



Northern Somali Unionist Movement (NSUM)

An open letter to H.E. John Kufuor, President of Ghana

We the members of the Northern Somali Unionist Movement (NSUM), whose members are mainly from Northern Somalia (former British Somaliland) and whose mission is to preserve the unity of Somalia, would like first of all to extend our greetings to you and secondly to bring the subject of this open letter to your attention.

Needless to say, Ghana and its leaders have a unique and cherished place in the history of Africa. As the first African country to gain its independence from Britain in 1957, it was thanks to her that a new era of hope for freedom had dawned throughout the African continent. Far from resting on his laurels, Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, chose instead to campaign single-handedly for the liberation of other African countries still languishing under colonialism and to champion the unity of independent African countries, individually and collectively. It was due to his exemplary efforts and visionary foresight that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established on 25 May 1963, to be subsequently superseded by the current African Union (AU). Not only has Ghana played a pivotal role in ushering the independence of many African countries but no less notable was its unswerving support in the past to African countries facing secessionist movements as those in the Congo and Nigeria in the 1960s.

Since independence, secession has been the bane stalking many fragile African countries. No country was considered immune to it even if some were more vulnerable than others. Conventional wisdom in the early 1960s saw Somalia as one of the few countries below the Sahara that would be spared this bogey, given its uniqueness as a country whose people had so much uniting them and little dividing them - people who are the most homogeneous in Africa, sharing the same language, religion, culture and blood ties. And yet, Somalia is today the sick man of Africa where secession in one part of the country is a threat to the country's unity and territorial integrity. If it can happen to Somalia, it could happen to others.

The separatists in some parts of northern Somalia (former British Somaliland), taking advantage of the collapse of the Somali state, unilaterally declared in May 1991 the secession of the area from Somalia, adopting its former colonial name of Somaliland. While secession is at all times reprehensible, what makes this one more unacceptable is the fact that the separatists are from one clan among the five major clans that inhabit in the north. In their quest for recognition, they had propagated the mendacious claim that all the clans in the northern Somalia were behind the secession when in reality only some sections of one clan subscribe to this secession.

The legal justification presented for the secession is based on two preposterous claims: Firstly, that the north used to exist during the colonial times as a separate country from the rest of Somalia; and secondly that British Somaliland gained its independence from Britain on 26 June 1960, four day days



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before unity with former Italian Somaliland on 1 July 1960. Neither of these claims are legitimate grounds for secession.

British Somaliland came to existence only because the Somali homeland in the Horn of Africa was arbitrarily partitioned by foreign powers. Those clans that were in the British zone had no exclusive national bonds that separated them from their fellow Somalis in the other colonial zones. Indeed, the same clans in British Somaliland were to be found in Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland and Ethiopian Somaliland. The fact that the peoples of former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland opted freely for union immediately after independence is a testimony to the artificiality of their division during the colonial times. The act of union had therefore rendered the former colonial boundaries as a footnote in history. It is Somalia's unity and borders that the international community recognizes and there is no way secessionists can revive and legitimise defunct borders or a phantom state that does not exist. These arguments, however, do not cut much ice with the secessionists, and more so if they entertain hopes, false or otherwise, that recognition is round the corner.

Lately, the secessionists have been singing the praise of Ghana, claiming at the highest levels that your government is about to recognise Somaliland and that other important countries in the west, notably the USA and Great Britain, are said to be following suit once your government has started the ball rolling. While in normal times one would have dismissed such stories as fantasies, the stakes are high and we, as patriots and Somali unionists, cannot afford to take a sanguine outlook.

Better we sound the alarm bells now even if we might be acting on unfounded information rather than wait for the act to happen. If these stories are true, Ghana should know that whatever it reaps from its action would be no match for the incalculable damage it would inflict not only on Somalia but also to many others in Africa. For Somalia, Ghana's recognition of Somaliland, if it materialises, would not lead to an independent recognized Somaliland but only serve to stoke the Somali civil war into a bloodier and prolonged one. For the rest of Africa, your action would set a precedent that will open Pandora Box that will dig the grave for the unity and territorial integrity of many other African countries.

If a clan in Somalia has a right to secede in the eyes of Ghana, so have any of Ghana's clans- the Ashanti, the Ewe, the Ga-Adangbe, the Mole-Dagbani, the Guan, and the Gurma. It would be a great service to the cause of Africa Your Excellency, if you were to clarify your government's position on this matter in a way that hopefully leaves no doubt your government's faithfulness to the charter of the African Union and hence your support of Somalia's unity and territorial integrity.

Just as a sick person would need help rather hindrance of his/her recovery, so a fallen nation would also require to be assisted by its fellow African countries to stand on its own feet in one piece. Any African country that provides succour to the secession in Somalia, or champions its recognition within Africa and beyond, would be betraying Kwame Nkruma's ideals and the charter of the African Union. If these much published stories are true, it would be ironic and unforgivable that, of all countries in Africa, Kwame Nkruma's Ghana should be the one, which acts as an agent for predatory western imperialists scheming to dismember selected African countries at their mercy. We pray that is not the case.

Please accept Your Excellency the assurances of our highest considerations.

Mohamed Ali Mirreh
Chairman, NSUM



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