

87067 response

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Rt Hon Sir Tony Baldry
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Minister of State

Dear Sir Tony,

Thank you for your letter of 8 August on Somaliland's status which follows on from your letter of 7 August about fisheries and the UN Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG).

In my response to your letter on fisheries, I acknowledged the challenges facing Somaliland in developing this sector. One of these challenges is the legal uncertainty for investment in the sector following Somalia's declaration of an Exclusive Economic Zone. The implication of this is that the fishing rights are the legal possession of Somalia and the Government of Somaliland would need to reach an agreement on fishing licenses with the Federal Government of Somalia before they could be legally issued by Somaliland from Hargeisa. Somaliland is also under the same sanctions regime as Somalia.

We recognise that the legal uncertainty resulting from Somaliland's status can be a barrier to investment and has been the subject of much debate. We are clear that it is up to the Somalis themselves to determine the future Somalia-Somaliland relationship and it should be their neighbours and other African countries leading the way in recognising any new arrangements.

We continue to urge dialogue between the Federal Government and the Somaliland Government to reach agreement on common areas of interest such as fishing rights. We welcomed the recent agreement on use of airspace and look forward to greater cooperation going forward.

We also remain committed to encouraging investment in Somaliland and my response to your letter of the 7 August set out how the Government is helping Somaliland to create the right business environment to support this aim.



The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Minister of State

I visited both Somalia & Somaliland recently & will continue to pay a close interest.