

DRAFT

Hazardous Waste Fact-Finding Mission to Somalia (Puntland)

Terms of Reference

In the aftermath of the Tsunami which has struck the north-eastern Indian Ocean coastline of Somalia on 26 December 2004, a UN report of February 2005 referred to the heightened potential of nuclear and toxic waste hazards on the shores of Puntland. The international media repeated those allegations widely, and a WWF report in particular claimed that clinical symptoms had appeared among the communities exposed to radioactive and toxic elements as a result of the Tsunami.

During the course of a three-day mission in early April 2005 by the President of Puntland State of Somalia and the United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia to the Tsunami-affected coastline of Puntland Somalia, the attention of the mission was drawn to the suspension of purchase of marine products by importing countries in the Middle and Far East, as well as suspension of overseas investment in fisheries, following these UN-sourced reports. The UN RC/HC was further informed by the Puntland authorities of the real and potential damage to the rapidly growing fisheries sector.

Coming on top of other recent natural disasters including drought as well as the continuing livestock ban on the part of Saudi Arabia, this ban on marine products if it continues will have a significant impact on the fragile economy of Puntland and on the livelihoods of already-struggling communities.

The UN RC/HC was requested by the President and community leaders to address the matter as a matter of urgency, and to as a first step to undertake a fact-finding mission to the Puntland coastal region.

The immediate objective of the fact-finding mission will thus be to establish whether there have been any associated risks to human health and the environment from the any combination of toxic waste and the Tsunami, by taking samples and carrying out analysis in relation to humans, fish and marine products, and water both on-shore and off-shore.

The expected outcome of the mission is a clear statement from the United Nations (eg Office of the UN RC/HC), based on facts established as a result of the mission, regarding risks if any to both resident communities and the marine environment. The analysis and conclusions from the different agencies, should there be more than one, will be linked to an integrated response.

The Office of the UN RC/HC will lead the mission, with assistance from other UN agencies as appropriate. WHO in particular will assist with the analysis of any health impact associated with hazardous waste on humans, and call as necessary upon other agencies for immediate analysis of the marine environment.

Note:

The purpose of this mission is to address as a matter of urgency the allegations of toxic waste damage to the marine environment and coastal communities of Puntland, with the immediate objective of establishing the truth or otherwise of these allegations and the implications for the local fishing industry.

The need remains for a more comprehensive and wide-ranging mission, organised by UNEP/OCHA, to examine the totality of the environmental effects of the Tsunami and to address the totality of the toxic waste issue throughout Somalia. The preparation of Terms of Reference for this wider mission should proceed.