

Permanent Observer Mission  
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation  
to the European Union



Mission Permanente d'Observation  
de l'Organisation de Coopération islamique  
auprès de l'Union européenne

البعثة المراقبة الدائمة لمنظمة التعاون الإسلامي لدى الاتحاد الأوروبي

**Statement by Ambassador Aissata KANE, Permanent Observer ad interim of  
the Permanent Mission of the OIC to the European Union in Brussels on the  
occasion of the Ministerial Pledging Conference for Somali Refugees**

**Brussels, 21 October 2015**

Mr High Commissioner for Refugees,

Madam High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and  
Security Policy,

Honourable Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to first of all begin by thanking you on behalf of the Secretary General of the OIC, His Excellency Mr. Iyad Madani, for inviting the delegation of the OIC which I have the honour of representing here to participate in this important high-level conference to discuss the Somali refugee situation, regarded as the result of one of the longest, most complicated and deplorable civil wars of the last two decades.

The Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, signed on November 12013, paved the way for the voluntary repatriation of Somalis in safety and dignity. After more than 25 years of living in refugee camps, especially Dadab in Kenya, as well as in neighbouring countries, this solution appears to be the only permanent and sustainable solution on the horizon, to the extent that it will allow Somalis to return to their homeland and their normal lives in their home communities.

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My organisation, the OIC, supports this voluntary return programme for approximately 425,000 Somali refugees, spread over a period of 5 years in predefined areas which meet the requirements of dignity, security and resilience. The level of return, be it spontaneous or assisted, already recorded within the Somali refugee community encourages the expansion of this sustainable solution and its effective implementation in a timely manner.

In this regard, the international community has to support this Agreement and apply all the measures necessary for the return of Somalis who wish to do so.

Support for this programme must be provided with the aim of addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees who wish to return but also the development imperatives of the host communities in Somalia.

The combination of humanitarian and development programmes is the only strategy which would ensure complete, dignified social and economic reintegration of refugees on their land in the long term.

Since 2011, the OIC has intensified its support for the efforts of the Government of Somalia to ensure a return to normality for populations which have suffered much from fragile security situations but also from extreme climatic conditions and serious health crisis.

The opening of an OIC humanitarian office in Mogadishu in 2011, at a time when very few international organisations still had direct access to victims of the war facilitated the setting up of assisted return and humanitarian assistance programmes for IDPs, and refugees returning from Kenya or Yemen to their villages of origin.

In this way, through a coalition of 42 members and with the cooperation of the Government of Somalia, our Organisation supported the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees through assisted return projects for 6000 families originally from Bay, Bakool as well as Lower and Middle Shebelle.

These target families benefitted from an assisted aid package composed of, in particular, food rations for three months, non-food and household goods as well as tents.

Moreover, in order to ensure the sustainable resettlement of displaced persons and refugees, allocations were given to families including pieces of agricultural land (1 hectare per family), seeds and agricultural tools for farmers and livestock for livestock rearers.

The coalition working under the leadership of the OIC was able to capitalize on the success of pilot return programmes to engage in development through the launch of subsistence infrastructure projects for host communities.

In this way, the OIC turned to the implementation of agricultural projects in the form of land preparation, rehabilitation of irrigation and water harvesting channels, and the construction of new channels and culverts.

The OIC has also invested in the rehabilitation and construction of schools, health centres and clinics in order to ensure access to basic services for refugees who wish to return and their families.

The OIC seizes this occasion to renew its firm commitment to maintain close collaboration with the other humanitarian and development actors active in the area and the Somali government in order to create synergies and coordinate actions in support of a voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced Somalis in dignity to their country and regions.

Thank you.