference was held to discuss how to improve the sector. Within this monthly report, we examine the sector's key developments over the last year and underline areas of importance for both the Federal and Puntland governments.

2. PEACE AND SECURITY

2.1 Key Developments: According to open source data, violent fatalities and casualties decreased in April 2019. The total number of violent deaths reported by local media was 13. Meanwhile, the total number of casualties reported by local media was 16. Violent deaths were attributed to local militia attacks on Somaliland (38.5%), US military airstrikes targeting ISIS in Al Miskood mountains (38.5%), unclaimed violent extremist organization (VEO) attacks on Puntland government forces (15.3%), and other criminal activities (7.6%).

2.1.1 Sexual Violence Against Women: The massive public outcry and demonstration witnessed after the rape and murder of 13-year-old Aisha Ilyas in Galkayo in Feb. 2019, and the strong reaction from the Puntland government, including the meting out of death sentences in Mar. 2019 did little to curb the continuity of this gruesome phenomena in Puntland. On Apr. 10, Hodan Ahmed Mohamed (Shanleyste), a pregnant mother of 2 children, was gang raped and killed by assailants during the afternoon in her home in Garowe. Police arrested five suspects in connection to the crime.¹ The victim spent 4 days in the hospital morgue for postmortem examinations prior to her burial in Garowe, according to the late victim's husband, Mr. Abdi Mahamed Farah, a driver and subsistence farmer in Garowe. On Apr. 12, the widower called upon the people of Puntland to unite and seek justice.²

The Puntland government continued passing court sentences that are yet to be implemented. On Apr. 11, a Puntland court sentenced Mukhtar Abdikafi Hirsi, a 36-year-old man to death in Galkayo for the alleged rape of Farrah Jama Farah, a 9-year-old IDP girl living in Galkayo. Mukhtar was sentenced to death and fined USD \$5,000 for the alleged rape of the minor in Galkacyo. The court disregarded an insanity plea entered by the defendant's advocate and upheld records from the Puntland HIV/AIDS Commission, which verified the status of the accused as HIV positive.³

Meanwhile, public concern was raised on the provision of justice for Aisha Ilyas who was gang raped and murdered. Speaking to the media on Apr. 16, the mother of young rape/murder victim requested Puntland authorities to guarantee justice for her daughter. The mother said Puntland CID investigators "visited her home and informed that that a new investigation was underway".⁴ She requested Puntland police and courts to "carry out justice" for her late daughter. On Apr. 30, the family of the late Aisha Ilyas fled Puntland, according to a video interview that the deceased's mother Zeinab Abdiwahab Adan gave to the media in Wardheer district, Dollo region, Ethiopia. The mother said she feared for the safety of her daughters in Puntland.⁵

The Puntland government and religious scholars reaffirmed the state's commitment to punish the perpetrators of the new rape and murder phenomenon. On Apr. 17, Puntland Islamic clerics held a conference in Bossaso where they jointly condemned rape crimes. Puntland Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs welcomed the scholars' appeal. Similarly, on Apr. 17, the Puntland Cabinet Committee issued a strong decree in support of the implementation and enforcement of the Puntland Sexual Offenses Act.⁶

2.1.2 Violent Extremist Organizations: Incidences of violent extremism occurred during the reporting period. Most of the attacks on security personnel in Bossaso area were not claimed by known groups operating in the area. 75% of the attacks targeted the Puntland police force in Bossaso district. On Apr. 10, five policemen were wounded in a grenade attack in Bossaso. No group claimed responsibility for the attack; however, both Al Shabaab and ISIS militant groups are active in Bossaso.⁷ On Apr. 11, an IED device hit a police vehicle escorting the new Bari Region Police Commander, Hussein Ali Mohamed, on a busy highway opposite Hotel Nakhil in Bossaso, Puntland state's commercial capital and administrative capital of Bari region. Seven police officers sustained injuries and remained hospitalized at the time of reporting. The IED hit the first vehicle in the convoy of the new Bari police commander and has not been claimed by any organization operating in Bari region⁸. However, an alleged picture of the IED incident has been circulated on <https://somalialiveaumap.com>. The source claimed that the attack had been conducted by ISIS in Somalia, targeting Somali police, on the 15th of April 2019⁹.

On Apr. 26, a Somali policeman from the Puntland Police Force was shot and killed as he travelled in a public service van in Bossaso. A suspect has been apprehended for the killing

of police officer Shuaib Osman Alula, according to police officers who spoke to local media. The incident occurred at the busy Ga'a junction in the heart of Bossaso.¹⁰ In what can be classified as a pattern, the attacks targeted regional authorities in Bari region. On Apr. 24, an IED targeted and hit a vehicle belonging to Bari regional governor Yusuf Mohamed Dhedo outside Jubba hotel, also in Bossaso. Three members of the governor's security detail were injured in the attack. No group has claimed the IED attack.¹¹

2.1.3 Counter terrorism Operations: The US military increased airstrikes in Puntland State while Kenya accused the UN of aiding and abetting terrorism in Somalia during April 2019. On Apr. 4, an official from the Kenyan Foreign Affairs ministry accused the UN of paying billions of dollars to Al Shabaab militant group. Principal Secretary Kamau Macharia claimed that the UN paid 10% of humanitarian aid for safe passage of humanitarian aid and other items across AS controlled territory in southern Somalia. Mr. Macharia referred to the UN call for the enforcement of terrorism finance laws, which he believed were "contradictory" to the UN payments to AS in Somalia. He further estimated the annual income generated by Al Shabaab from "funds disguised as funding for capacity building" in Somalia, at 12 billion USD.¹²

Meanwhile, the US targeted ISIS locations in Bari region. On Apr. 14, Puntland-based ISIS group's deputy leader Abdihakim Mohamed Ibrahim Dhoqob was killed in a U.S. military airstrike, in Hiriro town, under the Isku-shuban district in Bari region. The next day, US Africa Command released a statement saying, "As second-in-command of ISIS-Somalia, Dhoqob was responsible for daily operations of the extremist group, attack planning, and resource procurement."

Puntland Security Minister Abdisamad Mohamed Gallan announced that Dhoqob's driver was also killed in the airstrike as their vehicle drove in a remote area.¹³ Similarly, On Apr. 24, US military jets bombed a water well near Timirshe village in Iskushuban district, in Puntland State, Somalia. In a twitter statement, AFRICOM claimed to have killed 3 ISIS operatives as they staged in "Northern Somalia". The preliminary strike assessment statement was released on AFRICOM's twitter account.¹⁴ A Puntland intelligence officer who spoke to the Jerusalem Post claimed that the attack had also targeted AS operating in the targeted area¹⁵.

2.1.4 Maritime Security: Maritime security was affected by maritime crimes including illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU) activities in Puntland (Somali) waters. There were also reports of attempted vessel hijackings during the month April. On Apr. 3, fishing communities in Cape Gurdafui, Puntland, lamented the impact and prevalence of IUU fishing in waters off of Puntland coast. Speaking to local media, villagers claimed the destruction of property, fishing gear, and shootings from the pirate fishing vessels threatening waters in their districts. Community leaders who spoke to the media claimed that the impunity of the pirate fishing vessels could "reignite maritime piracy" in Somali waters.¹⁶

Meanwhile, on Apr. 23, a Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) officer was killed by his subordinate following an argument between the two in Bossaso. The late PMPF officer, Hassan Mire Ja'eyl, was killed at a PMPF station located in the outskirts of Bossaso. The suspected killer has been arrested and is in custody pending investigation and prosecution in the courts of the Puntland Armed Forces, according to sources who spoke to local media in Bossaso.¹⁷ The fishing community's forecast of potential reprisal attacks against pirate fishing vessels in Somali waters may have come to fruition. On Apr. 30, the EUNAVFOR reported a piracy attack off the coast of Somalia that started with the hijacking of a Yemeni with 23 hostages on Apr. 19. The dhow was used as a mother-ship to attack Adria - a South Korean fishing vessel - which evaded capture and reported the incident¹⁸. "ESPS Navarra

intercepted and boarded the captured dhow, apprehending five suspected pirates and releasing 23 hostages aboard,” the statement said.

2.1.5 Sub-national Conflicts: Somaliland and Puntland remained closely poised for war throughout April 2019. Local militia continued guerrilla attacks targeting Somaliland military positions in Tukaraq town, Sool region. On Apr. 7, militia loyal to Col. Faisal Falalug attacked Somaliland troops near a Tukaraq base in Sool region. The number of casualties was not confirmed officially¹⁹. Local media reported 5 soldiers were killed during the attack.²⁰

On Apr. 9, Col. Falalug said he would not stop his guerilla attacks on Somaliland “until all territory is liberated” from Somaliland troops²¹. On that day, Somaliland troops reportedly mutinied at Tukaraq garrison after local commanders “rejected” efforts to attack Col. Falalug militia.²² In a radio interview, Col. Falalug denied any links with Puntland government and claimed he led a “local militia against Somaliland” in Sool region²³. In Sanaag region, the tensions between Puntland and Somaliland temporarily decelerated following customary intervention from local community leaders. On Apr. 2, a meeting of Warsangeli clan elders and leaders in Erigavo, Sanaag region, announced that the clan had agreed for Somaliland to “withdraw its forces” from the [Sanaag] region. Somaliland troops arrived at Yubbe town, eastern Sanaag, on Mar. 11, sparking military tensions to date in the region.

2.1.6 Clan Conflicts: No new clan conflicts were reported in Puntland during this reporting period. Throughout April, traditional elders and the Puntland government continued to mediate an inter clan conflict that claimed 5 lives and a number of casualties in Galkayo, in March. On Apr. 18, Puntland traditional elders resolved a conflict over land between two armed clan-based militias in Galkayo. The two militia groups battled over land dispute on Mar. 13, whereby 5 persons were killed. The conflict resolution agreement requires that both parties to the conflict to fully respect and abide by the traditional elders’ decision.

2.1.7 Security Sector Governance: The new 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 Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) governance of national security in April 2019. On Mar. 31, President Deni conducted security meetings with Bari region security committee members. Puntland Minister for Security, and Commanders of the Puntland Police Force attended the meeting. Side meetings engaged traditional elders discussing avenues for strengthening collaboration with the recently elected Puntland administration and the security of Bossaso district. Puntland Security Minister Abdisamad Gallan told press that a key outcome of the security committees meeting with the President was a security plan for addressing threats in the region as well as in Bossaso district.²⁴

On the national level, on Apr. 19, Puntland State joined other Federal Member States to boycott the National Security Council meeting called for by the FGS in Mogadishu. Puntland did not expressly state why the government boycotted the National Security Council meeting, however, President Deni voiced his dissatisfaction with the Somali national security sector reforms, and highlighting FGS policy failures in said reforms, and in security of Mogadishu.²⁵

Puntland government advocated for security sector support from donor countries, including Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, the UAE and others. On Apr. 23, the President of Puntland appealed for support to address security challenges in Puntland from the government of Saudi Arabia. The request was among many presented to the government of Saudi Arabia through the kingdom’s embassy in Nairobi. Ambassador Dr. Mohammed Khayat, who

hosted President Said Abdullahi Deni at the Saudi Embassy in Nairobi, commended Puntland for the progress and development achieved and pledged that Saudi Arabia would make investments in Puntland as soon as possible.²⁶ Meanwhile, the government issued new control directives on arms trade in Puntland. On Apr. 4, Puntland banned the trading of weapons within the jurisdiction of the federal member state. The directive was issued by the Puntland Ministry of Security and circulated through local media.²⁷

2.2 Security Forecast

- 2.2.1 **Sexual Violence Against Women:** The recent phenomena in Puntland has been widely condemned by Puntland authorities and civil society groups. The Puntland government has promised justice for the victims of these criminal acts. Civil society groups have pressed authorities for transparent updates on the investigation of Aisha's rape and murder. Puntland state's handling of justice with regards to these sexual violence cases will be closely observed. It is likely that the Puntland government will try to expedite this case as a response to public pressure.
- 2.2.2 **Violent Extremist Organizations:** In light of the rapid reforms by Puntland authorities, with respect to security operations in Bari region, violent extremist operations within Bari region did wane in the month April. The extremist groups maintain high mobility in the mountain bases, but April's attacks which have not been claimed by extremist groups but bear their hallmarks, have not had the intended outcomes. Puntland security institutions capacity to thwart urban attacks before they arise may determine whether extremist groups focus in Bossaso, over the next months.
- 2.2.3 **Maritime Security:** If the current sentiment reported from coastal communities continues to grow, it may have serious implications to maritime security within Somalia's seas. The Puntland government's capacity to effectively respond to IUUF cases will likely not develop over the very near-term. Therefore, maritime security measures may rely on the government's commitment to strengthening its maritime capacities and its ability to effectively communicate this strategy to coastal communities.
- 2.2.4 **Sub-national Conflicts:** The tensions in Sanaag between Somaliland and Puntland may have been subdued for the time being, by the active interjection of traditional elders in Sanaag. However, the forecast for conflict is dependent on the influence of Sanaag traditional elders intervention bears on the Somaliland government, and secondly on Puntland state's willingness to defend its claimed territory in the event of Somaliland's rejection of peace overtures. It is unlikely that fully fledged war between the two sides will occur in May.
- 2.2.5 **Security Sector Governance:** The Puntland administration's commitment to undertake security sector reforms has been mainly focused in Bossaso. The administration has admitted to the need for enhanced security governance throughout Puntland, and government officials have promised to reform the security sector. President Deni has also lobbied for international support with regards to security. However, it remains to be seen if Puntland prioritizes developing a comprehensive security strategy within the framework of the broader national security strategies for Somalia, and ensures that its security interests, unique needs and priorities are incorporated into any negotiations or reform processes. It is entirely possible that the recent dispute over the National Security Council meeting gives hint to the Puntland administration's discontent with the Federal Government's handling of security governance. Hence, Puntland's ability to define the security governance necessary for the state will be crucial. It is likely Puntland will continue to focus on security reforms in Bossaso during the course of next month.

3. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

3.1 First Domestic Trip Focused on Development Initiatives

3.1.1 **Key Developments:** On Mar. 27, Puntland President Said Deni commenced his first domestic tour since January 8 election day, leaving the state capital Garowe and traveling 520km north by road to Bossaso. The President's first trip inside Puntland, aimed at shoring up domestic support for the new government, focused on key public events, project launches, and meetings with regional and police officials, community elders, and business leaders.

There were a number of project launch ceremonies along the road. The president laid the groundbreaking stone at a new sports stadium in Qardo, provincial capital of Karkaar region.²⁸ On Mar. 30, President Deni laid the groundbreaking stone at El Dahir-Erigavo Road, connecting Bari and Sanaag regions.²⁹ The road construction project, which began under the term of former Puntland President Abdiweli Gaas, had entered the second phase of construction, according to project engineers. Stopping over in Armo, 90km south of Bossaso, President Deni toured the Armo National Police Academy and pledged more government support for security forces "protecting the State, day and night".³⁰ The Puntland leader also called for more police training to be conducted at Armo police facility, operational since 2005.

3.1.2 **Analysis:** President Deni was focused on active engagement with government officials and police commanders, with a particular focus on improving peace and rule of law, especially in Bossaso. The community meetings between the president and local elders was focused on strengthening the bond and working relationship between the two sides, which the government hopes contributes to overall peace building efforts. It was the new leader's first visit as president of Puntland; during the election campaign, President Deni had pledged to improve the security situation in Bossaso and increase the port city's commercial and investment activities.

The government's efforts to subdue local tensions and actively engage community leaders was a commendable step to build the government's local credibility. Moreover, the administration has focused on regional-level institutional reforms, especially the Ministries of Security, Finance and Fisheries. This combined approach at the presidential and ministerial-levels significantly contributes to public perceptions and outlook for the new administration's governing mandate in Bari region. However, the Puntland government has not yet presented a comprehensive policy or strategy for implementing crucial reforms in key sectors, including finance, security, trade, and local government. However, key sectoral reforms are expected to be implemented incrementally over time, pending the completion of a comprehensive policy and an effective implementation strategy.

Secondly, the President's visit coincided with launch events for a number of projects, including El Dahir-Erigavo Road project. The project is a Puntland government initiative which commenced with funding from government coffers and allocated funds collected from local sources, including public institutions, companies, and educational institutions. For President Deni, the project— among others, including Bossaso port expansion project — retains a political value, as the new president is seen to support ongoing development initiatives.

It is noteworthy to highlight that the presidential delegation's first domestic trip was limited to the tarmac highway. For some years, local media and public figures have criticized the

limited presence of government services in rural and coastal areas, and local sentiments of neglect by former Puntland administrations is commonplace in a number of rural and coastal districts across Puntland. During election campaigns, many presidential contenders promised increased government services in rural and coastal areas. It remains to be seen whether the new leadership of Puntland is committed to approve more visitations, expanding government presence, and extending increased public services to regions beyond the main highway.

3.1.3 Forecast: In Somalia, it is extremely common for projects to be launched at highly publicized events; however, in the following months, in many cases, the projects do not materialize and there is seldom any report or government commissioned studies that provide the public an update on the progress of these projects. That said, the new government has momentous tasks ahead and it remains to be seen what types of regulatory institutional mechanisms the government will build to analyze, supervise, report and transparently disseminate public information regarding the status of development projects in the state.

The government has shown a commitment to continue the projects inherited from previous administrations, largely continuing a political tradition in Puntland. Moreover, the government has shown commitment to complete ongoing projects and attract new investment. This clear commitment is anticipated to continue for the coming months; however, it will become clearer over the next months if the government plans to implement a comprehensive strategy for institutional reform. The government is more likely to succeed with investment initiatives and project implementation if government institutions develop the necessary policies, procedures and strategies founded on the administration's reform commitments.

3.2 Puntland Relations with Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)

3.2.1 Key Developments: With the planned Garowe Conference delayed, political tensions were rising throughout the month of April 2019. The political tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) had been simmering for some time, and threatened to come to the surface, in part due to further delays of the planned Conference.

The political fallout commenced after FMS leaders did not agree with the FGS invite for a National Security Meeting in Mogadishu. When the meeting did not materialize, political tensions expectedly increased between the FGS and FMS. In the following days, the political atmosphere was ripe with speculation. Then tensions took a different turn the Federal Education Minister, Abdullahi Godah Barre, and Puntland Education Minister Abdullahi Mohamed Hassan, engaged in a public spat over examinations.

On Apr. 20, Minister Hassan criticized his counterpart, Minister Godah, for “threatening” Puntland students and parents.³¹ The Federal Education Minister had earlier criticized Puntland for not partaking in “national examinations”; in this rebuttal, the Puntland Education Minister stated there were no “unified national examinations” in Somalia and demanded Minister Godah apologize to Puntland students and parents. Minister Hassan noted that Puntland state has established its own educational system for over 20 years and has its own state education certificate recognized by universities in several countries, including Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Malaysia and Turkey, among others.³²

Puntland senators in the Federal Parliament's Upper House also questioned Minister Godah about the national examinations controversy; after the hearing, Minister Godah

retracted his previous statement and praised the commitment of Puntland students and parents.³³ The controversy did not end there. Puntland's Minister of Energy, Mining and Water, Ahmed Mohamed Yusuf 'Taran', issued a short press statement on Apr. 14, categorically rejecting that Puntland state was represented at the Federal Government's review process for the Somali Petroleum Law (2008), which was underway in neighboring Djibouti.³⁴ Minister Taran's public statement declared that "the Ministry of Energy, Mining and Water Resources was the sole representative of Puntland" in all matters relating to management of natural resources.³⁵ The Minister's statement came only three days before Somali federal ministers and parliamentarians met in Djibouti to discuss and review the Somali Petroleum Law of 2008.

On Apr. 27, Upper House senators representing Puntland state supported President Deni and his efforts to host a conference on federal-state relations, after a meeting with the Puntland leader at State House in Garowe.³⁶ On Apr. 28, President Deni strongly criticized the FGS, telling a press conference in Garowe that the FGS "violated the federal constitution" and was "mismanaging foreign aid" in Somalia.³⁷

On Apr. 7, and despite the rising political tensions, a federal parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker Mahad Awad arrived in Garowe to partake in federal and state level parliamentary meeting. It was the fifth such meeting of federal and state parliaments in Somalia in recent years.³⁸

3.2.2 Analysis: Relations between FGS and Puntland have been sour for some time. The disputes date back since the formation of the Transitional National Government in 2000, in neighboring Djibouti. Disagreements over power and resource-sharing sit at the heart of the disparaging relationship between today's FGS and Puntland. The historical misunderstandings form part of the context, while the political maneuverings of the federal and state leaders of a particular time in leadership shape policy in light of existing political realities. This allows for fluid politics that transverse the two ends of the spectrum, and in between, over the course of time in terms of level of cooperation and engagement between the two levels of government.

The spat between the FGS Education Minister and Puntland Education Minister is part of a wider disagreement over the type of federalism and the direction of Somalia. This wider dispute came to surface when President Deni openly accused the FGS of "violating the Provisional [Federal] Constitution"; the 2012 constitution forms the legal foundation for today's federal institutions, and hence, the legality for the approval of African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

The state president highlighted specific constitutional clauses to illustrate his point, giving focus to provisions that protect state autonomy and limit the extended powers of the FGS. He specifically accused the FGS of foreign aid mismanagement, a loud message to international donors. State governments have long pursued pseudo-bilateral relations with foreign embassies and international organizations, with the aim of increased development assistance managed at the state-level. In contrast, the FGS leadership has a fundamentally differing reading and interpretation of the constitution, viewing constitutional principles that extend vast powers to the center (FGS) and limit the power of state governments. This dichotomy sits at the heart of an entrenched and evolving political debate.

Throughout the month of April, the silence of FGS in light of major allegations from Puntland government and Upper House senators was noteworthy. It was unclear whether the FGS lack of response was characterized by a need not to engage in public disputes with FMS, silent acceptance of Puntland's allegations, or general apathy to these developments. However, the silence of FGS gave a broad platform for Puntland state to

present its case to Somalia and the international community. This platform gave Puntland an unprecedented opportunity to engage the international community, and President Deni benefited from this opening political space during his trip to Nairobi.

3.2.3 Forecast: In the coming months, relations between Puntland and the FGS are projected on the current path of disputes over power and resource-sharing, constitutional review process, foreign aid, and matters related to oil and mining sectors. The upcoming Garowe Conference, if it materializes, is expected to bring to the forefront improving federal-state cooperation in all areas of governance. However, if the anticipated conference is not held or fails in its stated objectives, then federal-state relations are projected to further polarize and entrenched disputes to continue in the near-term, adversely affecting many sectors. If the federal and state leaders prioritize balanced political negotiations, commencing with an agreed constitutional review framework founded on cooperation and consensus politics, then there is opportunity for increased cooperation in many areas, including security, federalization, foreign aid, and economic development. But given the current political climate, tensions and precedence in Somalia, this scenario is unlikely to develop in the coming months.

3.3 Puntland State's International Engagement

3.3.1 Key Developments: During the reporting period, Puntland state actively engaged with various international partners and actors in a bid to secure closer development cooperation. On Apr. 1, President Deni welcomed US Ambassador to Somalia Donald Yamamoto at State House in Bossaso, whereby discussions reportedly centered around security, drought relief and US aid.³⁹ On Apr. 7, President Deni welcomed German Ambassador to Somalia Annet Gunther and her delegation at Puntland State House in Garowe. The meeting discussions focused on German aid to Puntland, the Garowe Hospital expansion project which is funded by Germany, and restarting the Garowe-Galkayo road rehabilitation project, which Germany suspended in late 2018 over corruption allegations.⁴⁰

Moreover, President Deni embarked on his first overseas trip on Apr. 8, commencing with a visit to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Meetings with Emirati government officials and business leaders focused on increased cooperation in the areas of trade, regional security, civil aviation, and development support. President Deni's delegation also met with management of P & O Ports and DP World, including a meeting on Apr. 15 with DP World head Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem in Dubai. The two officials discussed Bossaso port construction project, according to a government statement.⁴¹

After arriving in Nairobi, President Deni held meetings with foreign ambassadors between Apr. 23 – 25, including ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and India. According to a Puntland press release, President Deni's meeting with Saudi Ambassador Mohamed Khayat focused on improving security ties and economic cooperation between Puntland and Saudi Kingdom.⁴² Indian Ambassador Rahul Chhabra's meeting with President Deni focused on trade and maritime security ties, with Ambassador Chhabra commending Puntland government on its anti-piracy efforts.⁴³

On Apr. 26, having returned to Puntland, President Deni met in Garowe with UK Ambassador Ben Fender to Somalia and Norway Ambassador to Somalia Elin Bergithe Rognlie.⁴⁴ The meetings focused on security developments, facilitating humanitarian aid and drought relief efforts, judicial reforms, democratization process, development support and social sector support, according to presidential statement.

On Apr. 29, the Puntland leader met with Egyptian Ambassador Nasar at State House in Garowe. A government press statement indicated that the Ambassador came to Garowe on a three-day visit to Puntland, aiming to assess first-hand the local situation and to discuss with relevant government authorities about Egyptian cooperation with Puntland in the security, trade and social sectors.⁴⁵

3.3.2 **Analysis:** Puntland state's renewed international engagement drive is much needed and comes at an appropriate time. Puntland held its fifth election, bringing in a new state parliament comprised of 74% new and younger legislators, and electing a new president and vice president in Jan. 2019.⁴⁶ During the last year of the former administration under President Gaas, local sources reported that aid and development agencies decreased their activities and projects in Puntland, citing corruption allegations and security considerations in parts of the state.

President Deni's trip to UAE was in pursuit of Puntland's strategic interests, especially with regard to trade and investment opportunities including cooperation in the livestock export and aviation sectors, increased cooperation and maritime security (UAE funded Puntland Maritime Police Force – PMPF), and provision of development assistance. In Nairobi, home to many foreign missions and international organizations operating in Somalia, the president actively lobbied a number of international actors. The initial success of his lobbying efforts became evident when the Egyptian ambassador, whom Deni met in Nairobi, arrived in Garowe on an official visit. It was also an opportunity for Puntland government to present its situation, needs and priorities to a number of foreign missions and international organizations.

The foreign ambassadors' meetings with President Deni in Bossaso and Garowe, underscored and contributed Puntland state's rising profile. This reengagement drive succeeded in attracting attention to Puntland state, where credible elections recently concluded. Puntland's most recent democratic achievements certainly helped to augment its reception by the international community. This continuity of engagement shall be driven by two factors, namely the commitment of Puntland government to increase cooperation with international partners and international organizations seeking further opportunities in Puntland, and others seeking leverage to offset their relations with the FGS in Mogadishu. Whatever the case, the increased attention to Puntland by international actors, and the government's continuity to engagement and responsive governance, shall form the guiding pillars of how the parties can mutually benefit from increased engagement. This development, however, risks further complicating the tri-partite relations between the FGS, Puntland and the international community.

3.3.3 **Forecast:** Puntland state's international engagement drive is expected to continue in the upcoming months, and may result in increased communication and cooperation with international partners in a range of sectors, including security, federalization, aid and development assistance. The international actors' reengagement with Puntland state, however, shall depend on working mechanisms and systems in place to guide broader reengagement activities.

3.4 Puntland Institutional Reforms

3.4.1 **Key Developments:** On Mar. 31, Puntland Parliament during its 43rd Ordinary Session approved the government's \$54million budget for the remaining eight-month period of 2019.⁴⁷ The state budget was not inclusive of support Puntland receives from other sources, through its governmental institutions, ongoing investment projects or development programs, according to the Ministry.

In addition, the Ministry of Finance took anti-corruption actions against some government officials, backing the government's anti-corruption campaign platform, with arrests of officials accused of corruption. On Apr. 17, Puntland Finance Minister Hassan Shire Abgal announced that the Ministry of Finance had "arrested" two Ministry officials in Armo and Qandala districts over "corruption allegations", including "mismanagement of \$52,000", according to Ministry statement. On April 22, former Puntland Ministry of Finance official Awale Mohamud Sheikh was convicted on corruption charges and sentenced to four years in prison. The 26-year-old Mr. Sheikh was accused of "forgery documents" and was fined \$2,751 USD. He was the finance director in Armo, a district in Bari region. Bari Regional Court handed down the verdict.⁴⁸

On Apr. 21, Puntland Vice President and then Acting President Ahmed Elmi Osman 'Karash' opened the new government's Institutional Reform Conference hosted by the Puntland Ministry of Labor, Youth and Sports.⁴⁹ Vice President Karash encouraged conference participants – mainly Government ministers and Director-Generals – to work closely to formulate new policies for institutional reforms.

3.4.2 Analysis: Puntland Finance Ministry's anti-corruption drive is timely and commendable, especially in efforts to revive the state government's waning credibility. It is not the first time that the Puntland Finance Ministry undertook similar anti-corruption measures to root out officials suspected of engaging in corrupt practices. However, it is vital that the Finance Ministry carefully manages its anti-corruption drive, in light of lacking policies and weak judicial capacities in Puntland. In addition, it is vitally important the anti-corruption drive is underpinned by enacted laws and policies, and that public officials are sufficiently trained and informed of the laws. Institution-building and public relations campaign should precede the enactment of major anti-corruption drives. Due to these major gaps, it is entirely plausible that the Ministry is accused of "selective justice", as some communities might perceive the court cases as targeting a particular sub-clan or community, potentially stirring existing clan sentiment undertones and posing further risks to the Ministry's institutional credibility. To mitigate such risks, the onus is on the Ministry to design and implement transparent policies that circumvent such possibilities.

3.4.3 Forecast: Puntland state's institutional reforms form an important and continuous pillar of governance. All government organs are undergoing institutional reforms and it remains vital that institutional reforms are guided by policy development and training. In this example, the Finance Ministry did not provide a cohesive anti-corruption policy and action plan based on evidence-based research and assessment, to lead towards informed policy development. This was expected to occur prior to taking legal actions and enforcing anti-corruption laws.

The publicized court cases' impact on corruption will be lackluster, unless the Ministry takes concerted efforts to develop policies, laws and strategies with a focus on long-term impact in reforming the government's financial system. To achieve its stated goals of reform and anti-corruption, the Ministry's first push should be a focus on completing and strengthening the Public Finance Management (PFM) system, which sets the standard practices of financial institutions and establishes the regulatory framework for managing public funds. In addition, the Ministry should focus on a public relations campaign with a sustained message of improving governmental accountability and building institutional integrity. Without these two key pillars, the state and the Ministry's anti-corruption efforts shall be hampered by a lack of long-term vision, lacking policy and legal framework, and institutional weaknesses inherited from former administrations.

4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

4.1 Driving Economic Policy

4.1.1 Key Developments: On Apr. 8, Puntland President Said Deni commenced his first overseas visit, leading a ministerial delegation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The trip's main purpose was to discuss economic trade, with discussions centered around the lifting of UAE's livestock ban, launching commercial flights between Dubai and Puntland, and implementation of the P&O Ports concession to expand Bossaso Port.⁵⁰ President Deni met with DP World head Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem on April 15 in Dubai, where discussions focused on Bossaso port expansion project, according to a government statement.⁵¹ A week prior to his UAE visit, President Deni spoke at a university graduation in Bossaso and said his administration "will honor" P&O Ports (DP World subsidiary firm) agreement.⁵² He also stated that the assassination of Paul Formosa, former Bossaso port manager for P&O Ports, "was a major blow to Puntland, the killing halted many [economic] projects and investment opportunities that were coming to Puntland".⁵³

The Puntland President specifically mentioned that an Italian sponsored water project for Bossaso, which was planned to commence this year, was delayed because of the killing.⁵⁴ Before his departure to UAE, President Deni stated that the restarting of the P&O Ports deal was one of the topics that would be discussed. According to a press release, DP World pledged to fast track the construction and expansion of Bossaso port.⁵⁵ Another international actor has also pledged to support the Bossaso port deal; speaking at a joint press conference with President Deni in Garowe on April 27, British Ambassador to Somalia Ben Fender stated: "We [UK] are looking to support the further development of Bossaso Port".⁵⁶

4.1.2 Analysis: The port development agreement signed in Apr. 2017, between former Puntland President Abdiweli Ali Gaas and P & O Ports, has been shrouded in controversy since its inception. Shortly after the agreement was inked and implementation was slated to begin, citizens took to the streets to protest against the port deal. More recently, progress on the Bossaso port expansion stalled after the assassination of Paul Formosa in Feb. 2019. The recent assassination in Bossaso during President Deni's first months in office reinvigorated public undertones of dissatisfaction towards the deal. But the former administration cannot be accredited alone for creating this sentiment. It can be partly credited to 2019 presidential candidates, who used the deal as a hot button issue, and as an example of what not to do when signing long-term economic deals. During his campaign, President Deni pledged that, if elected, his administration would review the Bossaso port expansion agreement.⁵⁷

There was no formal process initiated for the review of the agreement and it is unclear how the agreement was reviewed; however, legal analysts believe that the President had little maneuverability to scrap or amend the agreement, bearing in mind that it was approved by both executive and legislative branches of government. President Deni alluded to this reality in his Bossaso speech, saying: "If the Government legally permits economic development by an actor, the public needs to welcome [the actor]". The hot button issue President Deni campaigned on will be a key test for his administration; he will have to lobby and provide assurances to the public, and perhaps more specifically business owners in Bossaso, to support the deal. A key component of gaining support is for the government to provide more clarification about the scope of the port expansion project, to introduce a work plan and to influence the many conflicting narratives that exist. Gaining public support will essentially require full transparency, by presenting to the Puntland public access to more information.

4.1.3 Forecast: The Puntland government has officially stated that the Bossaso port deal will continue and the current forecast will depend on security in Bossaso. Thus, the progress of the administration's commitment to improving security in Bossaso will need to be closely monitored. Another key area will be the Puntland administration's approach to gaining popular support for the Bossaso Port agreement. What steps will be taken by the current administration to garner public support and how it is conducted, may have serious implications on the future implementation of the port expansion project.

4.2 Drought Response in Puntland

4.2.1 Key Developments: On Apr. 15, a small number of districts in Puntland were showered by *Gu'* seasonal rains, especially parts of Qardo (Karkar region) and Burtinle districts (Nugal region).⁵⁸ The rainfall was minimal according to local sources. On April 11, the Puntland government declared a rain prayer event and subsequently closed all public institutions. The rain prayer was attended by Vice President Ahmed Emi Osman 'Karash' and various prominent figures.⁵⁹ However, experts warn that the dangerously low levels of rain can create a humanitarian crisis.

The month of April's rainfall has been the least on record for more than three decades. On April 17, IGAD warned: "*Analyses show that rainfall levels through mid-April will likely be amongst the driest on record (since 1981)...*"⁶⁰

The current situation is very dire in northern and central Somalia, where the food security situation has worsened. Experts suggest that some 4.9 million Somalis are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, and of that, 1.5 million suffer from acute malnutrition.⁶¹ Vice President Karash nominated a technical sub-committee for the drought and emergency response. The committee comprised of government officials from various public institutions tasked with technical aspects of Puntland's drought response.⁶² The sub-committee will operate under the larger Puntland Drought Committee, chaired by the Puntland Vice President. Recent reports from livestock owners across Puntland signal a worsening situation across the state.⁶³ The upcoming forecasts also do not inspire much hope, as there were reports of a continuation of dry conditions in April.

4.2.2 Analysis: As the current situation worsens, the government's approach and plans for drought relief remains ambiguous and lacks a clear public policy and action plan towards providing drought relief to impacted communities. Last month, the government announced dispatching 200 water trucks to severely affected areas; however, it is not public knowledge as to how these trucks were disseminated and what areas the 200 trucks reached. The previously positive seasonal rain forecast (March to May) have largely failed, and a continuation in lack of rains is forecasted for much of April.⁶⁴ Taking into account the forecasts and the increasingly worsening situation, the Puntland government's ability to act swiftly and accordingly will be tested. If the government relies too heavily on its international partners to provide relief, this will surely result in more risk for both property and human life.

Only 19.4% of the Somalia Humanitarian Response for 2019 has been funded, which totals to upwards of 200 million US dollars.⁶⁵ A 2018 report put the estimates of damages and losses of the drought at a combined staggering \$3.25 billion.⁶⁶ This is why homegrown solutions that are initiated early and that are planned effectively can alleviate damages to livelihoods and properties. President Deni in a speech in Nairobi stated that his administration had created financial reserve, which the government intends on using for emergency situations. Whether or not the proceeds of this fund will be directed to the current drought is still unclear.

But if the administration decides to utilize the fund for purposes of alleviating drought symptoms, they will need to clearly identify how to develop cost effective programs that can improve the lives of those affected by the drought. Quick impact research should be undertaken to identify current needs. The distribution of imported food rations and water trucks alone will not suffice. The maintenance of the economic backbone will require long-term policies that attempt to save livestock and their owners by creating government subsidized fattening farms. If Puntland wants to restore the livestock trade with UAE and ensure its economic powerhouse survives, it will need to develop long term sustainable programs to preserve the livestock sector.

4.2.3 Forecast: During the last report (PSR, March 2019), the need for a research based approach to the drought relief situation in Puntland was suggested. However, if such action was not undertaken, it is highly unlikely it will be initiated next month (May, which coincides with Islamic fasting month of Ramadan). The Puntland government may have missed its mark to clearly identify a plan to combat the imminent effects of drought. In the meantime, it seems the government will reach out to international donors, business community, and Somali Diaspora for drought relief. It is unclear what the newly appointed technical committee is tasked with, but it may be possible that they will lead coordinated efforts to reach drought-affected communities across Puntland.

4.3 Fisheries Sector Development

4.3.1 Key Developments: On Apr. 13, Puntland Ministry of Ports and Maritime Transport commenced dismantling the old fish market (Necfish) in Bossaso, which Puntland government decreed on March 5 to be shut down. Puntland Deputy Ports Minister Yasin Artan and Bossaso Mayor Abdisalam Bashir witnessed as construction crews dismantled the old fish market and nearby public buildings.⁶⁷ Deputy Minister Artan reiterated that the government decided to shut down the old fish market for “security reasons and expansion of Bossaso port”.

On the Apr. 29, the Federal Ministry of Fisheries and the Puntland Ministry of Fisheries along with Secure Fisheries held the 2019 Somalia Fisheries Forum. According to Secure Fisheries, a program implemented by One Earth Foundation, “the forum builds off the success and excitement generated by the 2017 Somalia Fisheries Forum, which brought together attendees from across the Somali region and the international community”.⁶⁸ The theme of this year’s convention was “Building a Roadmap for Small-Scale Somali Fisheries”.⁶⁹ The event was held for three days and included a trade show event where businesses involved in the fishery sector showcased their products and services. The following two days discussed Somalia’s fisheries in three thematic tracks, which were: increasing knowledge and skills; expanding sector capacity; and increasing management capacity.⁷⁰

In Feb. 2018, Federal Member State leaders, and the Federal Government President and Prime Minister under the moniker the National Security Council (NSC), signed an Interim Agreement on Resource Sharing which solely focused on sharing of fisheries resources.⁷¹ Within the nine article agreement, some of the most vital issues the NSC agreed on were licensing of the Exclusive Economic Zone, the creation of Somali Fisheries Authority and the financial management of marine resources. The agreement, however, postponed outlining the specifics of how marine resources would be allocated among the FGS and FMS to a later date. Article 5 titled “Article of Division and Expenditure Purposes of Revenue” states:

“The division and expenditure purposes of revenue that is derived from fishing will be decided upon by committee comprised of the President of the FGS, Prime Minister of the FGS, and Federal Member State Presidents and the Governor of Banadir, with special consideration given to issues of security and the reconstruction of the country.”

This agreement, inked Feb. 10, 2018, paved the way to another major fisheries development that saw the Federal Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources sign an MoU with the Chinese Offshore Fishing Association (COFA). Under this agreement, “31 Chinese tuna longline vessels were issued with a license to fish for tuna and tuna-like species in the EEZ”.⁷² Somalia would earn a little over \$1 million in revenue from this deal, according to the agreement.⁷³

This deal did not garner overwhelming support and public criticism was mainly directed to the Federal Government’s ability to effectively provide adequate oversight. When the BBC asked Federal Fisheries Minister Abdullahi Bidhan Warsame how the government would provide oversight, the Minister acknowledged existing weak capacities but stipulated that the agreement allowed for the government to call fleets to Bossaso and Mogadishu, for inspection.⁷⁴ According to the Federal Fisheries Ministry’s website, the revenue generated from the licenses has been deposited in an account in the Central Bank and is “expected to be reinvested into developing the domestic fishing sector”.

Many critics of the deal cite the government’s lacking capacity to monitor vessels, the risks of overfishing and the depletion of marine resources due to the poor ability of Federal Government to provide oversight, as reasons to oppose it. The 2016 Amendment to the Somali Fisheries Law puts the onus on the Ministry to protect coastal resources and their aquatic ecosystems.⁷⁵ The Fisheries Ministry counterclaim to critics of the deal is that there are environmental protection measures that are stipulated in the agreement. The Ministry’s position is that the environmental effects of bycatch and overfishing will be mitigated by the Conservation and Management Measures of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which require the vessels to record and report all their catch to Somali authorities.⁷⁶ According to the Federal Ministry of Fisheries, under the Commission’s framework, no quotas have been imposed within the Conservation and Management Measures last updated in October 2018.⁷⁷ However, guidelines by the IOTC Scientific Committee recommend that catch should not exceed the Maximum Sustainable Yield levels, which have been estimated at 300,000 tons for yellowfin tuna and at 110,000 tons for Bigeye tuna.⁷⁸

4.3.2 Analysis: Since the collapse of Somali central government in 1991, Somalia’s waters have experienced a tumultuous period. During this period, there have been several disasters that have impacted Somali waters, such as illegal fishing which has depleted the country’s marine resources; toxic waste dumping; the 2004 tsunami that destroyed livelihoods and coastal ecosystems; the explosion of piracy in 2007; and the sustained lack of access to international markets for Somali fisheries products. All of these issues, which have impacted the lives of Somalis both coastal and inland, have not been properly assessed. Despite all of these issues, the artisanal fishing industry in Somalia still employs huge numbers of people in coastal communities. Over the past few years, there has been a renewed focus from federal and state-level governments on the fishing industry. However, this focus has been on capitalization of the fisheries industry from a government perspective.

The deal with the Chinese fishing cooperative did not raise eyebrows internationally and was supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization.⁷⁹ In a press release on January 7, FAO lauded the deal and claimed that it was providing long term support towards an agreement “on tuna fishing revenue”.⁸⁰ It seems that other international organizations also

supported the deal, as FAO states in its press release, including agencies like the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and World Bank were among long term supporters of tuna fishing agreements via “technical assistance and funding”.⁸¹ The deal’s skepticism was mainly from a domestic standpoint due to a 30-year precedence of weak government capacity in protecting marine resources. Thus, if the federal and state governments want to quell skepticism, they will need to not only enhance transparency of the agreement but also of its operations. But more importantly, the governments will also need to enhance and strengthen their own capacities to effectively protect marine resources.

This is an area that should have garnered more attention and international support; however, the majority of support was directed to technical areas rather than the more practical. In recent years, more international support has been directed to the creation or funding of institutions, such as the Puntland Maritime Police Force and the Somali Navy. However, despite their impressive mandates, these institutions have not had a substantial impact on the protection of Somali waters. Many coastal fishing communities have vocalized this sentiment.⁸² The federal and state governments and their international partners will need to do more for local artisanal fisheries communities who need more training and equipment, access to competitive international markets, improved cold chain storage capacities, and enhanced coastal protection capacities in Somali waters. These are major feats for the current governments, but are achievable goals depending on if the public sector can direct increased support to improve the livelihoods of communities and workers in the Somali fisheries sector.

4.3.3 Forecast: It seems that the deal with the Chinese fishing cooperative is another testament in the growing interest in Somalia’s blue economy. The recent Somali Fisheries Forum comes on the heels of that deal and also highlights a more comprehensive approach for the fisheries industry from the states and federal government, along with international partners. The forecast for the fishing industry looks promising for Somalia as a whole, if a number of factors are prioritized.

Given the current shaky relationship between FGS and FMS, priority should be given to the finalization and agreement of Article 5 of the resource sharing agreement, which postpones how resources will be divided to a later time. This ambiguous article can manifest itself as an point of contention, if the two levels of government do not come to a comprehensive and transparent agreement on how resources will be shared and managed. The FGS and FMS will also be wise to adopt policies that prioritize enhancing the productivity of artisanal fishing. These policy questions were briefly discussed during the Somali Fisheries Forum, but key questions remain, such as how to build export capacity and the overall expansion of the underperforming sector, which will require more than just two-day Forums. This will indeed require government commitment, resolve and planning to enact and enforce informed and inclusive policies that not only build the sector broadly but also ensure its long-term marine protections and sustainable development.

***New Access International (NAI Somalia)**, founded in 2012, is a development agency based in Somalia. NAI Somalia specializes in research, organization and policy development, and advocacy programs, and 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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