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Celebrating Culture, Building Community: Somali Cultural Lunch Breaks at UNSOS

Mogadishu - In Mogadishu, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UN SOS) is creating space not only for operational excellence but also for cultural connection. Through the Cultural Lunch Breaks, organized by the Staff Welfare and Recreation Committee (SWRC), UN staff are invited to experience Somali traditions within the workplace. Far from being just another mid-day meal, the event has become a vibrant occasion where the UN community can enjoy food, art, and music while connecting with Somalia's rich cultural heritage.

The initiative reflects the SWRC's commitment, through its Cultural Sub-committee, to fostering well-being and a healthy work-life balance for UN personnel, while giving staff the chance to experience the traditions of the country they serve. In an environment where security restrictions often limit exposure to local culture, the Cultural Lunch Breaks provide a unique opportunity, a welcoming and inclusive platform where colleagues can socialize, share a meal, and immerse themselves in Somali heritage.



Each Cultural Lunch Break is unique, bringing the vibrancy of Somalia's cultural life directly into the UN compound. Traditional music groups set the rhythm, while henna artists, local artisans, portrait painters, and food vendors showcase their talents and crafts. The result is an atmosphere that is both festive and inclusive, supporting local performers and small businesses while offering staff a genuine cultural encounter.



The event, held four times a year, acts as a cultural bridge between UNSOS and the surrounding community, celebrating creativity while fostering mutual respect and understanding. Its inclusive model benefits both participants and partners: while UN staff gain meaningful exposure to Somalia's heritage, local artisans and performers receive visibility and support for their work.



This two-way exchange strengthens ties between UNSOS and its host community, highlighting the mission's role not only as a logistical enabler of peace operations but also as a respectful partner within Somali society. Through the Somali Cultural Lunch Breaks, UNSOS is enriching the staff experience and building bridges of understanding between the United Nations and the people of Somalia.