Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

I bring you warm greetings from the government and people of Somalia, especially from the Somali children.

At the outset, let me extend my sincere gratitude to the International Institute for the Rights of the Child and Rajo Association for organizing this event which is a critical step towards protecting the very fundamental rights of every Child in Somalia. I would also like to congratulate to the canton of Valais and the Government and people of Switzerl

My name is Mohamed Abdulkadir, I am the Director of the Ministerial Support office at the Ministry of Interior and Federal Affairs of the Federal Republic of Somalia – an office that provides policy advice, daily briefings, and secretariat and support services to the leaders of the Ministry. As a child at the age of 9, when the civil war broke out in Somalia, I lost my right to go to school similar to many children at my age during that period. Additionally, I have gone through and experienced displacement and exposed to dead bodies at the streets of Mogadishu – a city once called the Switzerland of Africa for its beauty and cleanliness of its streets. That experience left me in nightmares and sadness for many subsequent years.

However, I was one of the very few lucky children who survived and completed their secondary school education after spending their entire childhood in a war torn country where the violent civil war forced thousands of children live with harm and fear as well as hunger and homelessness. Many children also lost their lives as a direct result of the war and others injured, displaced, disabled, orphaned, exploited, smuggled, recruited as militias and exposed to all forms of abuse, maltreatment and neglect. Unfortunately, as of today, many children are still struggling to survive while experiencing unpleasant childhood in Somalia and around the world.

As a humanitarian aid worker in Somalia, I have witnessed disturbing images of children facing death due to famine and disease. In a later stage, as a developmental consultant, I have met and worked directly with children living in dwindling situations whether in frontlines, rural and remote areas or confined in
IDPs settlements across Somalia. That experience made me convinced to the importance of preserving and protecting the well-being and rights of the children in Somalia. Not only for the children but the future of the country too.

The Ministry of Interior and Federal Affairs, which is where I currently work for, leads the process of establishing a federal framework for governing the country through formation of the federal units as well as coordinating and collaborating with existing and emerging federal state administrations. The Ministry also works on stabilising the newly recovered areas through establishment of caretaker and interim local administrations capable of leading an inclusive dialogue, formation of governance structures, promoting reconciliation and civic engagement. The Ministry also directs the National Commission of the refugees and IDPs who are the most vulnerable groups in Somalia where children and elderly are the majority.

Recently, the Ministry has concluded a National consultation on the draft citizenship amendment bill, which stipulated the rights of children to the Somali citizenship in line with the articles 1,3,4,7,8 and 21 of the convention on the rights of the child. Thus, making the Ministry of Interior and Federal Affairs, the first government institution that carefully drafted a legislation that is compatible with the relevant articles of the CRC since Somalia ratified the convention. It was a great honour for me to lead the consultation process and play a key role in the drafting process of such legislation.

Similarly, the Somali Government established the National Child Protection Unit at the Ministry of Defence and developed action plans to end and prevent recruitment and use of children as well as to end killing and maiming of children by the Somali National Army.

The government also established 3 centres for rehabilitating child defectors from insurgents. At the same token, the Ministry of Justice is in the process of developing the Juvenile Justice Law. The Ministry of Health established and runs a safe house for caring under 18 girls who encountered with abuse and violations against their rights. The Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development chairs and facilitated establishment of child rights implementation steering committee which included line Ministries, members of the Federal Parliament, civil society organisations, religious leaders and traditional elders.
Although all these steps were taken towards the positive side, yet many challenges are preventing Somalia to implement the CRC. These vary from conflicts and political instability, weak government capacity, lack of accurate or reliable data, limited awareness and knowledge, high poverty and illiteracy rates, high fertility rate and culturally harmful practices. Hence, it is very clear, that Somalia would not be able to implement the ratified convention without getting international support and having supportive friends.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to your questions and comments.