

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 2, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We are writing to request that the Department of State distinguish Somaliland from the Federal Republic of Somalia in its travel advisory report. This distinction would symbolize support for the efforts Somaliland – which the National Defense Authorization Act of 2023 treats as distinct from Federal Member States of Somalia – has made in countering the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the Horn of Africa, supporting Taiwan, and actively engaging and supporting U.S. interests.¹ Both the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party (Select Committee) and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) see this step as consistent with our efforts at countering the PRC’s malign influence in the Horn of Africa and supporting greater international recognition of Taiwan.

Differentiating Somaliland from Somalia through a separate travel advisory would more accurately reflect the realities on the ground in the region. Successive, democratically-elected governments in Somaliland have successfully prevented terrorism, piracy, and smuggling within its borders and created a safe and prosperous society, in sharp contrast to the civil conflict that has engulfed Somalia.² Somaliland’s security and law enforcement authorities, moreover, have ensured the security of its territory and surrounding waters.

A travel advisory that accurately reflects Somaliland’s security environment would stimulate further development and growth and builds on letters to your predecessor for the U.S. to deepen engagement with Somaliland and open a representative office in its capital city of Hargeisa.³ The current “Do Not Travel” advisory for Somalia poses a severe deterrent for visitors, commerce, and investment, while a separate advisory for Somaliland would incentivize U.S. companies and investors to capitalize on its natural resources, including critical minerals such as lithium and copper.⁴

¹ U.S. Congress. House. H.R.7776–James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023. 117th Cong., 2nd sess. Enacted December 23, 2022. Public Law No. 117-263.

² Joshua Meservey, “The U.S. Should Recognize Somaliland,” *Heritage Foundation*, October 19, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-us-should-recognize-somaliland> and Michael Horton “How Somaliland Combats al-Shabaab,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, November 2019, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/somaliland-combats-al-shabaab/>.

³ Letter from the Select Committee on the CCP to Secretary Antony Blinken, Department of State, January 15, 2025 and Letter from the House Foreign Affairs Committee to Secretary Antony Blinken, Department of State, March 14, 2022.

⁴ Nicholaas C Steenkamp, “The mysterious horn of Africa: Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland,” *African Mining Online*, May 1, 2023, <https://www.africanmining.co.za/2023/05/01/the-mysterious-horn-of-africa-somalia-somaliland-and-puntland/>.

A bifurcated travel advisory would not be unprecedented. As you know, the State Department currently offers region-specific guidance and travel risk levels for several countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, and Cameroon.⁵ Somaliland continues to demonstrate its interest in partnering with the U.S. on countering PRC influence in the region, which continues to grow. In 2017, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) established its first ever overseas military base in Djibouti, and Iran-backed Houthi rebels use Chinese-made weapons and satellite imagery from Chinese companies to launch attacks on ships transiting the Red Sea.⁶

Somaliland is also keen on working with like-minded partners wherever possible, such as with its close cooperation with Taiwan on healthcare, infrastructure, and maritime cooperation and growing ties with Israel through its solid support of the Abraham Accords.⁷ Indeed, the Development Finance Corporation has stated, at a May 2024 Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, its willingness to consider partnering with its Taiwanese counterpart to finance critical mineral ventures and partner on oil projects.⁸

I commend the steps this administration has already taken to strengthen ties between the U.S. and Somaliland, including facilitating a delegation led by U.S. Ambassador to Somalia Richard Riley and the former Commander of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) General Michael Langley to Hargeisa. The Select Committee and the CECC stand ready to work with you and the State Department. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Chris Smith
Co-Chair
Congressional-Executive Commission on China



John Moolenaar
Chairman
Select Committee on China

⁵ "Travel Advisories," *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs*, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html.html>.

⁶ "China Arming Houthi Rebels in Yemen in Exchange For Unimpeded Red Sea Passage," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, January 2, 2025, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/01/02/china-arming-houthi-rebels-in-yemen-in-exchange-for-unimpeded-red-sea-passage/>.

⁷ "Taiwan, Somaliland sign coast guard cooperation deal," *Focus Taiwan*, July 24, 2025, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202507240027> and Avi Kumar, "Abraham Accords work to grow Israeli-African ties, as do other Jewish relations on the ground," *Jewish News Syndicate*, May 1, 2023, <https://www.jns.org/abraham-accords-work-to-grow-israeli-african-ties-as-do-other-jewish-relations-on-the-ground/>.

⁸ Moustafa Ahmad and Sacad Muhumed, "Now is the Time for the United States to Back Somaliland-Taiwan Ties," *Global Taiwan Institute*, <https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/GTB-10.4-PDF.pdf> and House Foreign Affairs Committee, "Reviewing DFC's Efforts to Out Compete China's BRI," May 2024.