

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Benadir Court Complex Opens in Mogadishu

Mogadishu, 10 September 2015 – The Federal Government of Somalia, United Nations, and donor partners welcomed the opening of the Benadir Courts Complex today in Mogadishu. This opening marks an important milestone for the justice sector. The provisioning of a safe place for the community to access justice services supports a more effective delivery of justice services and enables judicial personnel to carry out their duties.

Access to a functioning and fair legal system is one of the pillars of sustainable peace and development, but has proved to be particularly challenging to achieve in Somalia. In 2013, a tragic attack at the Benadir Court killed at least 30 people, highlighting the urgent need to improve security for justice institutions and practitioners.

With support from UNDP and UNSOM, the Federal Government of Somalia's Ministry of Justice is building a stronger, safer justice sector for the people of Somalia. The Benadir court complex pilot project had three components: rehabilitation of the infrastructure, selection and training of judicial protection staff, and the procurement of security equipment. The perimeter wall was heightened and reinforced, several vehicle checkpoints have been established and main-gates, boom-gates, jersey barriers, screening rooms, watch-towers, and guard shelters have been put in place. Metal detectors have been procured, and a custodial team has been established and trained in awareness, protection, and incident response to maintain security for the court and its personnel. The compound serves nearly 100 people every day and accommodates key institutions including the Supreme Court, Attorney General's Office, Benadir Regional Appeal Court, Banadir Regional Court and 4 District Courts.

Somalia's Minister of Justice, Abdullahi Ahmed Jama is leading the push for greater accountability, transparency and efficiency within government. He says that the new court complex does not just provide a safe place for citizens to come access their rights to justice. The launch of the Benadir Court complex will also strengthen judicial services for all Somalis. "The opening of this complex is so important to the people of this region," said the Minister. "Our goal is to enable more Somalis have access to fair and affordable justice."

Renovation of the Benadir Court Complex directly supports the Peace-building and State-building Goals (PSGs) of the Somali Compact, in particular PSG 3: Establish independent and accountable justice institutions capable of addressing the justice needs of the people of Somalia by delivering justice for all.

The European Union Special Envoy and Ambassador to Somalia Michele Cervone d'Urso called upon judicial officers to lead by example and provide servant leadership. "This is an important step in improving access to justice in Somalia and as we know there can never be peace without justice and as such we hope this court complex will be the center of justice where every Somali man or woman will be treated equal in the eyes of the law and that no one will be above the law," Amb. Cervone d'Urso said.

Thanks to generous support from the European Union and UK-DFID, UN partners are working to support and strengthen government and civil society institutions to deliver fair and rights-based justice services. "*By supporting the Federal Government's priorities to increase judicial personnel and courthouse security, we can help delivery of basic justice services to contribute to strengthening rule of law,*" said, Mitch Dufresne, Chief Joint Justice and Corrections Section of the Rule of Law & Security Institutions Group (ROLSIG), UNSOM. "*This is instrumental in the efforts for lasting peace and stability.*"

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