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**Speech by HE Geoff Tooth,
Australian High Commissioner to Kenya and Ambassador to Somalia
at the launch of
*Peace and Milk: Scenes of Northern Somalia*
Goethe Institut, Nairobi, 12 June 2012**

The Honourable Mahamud Sirat,

Eliphas Nyamogo Head of Information of the Goethe Institut Kenya

Panel Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here tonight for the launch of *Peace and Milk: Scenes of Northern Somalia*.

I am sure I join you all in congratulating Fatima Jibrell and James Lindsay for putting together this quite extraordinary book of photographs that offer a rare insight into Somalia.

We at the Australian High Commission are of course very proud of James. He was for many years one of us and served in the High Commission in Nairobi as well as Santiago, Vientiane, Caracas Dacha, and Islamabad. He was a great loss to the Australian Foreign Service but our loss has been to the gain of some very worthwhile charities and projects. James and his wonderful wife Pamela have done so much to help and inspire others and I marvel at their energy and commitment.

Ladies and gentlemen, This is an important book.

It powerfully showcases the lives of ordinary Somalis in northern Somalia and highlights the devastating impact of climate change and war.

But these striking photos also show the unknown beauty of Somalia, in stark contrast to the everyday pictures of conflict, violence and poverty that the media and the public tend to associate with this war torn country.

*Peace and Milk* captures the beauty underneath the tragedy and provides a glimpse of the vast potential of the environment and the people.

For there is good news coming out of Somalia. There is hope that a society is emerging that is better able to look after its people, provide jobs, educate its young and create wealth and opportunity.

I hope that the book will prove a significant contributor to the current dialogue on the reconstruction and development, and particularly help focus our attention on the vital issue of environmental degredation.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend Fatima and James for their work in preserving the environment through the introduction of affordable solar cooking for communities in the region. Sun Fire cooking can transform lives in Somalia and elsewhere and deserves support.

Ladies and gentlemen, Australia is committed to the resolution of conflict and sustained development in Somalia. We were a major donor to Somalia last year, responding quickly to the drought and famine. We intend to continue to do what we can, working with Kenya, other countries in the region and elsewhere, the Somalian community in Australia and of course Somalians themselves.

We must keep the momentum of the last year going in Somalia. There is too much at stake not to.

Ladies and gentlemen

That is more than enough from me. I would like to end by thanking the Goethe Institut for their generosity in hosting this event, and in particular Eliphas Nyamogo for being such a wonderful host tonight.

I will now let you enjoy the peace and milk and perhaps some Australian wine and hope you get inspired by the Panel and this wonderful book.

**Background**

This book has been a result of the persistent advocacy and passion that the authors have towards northern Somalia and preserving the environment that is under threat from climate change, drought and the charcoal trade.

Fatima Jibrell, a renowned environmental activist, has worked with pastoralist communities and is committed to the cause of preserving the pastoralist way of life.

James Lindsay, a retired Australian diplomat, regards Somalia as a special place and has worked with Fatima to raise awareness on the devastating effects of climate change on the environment of northern Somalia, as well as the charcoal trade leading to deforestation. This led to the founding of Sun Fire Cooking in 2004 which has introduced the solar cooker as an alternative to charcoal for household cooking.

Through this book, the authors show their love and concern for the fragile yet amazing environment of northern Somalia.