

## **1<sup>st</sup> Conference and Exhibition on Somaliland ICT**

**Somaliland ICT Conference 2019**

**Theme of the year “ICT for Development and Empowering Success”**



**Participant of the conference on Somaliland ICT 2019**

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## CONFERENCE SPONSORS



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## Acronym

COO	Chief Operating Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GTS	Global Technology Solutions
GB	Giga Byte
GMS	Global Messaging Service
MoFD	Ministry of Finance Development
ID	Identification
MoCT	Ministry of Communication and Technology
SLFMIS	Somaliland Financial Management Information System
IoT	Internet on Things
CTO	Chief Technology Officer
ISPs	Internet Service Provider
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
DG	Director General

## **Introduction**

The Ministry of Communication and Technology and Ministry of Finance Development organized the first Conference on Somaliland Information and Communication (ICT) 2019, under the theme of ICT for development and Empowering Success on September 07 to 08, 2019 at Maansoor Hotel, Hargeisa Somaliland.

The agenda of the conference consisted of opening speeches by the officials from the Ministry of Communication and Technology and Ministry of Finance Development and the Vice President of Somaliland pursued by presentations and panel discussions, and awards were honored to the esteemed companies and individuals who contributed to the conference.

ICT Companies, experts and practitioners, Ministry of Communication and Technology and Ministry of Finance Development conducted important presentations and Three plenary discussions followed by questions, comments and reflections from the participants. The conference was simultaneous followed by Exhibition. The ICT companies operating in Somaliland and Ministry of Interior showcased the ICT services they provide to the public and offered free of charge services to the citizens of Somaliland

This report summarizes the conference and its outcomes

## **Background and Rationale of the Conference**

Right after dissolving the union with Somalia in 1991 and declaring state sovereignty, Somaliland began the process of rebuilding state institutions to restore law and order and basic public services. This was very challenging since the basic public infrastructure essential for economic and social development for modern society such as telecommunication, electricity, roads and airports were inadequate or non-existent.

Privately owned ISPs maintain strong presence and service availability in both urban and rural areas. Equally, services grew from commonly known internet and telephony to a broader range of modern services incorporating financial transactions for example e-Dahab, Zaad and other online money transfer services.

Now, Somaliland Offers Some of the most technologically advanced and competitively priced telecommunications and internet services in the region. This major development in ICT growth, usage and penetration increasingly engage market stakeholders, government and civil society in discussion and debate about information communication technology.

Therefore, to understand critic and put economic issues in perspective, the Ministry of Communication and Technology (MOCT) and Ministry of Finance Development are planning to host the first Somaliland ICT conference and Exhibition under the theme of “ICT for Development and Empowering Success”.

The conference will establish itself as a unique platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience in the area of ICT, which brings together all participants in the Tech Industry. In this event it will be for the first time an open discussion on these topics with the participation of Tech companies, government regulatory bodies and public organizations for consumer rights protection.

## Objectives of the Conference

- To uphold the role of ICT in transforming our national economy, accelerating national development, improving public service delivery and increasing good governance and transparency
- To create a platform for discussion on how the ICT sector can be improved in order to create an enabling environment that can build appropriate sustainable solutions for long term national development
- To consolidate the co-operation and bridge private and public ICT stakeholders
- To nurture the nation's ICT entrepreneurship and innovation industry
- To discuss the challenges and opportunities for ICT in Somaliland

## Participants of the Conference

The conference brought together over 350 participants representing policymakers and regulators, telecommunication companies, Fintech Companies, Technology Solutions Providers, ICT consulting firms, Economist Expert, Legal Experts, Academicians and Journalists, ICT Start-Up Innovators and Training Centers, NGOs and Development Organizations, World Bank Group and Other ICT Stakeholders. It was held at Maansoor Hotel from September 07, 2019 to September 08, 2019. For the first day, it has started at 10:00 AM and adjourned at 5:45PM, for the second day, it has started at 9:00 AM and adjourned at 3:30PM.

The different media were also present conducting live streaming on Social media and covering the news of the conference.

The staff of MOCT constantly posting the conference and became trending in the Twitter and FACEBOOK

## Welcoming and Opening Statements

The Director General of the Ministry of Communication and Technology Eng. Ali Abdillahi Dahir welcomed the participants, explained the objective of the conference and shared with the schedule of the conference with the participants. The Director General stated that this is the first national conference on ICT held in Somaliland since 1991 to discuss the challenges and opportunities for ICT in Somaliland. The DG reiterated that this conference is allocated to assess the ICT situation and added that there will be panel discussions moderated by ICT experts and practitioner, the conference will continue two days and expected to produce clear strategies and plans.



**The Director General of MOCT, Eng. Ali Abdillahi Dahir delivering opening statements**

The DG, thanked to the sponsors of the conference namely TELESOM, SOMTEL, SOMCABLE and GTS, SAHAL, TRUE CABLE and SOMSITE and also every person who contributed to the conference, the president of Somaliland, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Communication and Technology.

The Minister of Ministry of Information and Technology, His Excellency, Dr. Abdiweli Sh. Abdillahi Suufi stated its pleasure for him and his ministry to open national conference pertaining to the ICT issues. The Minister talked about the objectives of the conference demonstrating that this conference is intended to use ICT as a vehicle for development, to assess the utilization of the opportunities available and vowed that this conference will be held annually that will be presented academic papers developed by experts and practitioners in the field of ICT. The Minister indicated that it is imperative the collaboration between ICT stakeholders, to review policies and laws, to strengthen the relationship between ICT service providers and customers





**The Minister of Ministry of MOCT, Dr. Abdiweli Sh. Abdillahi Suufi conducting opening remarks**

The minister recommended empowering ICT skills and building Somaliland economy on ICT skills rather than agriculture and livestock, to develop Somaliland National ICT strategy, to establish ICT incubation and start up business centers, to launch websites and magazines and emphasized that this is an academic debate that will continue two days to discuss challenges and opportunities for ICT.

Finally the Minister closed his speech that this will create employment opportunities for ICT graduates who can work as a ICT free-lancers.

The Minister of Ministry of Finance Development, Dr. Sa'ad Ali Shire talked about the history and evolution of ICT. He contended that there are five (5) stages of human development starting from hunting and gathering, livestock rearing, agriculture, industry and currently information age. He regretted that Somaliland is left behind livestock rearing. He also discussed the history of computers and mobiles and further explained a brief history of Somaliland ICT which started from Telegram, exchange, telephone analogue, telex, faxes and Emails, internet and Social Media and projected the future of ICT whereby currently there are drones, trains without captain, cars without drivers and industries without labor.

The Minister expostulated the possible queries of the conference including the process of shifting from livestock rearing to information age with the help of ICT, capitalizing ICT, utilizing ICT in education and encouraged to lead the ICT in the world and talked about the outcomes of the conference including but not limited to developing strategies for growth and ICT development, cooperation between government, ICT companies and universities and that we are committed in the development of ICT sector.





**Dr. Sa'ad Ali Shire, the Minister of Ministry of Finance, conducting opening remarks**

the vice president of Somaliland His Excellency, Abdirahman Abdilahi Ismail aka 'Saylici', stated he is very honored to participate the ICT development conference and added that Somaliland is one of the leading ICT in Africa and proposed that public and private should cooperate in the development of ICT to overcome the challenges facing ICT, to provide awareness raising on the importance of ICT to our citizens and to our companies as well

Finally the Vice President of Somaliland, Ministries and CEO of ICT companies officially opened the Exhibition where by the Vice President visited and had conversations with companies present in the booths. The ICT companies showcased the exhibition their services and freely distributed gift, brochures portraying their profiles and business cards. In addition to that they were providing their service with a discount to encourage the customers to utilize during the conference.



**Vice President of Somaliland, His Excellency Abdirahman Ismail Saylici officially opening the conference**

SOMTEL<sup>1</sup> COO, Hassan Sh. Mohamoud emphasized the awareness of the importance of ICT and the existence of competition in the region in the development and innovation of ICT sector and explicated that Somaliland have great opportunities to take part in the competition. The COO suggested recommendations including but not limited to creating data and call centers, creating a good working environment for ICT companies in Somaliland and to capitalize the ICT opportunities

The COO further explained the history of SOMTEL and their contribution to ICT infrastructure and indicated that currently 4G is used in Somaliland and launched 3G and 4G in 2011 and 2012 respectively and pledged that 5G is on the way. The COO talked about the challenges and opportunities for ICT and proposed possible recommendations. The COO argued that the existing challenges are inadequate infrastructure particularly Fiber Optics, incomplete rules and lack of interconnections between

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<sup>1</sup> Established in 2009, SOMTEL is a telecommunication company that provides services including telephone (Mobile and landline), E – Dahab which is mobile money wallet service that allows you to pay for almost anything through your phone at ease instead of paying with cash, cheque or credit cards and internet services

telecommunication companies. Finally the COO recommended flourishing partnership, rules and regulations.

Abdirahim Omer COO of SOMCABLE<sup>2</sup> stated that the expected outcome of this conference will pave the way for public and private mutual understanding and contribution. He talked about a brief history of SOMCABLE, particularly the fiber optic which he contended that it is legal and the parliament approved and added that the Fiber Optic is working most of the regions in Somaliland. Abdirahim encouraged the ICT companies to utilize the fiber optics and articulated that their company should bring new inventions and innovations of ICT in Somaliland and pledged that they will launch 5G technology recently. Finally, Abdirahim recommended the creation of platform for idea exchange and information sharing and setting the framework for working and collaboration.

Khalid Sh. Muhumed, GTS<sup>3</sup> Managing Director talked a brief profile of their company and stated that they have created seven (7) systems for the Ministry of Transport and Roads Development of which 5 of them were a contribution and free of charge service, and created employment opportunities for 25 young graduates. Khalid added that ICT could be used as a vehicle for anti-corruption and delivering the services of the government. Finally Khalid suggested vital recommendations including but not limited to preparation of rules and regulations governing the ICT sector, to increase the budget of Ministry of Communication and Technology, to incorporate the curriculum on ICT skills and to export ICT skills such as Mobile Applications and others to the outside world

Abdikarim Mohamed Iid, CEO of TELESOM<sup>4</sup> elucidated the history of Telecommunication in Somaliland contemplated that the first telephone in Somaliland was two system used by two companies; analog and digital and added that study conducted by TELESOM showcased that the world is moving towards Digital Technology. The first internet service was launched in October 2000 and discussed the challenges they faced when he met USA companies in Dubai and surprised the capacity of 256KB/S which they mentioned it is only one companies and how come on earth that you want to use for a whole country and refused. He added that they have secured 256KB/S from United Arab Emirates (UAE), currently the total internet capacity used for whole companies in Somaliland is 100 GB and contended that the liberal economy of Somaliland made possible for the ICT development. In 2003 we launched APPS + GMS.

The CEO reiterated that Somaliland is leading ICT in Horn of Africa Countries and stated that it is important to develop infrastructure, particularly fiber optic and it is not possible to rely on another countries but we can import to our seas.

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<sup>2</sup> Founded in 2009, SOMCABLE is an internet service provider and telecommunication company. SOMCABLE is the first company to provide fiber optic network that covers more than 1200 KM of Somaliland and growing

<sup>3</sup> Global Tech Solutions is IT oriented company which was established in 2016 to provide web application development, customized Desktop Applications, Mobile App, ERP Development Solutions and Database Design

<sup>4</sup> TELESOM is the largest telecommunication in Somaliland that was established in 2002 by a group of shareholders. TELESOM Company provides GSM, Zaad Electronic Money, Internet and Landline telephone. Telesom Company is the first company to launch Zaad Electronic Money.

Finally, the CEO suggested viable recommendations including but not limited providing annual incentives to the employees, investing infrastructure and Research and Development, to comply rules and regulations and stressed three important issues such as to have rich mind set, knowledgeable managers and skilled labors.



**Abdikarim Mohamed Iid, CEO of Telesom delivering opening remarks**



## Panel Discussions

### Plenary Discussion on Somaliland ICT Challenges and Opportunities



#### Panelist

#### Moderator

- ✓ Dr. Aidarous Mohamed Ibrahim

#### Panelist

- ✓ Abdirashid Mohamed Ismail, Sahal Tech
- ✓ Mustafe Shukri Jama, Sahan Consulting
- ✓ Eng Ali A. Dahir, DG MOCT

- ✓ Farah Mohamed Hersi, Maansan Consulting

Here are the summary points for the panel discussion

The panel started with introduction of the panelist and overview of the topic pertaining to Somaliland ICT challenges and opportunities and the panelist proceeded to list the following challenges facing Somaliland ICT:

- Lack of ICT regulations
- Limited implementation of existing rules and regulations
- Lack of Spectrum Management Mechanism.
- Limited cooperation and collaboration
- Lack of national strategy, vision and policy
- Skill Gaps of ICT graduates
- Young generations are not ready for job due to limited skills
- Mismatch between education and working skills

The panelist suggested the following recommendations;

- The experts of ICT should go to the universities for teaching students
- To establish ICT training centers
- To engage and capitalize the local talents
- Creation of manpower of technologies or Institute of IT (IIT) to export skills to overseas

### **Reflections of the session**

Do the companies provide internships for young graduations?

Do we have strategy for the brain drain particularly to the government?

It is important to incorporate ICT education in Somaliland curriculum

Answers

- Companies provide internships for young graduates
- Companies should share their demands with universities
- ICT experts working with the companies should teach at universities
- The companies should launch internship programs



- Self-study and conducting researches
- To limit the foreigners working the country and implement Somaliland Labor law

The minister of ICT responded the questions pertaining to the governments and indicated the following points:

- To encourage the entrepreneurship
- The ministry and private companies should cooperate in the attainment of trainings pertaining to the ICT
- Establishment of Internship institute
- Establishment of ICT association governed by the private and public enterprises
- Development of Somaliland ICT development fund
- Lack of recognition is a main challenge facing Somaliland
- Development of ICT regulatory body
- To encourage local ICT
- To sustain this kind of conferences
- Currently we have one gateways and it is vital to add another gateway

### **Panel Discussion on Innovation & ICT for Employment Initiatives**



### **Panelist**

#### **Moderator**

- ✓ Mohamed Hassan Saleban, MoFD

#### **Panelists**

- ✓ Mustafe Abdi Daud, MoCT
- ✓ Mohamed Omer, Pacific Institute
- ✓ Shadiya Abdi Khalif, MoCT
- ✓ Khaled Sheikh Muhumed, GTS

The topics discusses pertaining to How ICT could participate in employment creation? ICT could provide employment to most of Somaliland citizens and requires the following steps; to strengthen the trainings and

certifications, capacity building, constant development, new productions and new innovations, employment creation. The panelist also discussed the challenges facing ICT innovation and suggested the following recommendations including; drafting laws protecting the innovations and new inventions, the government should establish innovation points, building trust between clients and students, fixing the ICT skills gap and enriching the universities knowledge.

### **Plenary discussion on cyber security and telecom frauds**



### **Panelist**

#### **Moderator**

- ✓ Ismail Hassan Yousouf

#### **Panelist**

- ✓ Mohamed Omer Mohamed, MOCT
- ✓ Abdirisaq Mohamed Jama, SOMTEL
- ✓ Abdikarim Husein Elmi, TELESOM
- ✓ Ahmed Omer Dini, SOMCABLE

The discussion started with introduction of the topic and brief background of the panelist. The panelists pointed out and suggested the following recommendations

- To assess current services to get solutions
- To obtain skilled and qualified labor
- To establish centre for managing ICT security issues
- Ensure for keeping information confidential with the use of passwords
- Maintaining back up of data

The plenary talked about reducing the risk of internet usage and raised the following issues

- Safe use of internet exists in the world
- Encrypted for financial services
- Safe Browsing
- Keep your personal data as private as possible
- Take care of unknown source downloads
- Online protection from Child
- Telecom frauds
- Develop cyber security acts and policies

## Presentations

Eng. Ali Dahir, Director General of MOCT delivered presentation on **Identify for Better Service Delivery**. He talked deeply the government ICT usage especially the last three registrations held such as National ID Registration, which assists the government and business in identifying the citizens for providing services. Somaliland Voter Registration simplified to go against irregularities due to ensuring one man one vote and Civil Registration that gives us and even the government to know our population, Birth rate, death rate, married, unmarried and divorces. He also told that government can use this civil registration to its clients and make better its public service delivery.

Dr. Sa'ad Ali Shire, the minister of Ministry of Finance presented **The Role of ICT in National Economic Development**. He indicated that the ICT increases the economy twice, in India, ICT increases 9% on their economy, in USA ICT increase their economy by 7% and added that the money spent on IT in the year 2014 was 4 trillion dollar

Abdilahi Abshir Ahmed, Director of ICT Research and Innovation of MOCT presented the theme on **Government ICT Usage Policy**. He presented the findings of a study conducted by the ministry. The study listing the challenges including lack of policies and rules governing government ICT, Limited government ICT infrastructure and provided recommendations including the development of policies government ICT,

controlling government expenditure on ICT, keeping government information confidential and establishing E – Governance and conducting researches and studies for developing ICT.

Amin Abshir, SLFMIS Director of Ministry of Finance conducted a presentation on **Somaliland Financial Management Information System (SLFMIS)** displayed how the Ministry of finance uses ICT its crucial functions like Expenditure management, Revenue and Budget mechanism. He also pinpointed to train the employees of the ministry to work. ICT usage facilitated the work load of the ministry.

Adnan Dahir, Telesom International Relations Manager presented the topic on **Somaliland Telecom Industries Evolution and Future Trends**. He argued that the first fixed lines started in 1993; SITCO and Aerolite launched the first mobile. 1999 was the first time implemented interconnection between Hargeisa and Burao. Telesom launched 3G and 4G in 2011 and 2014 respectively. According to Adnan, the following issues will be shaping the future trends of Telecom industry including 5G era, operators seeking to capitalize on rapidly evolving eco system, Internet of things (IOT) and artificial intelligence.

Fuad Mohamed Nuh, CTO SOMCABLE, conducted a presentation on **Improving Internet Connectivity**. He pointed out that SOMCABLE is currently providing internet to 10, 000 homes in Jigjiga yar and contemplated that 80% of the population is covered and expected to reach 90% at the end of 2020. He also stated that 5G service will require Fiber Optic. During his presentation, Fuad recommended the following points including enforcing early digital learning in schools, developing ICT centers in all cities, establishing government owned infrastructure and government policies.

Hassan Sh. Mohamoud, COO of SOMTEL, conducted a presentation on **Digital Transformation** in Somaliland suggested that the government should prepare the proper infrastructure which can make enabling environment. That is the tremendous challenge as companies always face.

Paul Jeremy from Head of IT Application Sector of DP World discussed about **Digital Transformation in Berbera Port Operations**. He emphasized the importance of collaboration of two generations and modernized Port Terminal System – Container Management System and carried out staff training sessions

Abdikadir Mohamed Abdille, presented the theme of **ICT for Media, Prospects and Problems**. He mentioned that ICT changed the media industry enormously and assisted the preparation and reporting of news that currently there is live updating. Social media became the daily life of our society and posting social events, news and personal incidents.

Dr. Aden Weli Ismail, discussed on the **Mobile Money in National Development** and talked about the role of mobile plays in the national development of Somaliland, he further explained the difference between mobile money and mobile banking. He stated that mobile money should be affordable, accessible, adequate and appropriate and recommended to protect the service, to encourage the companies and to employ the talents



## Exhibition

It showcased full spectrum of ICT companies providing products and services to the citizens. The exhibition also served as an outstanding deal making where local Tech companies engaged and secured investment opportunities. The ICT companies provided discounted and free of charge services to the clients.



### List of Exhibitors

1. TELESOM
2. SOMTEL
3. SOMCABLE
4. SOMSITE
5. SAHAL TECH
6. GTS – Global Technology Solutions
7. TAMAAM eservices
8. TRUE CABLE
9. Ministry of Interior
10. Sahal Transport



## 11. SMARTSOM

### Closing Remarks

The Director General of Ministry of Communication and Technology, Eng Ali Dahir acknowledged to the participants of the conference for their time and attention during the two days of the conference, pledged the production of conference report. He added that the outcome of the conference will be declared a communiqué and honorary awards will be provided to the companies and individuals who contributed to the conference and its outcomes.

The Minister of Ministry of Communication and Technology, Dr Abdiweli Sh. Ibrahim Suufi officially closed the conference. The Minister started his speech commending the companies who sponsored the conference and showcased their services and products to the exhibition. The minister also thanked to the individuals who contributed their energies and efforts, and the panelist, and presenters and finally to the participants. The Minister pledged the presentation of academic papers in the next ICT conference and invited researchers and students to participate. The minister read the conference communiqué consisting of 18 points covering the rules and regulations, strategic plans and ICT education.

Finally, the Minister of Communication and Technology, the Minister of Ministry of Finance Development and the Director General of Ministry of Communication and Technology provided honorary awards to the following companies and individuals:

#### **Companies**

- Telesom – Sponsor
- SOMTEL – Sponsor
- SOMCABLE – Sponsor
- GTS – Sponsor
- SAHAL TECH Company – Sponsor
- SOMSITE
- True Cable

#### **Conference Organizers:-**

- Eng. Ali Abdilahi Dahir, Director General of Ministry of Communication and Technology
- Abdikarim Ibrahim Saleebaan, Ministry of Finance Development
- Mohamed Hassan Saleban, Ministry of Finance Development
- Mustafe Abdi Daud – Ministry of Communication and Technology
- Abdilahi Abshir – Ministry of Communication and Technology
- Mukhtaar Nuur Mohamed – Ministry of Communication and Technology
- Mohamed Omer Mohamed – Ministry of Communication and Technology

- Abdiqadir Mohamed Abdile – Ministry of Communication and Technology
- Ismail Hassan Yuusuf



**Communiqué**  
**Of Somaliland ICT Conference under the Auspices of Ministry of Communication and  
Technology**  
**Hargeisa, Somaliland**

On September 07 to September 08, 2019 the ministry of Communications and Technology (MOCT) hosted the first National Conference on Somaliland ICT under the theme of “ICT empowering for development and success” in Hargeisa from September 07 to September 08, 2019. The conference consisted of panel discussions, presentations conducted by ICT companies and experts and Exhibition that ICT companies operating in Somaliland displayed their products and services and provided discounted and free charge of service to the clients.

The vice president of Somaliland His Excellency, Abdirahman Abdilahi Ismail aka Saylici officially opened the conference participated by more than 350 delegates representing policymakers and regulators, telecommunication companies, Fintech Companies, Technology Solutions Providers, ICT consulting firms, Legal Experts, Academicians and Journalists, ICT Start-Up Innovators and Training Centers, NGOs and Development Organizations, World Bank Group and Other ICT Stakeholders. The Ministry of Communication and Technology, Dr. Abdiweli Sh. Abdilahi Suufi officially closed the conference and declared the conference communiqué.

The participants recognized that Somaliland is leading ICT in the Horn of Africa with the help of liberal market economy and encouraged to sustain these initiatives.

The participants underlined the existence of ICT competition in region

The participants also noted that ICT is a vehicle for economic development, good governance and increases the GDP of the countries tremendously

1. The Ministry of Communication & Technology should prepare **Somaliland ICT Strategic Plan** which will support the national economic growth.
2. The ICT Conference underlined that Somaliland should become Technological Hub in the Region and declared to establish **ICT Innovations and Entrepreneurship Centre**, jointly invested by the government and private Companies.
3. The Somaliland ICT Conference is Calling upon the Ministry of communication and Technology to amend and enforce Acts and policies required to develop ICT Sector and develop intellectual property acts and policies

4. The Somaliland ICT Conference recognized to develop ICT Infrastructure and to create enabling environment for ICT Sector
5. The Somaliland government should play an important role in safe guarding existing investments, encourage new investments, innovations and regulating free market competition.
6. The ICT conference agreed to incorporate ICT education into the National Curriculum and harmonize market demand skills and establish ICT trainings Institute for information age generation
7. The ICT conference recognized the importance of ICT in economic development and recommended to increase the budget of Ministry of Communication and Technology to advance ICT sector as well as establishment of Somaliland ICT Development Fund cooperated by all ICT stakeholders.
8. The ICT conference recommended to document the historical perspective of Somaliland ICT and to produce ICT magazine that will publish ICT information.
9. The ICT conference noted the importance of strengthening the relationship between ICT companies and government institutions.
10. The ICT conference suggested the Government to utilize E – Governance system to deliver public services and improving accountability and transparency. The ICT companies pledged to support the government in shifting to this modern system.
11. The ICT conference affirmed to launch Somaliland ICT professional Associations
12. The ICT conference noted the importance of the conference in information sharing, fostering collaboration among stakeholders and securing investment opportunities. In light of this, the participants agreed to hold the ICT conference annually.