

The Somali Youth Charter

We, the youth of Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia, acknowledge that we are the present and future of the nation. Bearing this in mind, we would like to have a unified voice: one voice that is heard through this Charter. We want a supportive and enabling environment, in which every young person—women and men—gains ability, authority, agency and opportunities to make effective choices, and translate these in their own lives and the lives of other people.

Recognizing the power and struggle of the Somali Youth League for the liberation of the Somali Republic in 1960, we, the youth of Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia want to have a common voice to address our common challenges for building an inclusive Somali society, in which all Somalis would feel valued and empowered.

Acknowledging that we are a strong force that can propel the country forward to improve overall human development, and address the challenges facing the Somali youth today, and recognizing the aspirations outlined in the Millennium Development Goals, we have set aside our differences and come together with the hope of attaining the following principles:

We, the Somali youth, declare in a unified voice through this Charter the empowerment of youth and the Somali people through:

Policy and Institutional Reform

- Urge the government to develop and implement a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy that is well integrated into national policy and programmes.
- Acknowledge the need to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women according to obligations stipulated in various international, regional and national human rights conventions and instruments designed to protect and promote women's rights.

- Ensure that every young person, both men and women, has the right to participate in decision-making processes in social, political and economic spheres of society.
- Create sustainable national youth empowerment funds.

Social Empowerment

- Wish to change the curricula and make them relevant to local labour market opportunities, patriotism, morals, the dynamic environment and personal development.
- Every young person shall have the right to quality education that encompasses civic education at all levels.
- Provide free and compulsory basic education, and make all forms of secondary education more readily available and accessible by all possible means, also focusing on the nomadic populations.
- Introduce scholarship programmes to encourage entry into post-primary school education and into higher education for outstanding youth from disadvantaged communities, particularly young girls.
- Encourage stakeholders to provide opportunities, such as inclusive education, to physically challenged children and youth.
- Every young person shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.
- Institute comprehensive programmes to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, including risks related to maternal health (female genital mutilation, unsafe child delivery and high birth rates) by providing education and awareness creation as well as making protective/rehabilitation measures and youth friendly reproductive health services available, affordable and

relevant with special attention to at-risk youth.

- Access to HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment services.
- Zero-tolerance on HIV-related stigma and discrimination.
- Require access to public spaces where we can safely meet, interact and play sports, regardless of gender.
- Request families and governing bodies to encourage sports, particularly as they instill values such as discipline, healthy competition and mental productivity.
- Want to change society's perception of youth as problems to be resolved (deficit approach) to positive agents of change.
- Want the society—our families, friends, policy makers, institutions and fellow citizens—to perceive us as fresh, young, innovative and future visionaries, pioneers and intellectuals.
- Want to practice tolerance and respect of people from different backgrounds (clan, race, tribe or financial disposition).
- Eliminate all traditional practices that undermine the physical integrity and dignity of women.
- Harness the creativity of youth to promote local cultural values and traditions.
- Establish structures that encourage young people in the diaspora to engage in development activities in their country of origin.
- Enhance mitigation strategies for youth who have turned to piracy, extremism, drug abuse and other forms of risky behaviours.

Economic Empowerment

- Every young person shall have the right to gainful employment for sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Ensure equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work, and offer protection against discrimination regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, disability,

religion, and political, social, cultural or economic background.

- Every young person shall have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is harmful to the young person's health or holistic development.
- Foster greater linkages between the labour market and the education and training system to ensure that youth are being trained in fields where employment opportunities are available or are growing.
- Develop employment-led macroeconomic policies on job creation for youth, particularly young women.
- Promote youth entrepreneurship by launching a comprehensive training programme (providing life skills and livelihood skills training, access to credit, mentorship opportunities and better information on market opportunities).
- Institute national youth service programmes to engender community participation and skills development for entry into the labour market.
- Institute a holistic national youth-led community based programme encompassing both peace and development in an integrated package.
- Promote research on Somali youth's common problems to shape poverty-reducing policies.

Political Empowerment

- Guarantee the representation of youth in Parliament.
- Create space and strengthen platforms for youth participation in other decision-making bodies at national, district and local levels of governance.
- Every young person shall be assured the right to express and disseminate his or her ideas and opinions freely in all matters.
- Every young person shall have the right to free association, freedom of peaceful assembly and right to information.

Peacebuilding

- Would like to be involved in, and to contribute substantively to peace processes.
- Would like to change the status quo, and move away from short-term externally driven conflict management to Somali-led conflict transformation, embracing constructive dialogue and addressing challenges innovatively.
- Want to forge close partnerships with the youth in the diaspora.
- Ensure youth representation in all national peace and reconciliation conferences.
- Reinforce traditional peacebuilding methods.

Greening Human Development

- Recognize the vested interest and potential of young people in protecting the natural environment as the inheritors of the environment.

- Support youth organizations in instituting programmes that encourage sustainable energy and environmental preservation, such as waste reduction and recycling programmes using clean technologies.
- Wish to receive information about and introduce or reinforce strategies to protect the environment and prevent climate change, particularly in regard to protecting resources such as land (to avoid overgrazing, improper waste disposal and deforestation) and water (to prevent flooding, illegal fishing and dumping, and protect marine resources), so we may take steps towards protecting the environment and livelihoods.
- Encourage the use of renewable/alternative energy by developing a cadre of youth-led energy entrepreneurs.
- Ensure youth participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of renewable energy and environmental policies, including the conservation of natural resources.

The Youth Charter was adopted by youth representatives from Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia during the consultative workshop held in Garowe, Puntland on 24 September 2011, and disseminated to a wider youth group across the regions through consultations.