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January 15, 2025

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I am writing to urge the Department of State to establish a representative office in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Such a move is critical for advancing U.S. strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and countering the growing influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in this vital region.

Somaliland, while a self-proclaimed de facto state without international recognition, holds immense strategic significance. Situated south of the Gulf of Aden and to the east of Djibouti, Somaliland's geographic position in the Horn of Africa makes it an essential player in regional geopolitics. The city of Berbera, with its strategically located port and one of the longest airstrips in Africa, serves as a vital shipping and transportation hub for the region, particularly for landlocked neighbors like Ethiopia. These critical assets present an opportunity for the United States to strengthen its presence and promote stability in a critical area of global trade and security.

For over three decades, Somaliland has maintained relative political stability and functions as a democracy, demonstrating resilience and governance capacity in a challenging region. Notably, Somaliland is one of only two African states (the other is Eswatini in Southern Africa) with ties to Taiwan, a democratic partner of the United States, but having no official relations with the PRC. However, Somaliland faces significant pressure from the PRC as Beijing seeks to expand its influence in the Horn of Africa. The recent presidential election in Somaliland, during which ties to Taiwan were a campaign issue,¹ underscores the precariousness of Somaliland's alignment. Without U.S. engagement, the PRC may succeed in shifting Somaliland's interests in its favor, further consolidating its influence in the Red Sea and beyond.

¹ <https://panafricanreview.com/what-somalilands-2024-elections-mean-for-the-china-taiwan-rivalry-in-the-horn/>

The PRC's growing footprint in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region is evident. In 2017, it established its first ever overseas military base in Djibouti.² Additionally, it leverages its close relationship with Iran to influence the Yemeni Houthis³ and covertly supplies them with arms, enabling the Houthis to disrupt one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.⁴ These actions pose significant challenges to U.S. and allied interests. Establishing a permanent U.S. diplomatic presence in Somaliland would serve as a critical counterbalance, reaffirming America's commitment to supporting stable, democratic, and strategically aligned partners in the region.

Furthermore, the establishment of a representative office in Hargeisa need not conflict with the United States' current recognition of the government of Somalia in Mogadishu. Other nations, including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Kenya, and Taiwan, maintain offices in Hargeisa without extending formal recognition to Somaliland's sovereignty. Additionally, Turkey and Ethiopia have established consulates in Somaliland under similar arrangements.⁵ The U.S. can adopt a similar approach, allowing for meaningful engagement with Somaliland while respecting existing diplomatic frameworks.

The creation of a U.S. representative office in Hargeisa would send a strong signal of support to Somaliland's democratic achievements and resilience. It would also underscore our commitment to countering the PRC's growing influence in one of the world's most geopolitically significant regions. I urge you to prioritize this initiative as part of our broader strategy to safeguard U.S. interests in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I stand ready to assist in any way to support the establishment of a U.S. diplomatic presence in Somaliland.

Sincerely,



John Moolenaar
Chairman
House Select Committee on the CCP

² <https://web.archive.org/web/20170712013933/https://thedi diplomat.com/2017/07/china-officially-sets-up-its-first-overseas-base-in-djibouti/>

³ <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-finance-houthi-red-sea-attacks-iran-oil/>

⁴ <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/artc-china-helping-houthis-obtain-advanced-weapons-for-free-passage>

⁵ [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2012-09-07/debates/12090721000008/Hargeisa\(BritishOffice\);](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2012-09-07/debates/12090721000008/Hargeisa(BritishOffice);)
https://somalia.um.dk/en/about-us; https://www.horndiplomat.com/2023/10/08/kenya-raises-the-status-of-its-somaliland-office-and-appointed-a-new-representative/#google_vignette; https://www.roc-taiwan.org/smd_en/index.html; https://mogadishu-emb.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/About; https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/ethiopia-upgrades-consulate-in-somaliland-to-full-fledged-embassy