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SOMALIA'S REMARKABLE YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA IN SOMALIA



 **SONNA**
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Somalia's Remarkable Year of Transformation – 2023
The Dawn of a New Era in Somalia

2023 will be remembered as a watershed year for Somalia, a year marked by unprecedented progress and positive transformation. The nation's journey, once riddled with challenges, has shifted towards a path of stability and growth, heralding a new era in its history.

Joining the East African Community: A Strategic Leap Forward

The anticipated admission of Somalia into the East African Community (EAC) is more than just a diplomatic achievement; it's a testament to Somalia's commitment to regional integration and cooperation. This move, expected to be formalized at the November summit, symbolizes a turning point for Somalia, aligning it with regional economies and expanding its market access to over 300 million people.

The anticipated admission of Somalia into the East African Community (EAC) represents a significant milestone not only for Somalia but also for the EAC. As Somalia is expected to be officially integrated into the EAC at the upcoming November summit, it's important to understand the implications of this strategic move.

Joining the EAC is a clear indication of Somalia's commitment to regional integration, which is crucial for the stability and economic growth of the region. This integration allows for the expansion of market access, potentially benefiting Somalia's economy by opening trade routes to a combined market of over 300 million people across the EAC member states.

For Somalia, a country that has faced numerous challenges over the past decades, including civil war and political instability, this is a significant leap forward. It not only marks a step towards political stabilization but also economic revival. By aligning with the EAC's frameworks and policies, Somalia is positioning itself to take advantage of shared resources, knowledge, and trade opportunities.

Furthermore, Somalia's admission into the EAC could act as a catalyst for more robust economic policies, attracting foreign investment, and improving infrastructure. It will also pave the way for the country to play a more prominent role in regional affairs, contributing to peace and security initiatives that are often coordinated by the EAC.

The potential increase in trade and investment opportunities is expected to boost industries such as agriculture, fisheries, and livestock, which are mainstays of the Somali economy. The integration into the EAC could also lead to improved standards of living for the Somali people as the economy grows and stabilizes.

However, the integration process is not without its challenges. Somalia will need to align its laws, policies, and regulations with those of the EAC to enable the free movement of goods,

labor, and capital. There will be a need for significant reforms within Somalia to meet the standards set by the EAC, which could require substantial time and effort.

In conclusion, Somalia's anticipated entry into the East African Community is a testament to its resilience and forward-looking stance. While there are hurdles to overcome, the strategic benefits of increased market access, economic growth, and regional cooperation hold the promise of a brighter future for Somalia and its people. This is a strategic leap forward, not only for Somalia but also for the East African region as it continues to integrate and strengthen its collective economic and political stature on the global stage.

Breaking Free from the Shackles of the Arms Embargo

The ongoing efforts to lift the decades-long arms embargo reflect a new chapter in Somalia's sovereignty and self-determination. The call by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to lift the embargo is not merely about acquiring arms; it's about Somalia's ability to safeguard its own future, to robustly combat terrorism, and to secure a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow.

The call by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to lift the decades-long arms embargo on Somalia marks a significant turn in the nation's pursuit of sovereignty and self-determination. This appeal is more than just about acquiring military hardware; it's about empowering Somalia to take charge of its own security and future. Lifting the embargo is seen as a critical step towards enhancing the country's capabilities to effectively combat terrorism, ensuring its territorial integrity, and paving the way for a peaceful and prosperous future. The move is a bold statement of independence and an aspiration for stability in a region long plagued by conflict and insecurity.

Towards Economic Resilience: The Path to Debt Relief

Somalia's progress towards achieving debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative is a significant milestone. This step, facilitated by the implementation of comprehensive reforms, is crucial for economic rejuvenation. It paves the way for increased investments and financial stability, providing a foundation for sustainable development.

Somalia's journey towards debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative marks a pivotal moment in its economic history. Achieving this milestone is a testament to the nation's commitment to implementing comprehensive reforms, which are essential for economic revitalization. This progression opens new avenues for increased investment and financial stability, laying a solid foundation for sustainable development.

The HIPC initiative is designed to ensure that poor countries are not overwhelmed by unmanageable or unsustainable debt burdens. By meeting certain criteria, including the implementation of reforms, and maintaining sound economic policies, countries like Somalia can have a portion of their debt forgiven, thereby reducing their debt burden significantly.

For Somalia, this debt relief is more than just financial reprieve; it's a gateway to greater economic opportunities. It enables the country to redirect resources from debt repayment to critical areas such as health, education, and infrastructure development, which are vital for long-term growth and stability. Moreover, it improves the nation's creditworthiness, attracting foreign investors and opening additional sources of funding.

This progress is also symbolic of Somalia's resilience and determination to overcome economic challenges. It demonstrates the effectiveness of international cooperation and support in aiding nations to achieve financial stability and growth. The path to debt relief is not just about managing debts; it's about setting the foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable future for the people of Somalia.

Aspiring for a Global Voice: The Bid for the UNSC Seat

Somalia's bid for a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council is not just about gaining a seat at the global table. It represents the nation's aspirations to play a pivotal role in international diplomacy and peacekeeping, especially for the East African region. Success in this bid would be a clear indication of Somalia's growing influence and respect on the world stage.

Somalia's endeavor to secure a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a significant step in its international relations. This ambition extends far beyond simply obtaining a position; it symbolizes Somalia's commitment to becoming a key player in global diplomacy and peacekeeping, particularly in the East African context.

Achieving this goal would mark a pivotal moment for Somalia, signifying its enhanced stature and influence in international affairs. It demonstrates the country's readiness to contribute meaningfully to global discussions and decisions, particularly in areas where it has direct regional interests and experiences.

Somalia's bid is also a reflection of its progress and development in recent years. After decades of internal conflict and challenges, participating actively in the UNSC would represent a remarkable turnaround, showcasing Somalia's resilience and dedication to not only rebuild itself but also to contribute to global peace and stability.

Furthermore, Somalia's presence in the UNSC would bring unique perspectives and insights, especially concerning the challenges and opportunities in East Africa. It would allow the country to advocate for the region's needs and priorities on an international platform, potentially leading to more effective and regionally tailored solutions to conflicts and crises.

Overall, Somalia's aspiration for a seat at the UNSC underscores its ambition to be a significant voice in global affairs, reflecting its journey towards stability, peace, and prosperity, both domestically and in the broader East African region.

Repatriation of Sudan-Affected Citizens Achievement:

Successfully repatriated over 1000 Somali citizens from Sudan, amid conflicts, including men, women, and children – students and families. Process: Evacuees independently reached Metema, Ethiopia, and were assisted by Ministry officials to Addis Ababa for flights to Somalia. Commitment: Minister H.E Abshir Omar Jama emphasized prioritizing citizen safety, with readiness to intensify efforts. Acknowledgment: Extended thanks to international partners for their coordination in ensuring swift and safe evacuation.

Integration into East African Community (EAC) Progress

Somalia's integration into the EAC, marked by becoming its 8th member, following dedicated negotiations. Verification Mission: On January 25, 2023, EAC initiated a verification mission to assess Somalia's readiness, evaluating compliance with EAC Treaty criteria. Benefits: Membership opens avenues for regional cooperation, trade, and economic growth, tapping into Somalia's long coastline for increased intra-regional trade. Market Expansion: Joining EAC grants access to a regional market of over 300 million, reducing trade barriers and enhancing Somali business opportunities. EU Joint Operational Roadmap Partnership: Strengthened collaboration with the European Union, focusing on governance, security, and development. Roadmap Launch: A Joint Operational Roadmap launched, outlining a focused engagement plan for the next two years, because of high-level dialogues between Mogadishu and Brussels. Statements: Minister Jama and EU High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles acknowledged the roadmap as a significant milestone in strengthening Somalia-EU relations.

Progress: A landmark achievement for Somalia has been its integration into the EAC, becoming its 8th member. This milestone was reached following dedicated and strategic negotiations.

Verification Mission: On January 25, 2023, a significant step was taken by the EAC. They initiated a verification mission to assess Somalia's readiness, evaluating its compliance with the criteria set forth in the EAC Treaty.

Benefits: As a member of the EAC, Somalia stands to gain significantly. Membership opens new avenues for regional cooperation, trade, and economic growth. Somalia's long coastline is seen as a key asset for boosting intra-regional trade.

Market Expansion: Joining the EAC also means access to a regional market of over 300 million people. This expansion will facilitate the reduction of trade barriers and enhance opportunities for Somali businesses.

EU Joint Operational Roadmap

Partnership: The Ministry has been working on strengthening its collaboration with the European Union. This partnership focuses on key areas: governance, security, and development.

Roadmap Launch: A Joint Operational Roadmap was launched because of high-level dialogues between Mogadishu and Brussels. This Roadmap outlines a focused engagement plan spanning the next two years.

Statements: Both Minister Jama and EU High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles have acknowledged this Roadmap as a significant milestone in fortifying Somalia-EU relations.

Triumph Over Adversity: Combatting Al-Shabaab

Perhaps the most significant of Somalia's achievements in 2023 is the successful degradation of Al-Shabaab. This feat is a clear indicator of the government's commitment to peace and security. The liberation of territories from terrorist control is not just a military victory; it's a reclaiming of hope and a promise of a safer future for its citizens.

The successful efforts of the Somali government in degrading Al-Shabaab in 2023 represent a significant achievement in the fight against terrorism. Al-Shabaab, recognized as a terrorist organization by many countries and international entities, has been a major source of instability in Somalia and the wider region. The government's actions in liberating territories from the control of Al-Shabaab not only demonstrate military success but also symbolize a reclamation of hope and a commitment to ensuring a safer future for the Somali people. This progress is crucial in restoring normalcy and promoting peace and security in the region.

The narrative of Somalia in 2023 is one of resilience, ambition, and progress. These achievements are not just milestones for Somalia but are beacons of hope for the entire region. They serve as a reminder that even in the face of overwhelming odds, transformative change is possible. As Somalia continues this path, the international community should not only acknowledge these strides but also support and partner with Somalia in its journey towards a brighter future.

In 2023, the Federal Government of Somalia made significant progress in combating Al-Shabaab, a recognized terrorist organization. This success is evident in several key areas:

Eradication of Al-Shabaab's Presence

Liberation of Territories: Over 100 towns and villages were reclaimed from Al-Shabaab's control. This military operation was not just a tactical achievement but also symbolized the restoration of government authority and security in these areas.

Impact on Civilians: The liberation of these areas meant a significant shift in daily life for the residents. They were no longer under the control of Al-Shabaab, which had implications for their safety, freedom, and access to government services.

Financial Disruption & Closing of Financial Networks: The Somali government took decisive action against Al-Shabaab's financial operations. Over 100 accounts linked to the organization and its associates, involved in illegal taxation and business activities, were shut down.

Economic Impact on Al-Shabaab: This move significantly disrupted the financial structure of Al-Shabaab, impacting their ability to fund operations and maintain influence.

Restoration of Hope: The government's actions went beyond military and financial tactics. They were instrumental in restoring hope among the Somali population, promising a safer and more secure future.

Regional Stability: Somalia's success in degrading Al-Shabaab's influence also has positive implications for regional stability and security.

International Recognition and Support

- ❑ **Global Acknowledgement:** The international community has recognized these efforts, highlighting Somalia's commitment to combating terrorism.
- ❑ **Continued Support:** There is a call for continued international support and partnership with Somalia to maintain this momentum and ensure long-term stability and peace.

The Somali government's actions in 2023 marked a turning point in the fight against Al-Shabaab. By reclaiming territories and disrupting financial networks, the government not only weakened Al-Shabaab's operational capabilities but also demonstrated a strong commitment to securing a peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens. This progress is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Somali people and their government in overcoming adversity. The continued support and partnership from the international community will be crucial in sustaining these gains and fostering lasting peace and stability in Somalia and the region.

The progress in Somalia's education sector in 2023 has been notable, particularly in two key areas: the hiring of new teachers and the graduation of girls from a non-formal education program.

Hiring of 3000 Teachers.

1. **Expansion of Teaching Workforce:** Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud announced the hiring of 3,000 new teachers in 2023. This significant increase in the number of educators is part of efforts to bridge the wide education gap in the country.
2. **Increased Education Budget:** The decision to hire more teachers followed a four-fold increase in the Somali Ministry of Education's budget, which rose to \$34 million in 2023. This substantial increase in funding is a clear indicator of the government's commitment to improving education.
3. **Addressing Teacher Shortage:** Prior to this initiative, Somalia faced a severe teacher shortage, with only one thousand teachers on the government payroll across Mogadishu and all regional states for the past five years. The new hires are primarily aimed at areas with little access to education, indicating a focus on educational equity.

Graduation of 10,000 Girls from Non-Formal Education Program

- **Milestone Graduation Event:** In Mogadishu, 10,616 Somali adolescent girls and young women celebrated their graduation from an 11-month non-formal education course. This program was primarily aimed at enhancing literacy, numeracy, and life leadership skills.
- **Funded by USAID and UK:** The program was funded by the United States and the United Kingdom. It addressed the significant challenge of access to education in Somalia, especially for girls and young women, where only 25% of primary school-aged girls were attending school
- **Impact and Goals of the Program:** The Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia (AGES) program, funded by USAID and the British Embassy Mogadishu, supports over 80,000 out-of-school adolescent girls and young women. It provides foundational reading and numeracy skills, leadership opportunities, and financial literacy. The program is designed to empower girls to lead healthier and more productive lives, thereby reducing early marriage and enabling their contributions to their communities.

Overall Progress and Future Outlook

- **Strategic Focus Areas:** Somalia's education strategy includes increasing equitable access to quality primary education, enhancing the quality of primary education, and promoting equity for the most socially excluded children.

- **Support for Vulnerable Groups:** The country also focuses on supporting vulnerable groups affected by issues like food insecurity and drought, which have severely disrupted schooling and affected children's nutritional status.
- **International Support and Advocacy:** International organizations like the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) are supporting civil society advocacy and social accountability efforts in Somalia. This support includes funding initiatives like the Education for All Somalia Coalition (EFASOM) and the Somaliland Network on Education for All (SOLNEFA).

Somalia's education sector has seen significant progress in 2023, marked by the hiring of many teachers and the successful graduation of thousands of girls from a non-formal education program. These efforts, supported by increased funding and international collaboration, signify a positive trend towards improving education access and quality in the country.

DAN QARAN

