



Ministry of Trade and Tourism(MOTT) Republic of Somaliland

NEWS RELEASE

Somaliland Launches Online Business Registration and Licensing Services

Hargeisa, Somaliland, December 8, 2021 — Somaliland, with support from IFC, today launched an online one-stop-shop business registration and licensing system (BRLS) to speed, simplify, and reduce costs for businesses and entrepreneurs.

The new system, found at brls.govsomaliland.org, is part of Somaliland's wider strategy to strengthen its private sector and encourage economic growth and job creation. Reducing lengthy registrations and licensing procedures will save businesses time and operational costs, especially smaller and informal businesses seeking to formalize their operations.

The Ministry of Trade and Tourism will run a three-month pilot of the system allowing it to be further enhanced and optimized ahead of a formal launch expected in March 2022. The BRLS is being delivered by the Ministries of Trade in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Interior.

"We will now offer a world-class registration and licensing system to our business community in Somaliland," Minister of Trade and Tourism, Hon. Muhamoud Hassan Sa'ad, said. "This reform is a result of a successful collaboration involving counterpart Government institutions, the private sector, and IFC. My Ministry is determined to offer fast and easy registration and licensing services to the private sector. I therefore urge our businesses, especially informal businesses, to take advantage of this resource to register and to comply with government licensing requirements."

"Fast and easy access to registration and licensing services is transformative for businesses and investors," said Amena Arif, IFC Country Manager for East Africa. "The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important digital services are to connect businesses with critical services and customers."

The web-based system is a one-stop-shop resource that allows entrepreneurs to register and license businesses from their homes or offices, removing the need to visit Ministry of Trade offices. BRLS will offer a range of services, including reserving a business name, registering a new business, and changing the particulars of an existing business.

Users can also use the system to obtain a tax identification number through integration with Ministry of Finance, close or wind up a business, acquire or renew business licenses, and search the registry's business information database. Additionally, BRLS provides a variety of resources including relevant laws and regulations, online user guides, and information on registration and licensing fees and tariffs, among other resources.

Following the recent passage of company law regulation, the online portal is the latest initiative by Somaliland designed to strengthen the business environment by enabling improved access to government service by businesses. The system marks a major step towards enhancing digital financial services through online and mobile payment options and fulfilling "Know Your Customer" requirements for financial institutions in Somaliland.

BRLS will also improve inter-ministerial coordination, as businesses can obtain integrated registration, licensing and tax services from a single platform.

"We are happy that Government will be making business registration and licensing easier, transparent and affordable for the business community. We welcome this effort by government to modernize the services it offers to the business community and encourage our entrepreneurs to take full advantage of the online services," said Mr. Jamal Aided, Chairman of the Somaliland Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.

IFC provided technical and financial support from initial design of the system to implementation, and also provided capacity building to officials.

The business registration and licensing reform was supported by the Somali Investment Climate Reform Project II (SICRP2), managed by IFC and funded by the government of Denmark, the European Union, and the United Kingdom's Foreign Commonwealth Development Office.

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