

## **UN appeals to int'l community to stop people trafficking in Somalia**

Xinhua General News Service

May 30, 2006

A UN official on Tuesday appealed to international community to stop the unfolding tragedy of people smuggling from Somalia to Yemen, saying the highly lucrative trade is extremely dangerous.

Addressing a news conference in Nairobi, Dennis McNamara, the UN special adviser on internal displacement, said the people trafficking from the northeast Somali port town of Bossaso to Yemen, an illegal gateway to jobs in the Middle East and Europe, is a source of human tragedy.

"The Somali authorities should more vigorously prosecute the traffickers and organizers of this highly profitable trade, which is also extremely dangerous," McNamara told reporters in Nairobi after a week-long visit to the war-ravaged Horn of Africa nation.

People from Somalia and Ethiopia are often smuggled to Yemen from the port of Bossaso by unscrupulous boat operators, who exploit the migrants' desperate hope for better lives abroad.

Many such voyages have ended in heavy loss of life when unseaworthy, crowded boats have capsized or smugglers forced people overboard.

McNamara said it was the responsibility of the Puntland administration to put a stop to the practice.

"The authorities should control the boats that ferry the migrants, who are often lured to their deaths," McNamara said.

Last week, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the smuggling of people from Somalia to Yemen had increased significantly in the first four months of 2006, with more than 10,500 Somalis and Ethiopians making the perilous boat journey.

The total number of Somalis registered in 2005 in Yemen reached 13,400, as they sought to escape a region stricken by conflict, poverty and recurrent drought, OCHA said in its latest update published last Tuesday.

Smugglers charge between 30 U.S. dollars and 50 dollars per person, often cramming hundreds of people onto small vessels, with little food and water for a 30-hour passage on high seas.

Bossaso, the chief commercial port of Puntland, a self-declared autonomous area in north-east Somalia, is one of the world's busiest smuggling hubs.