



2024 MINNESOTA EAST AFRICA BANQUET

*“Connecting Communities,
Creating Opportunities,”*

OCTOBER 26, 2024
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM

NORWAY HOUSE
913 E FRANKLIN AVE
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55404



2024 MINNESOTA EAST AFRICA BANQUET

The Minnesota Institute of Horn of Africa Studies (MNIHAS) invites you
to the 2024 Minnesota East Africa Banquet

Date: October 26, 2024

Location: Norway House, Minneapolis, MN

Theme: *“Connecting Communities, Creating Opportunities”*

The banquet will focus on strengthening our communities, fostering mutual support, and promoting ties between Minnesota and East Africa. We are also excited to launch a transformative initiative called Minnesota Welcomes. This ambitious project highlights the powerful stories of Minnesota’s East African community, showcasing their significant contributions to the state. Minnesota Welcomes aims to inspire greater civic participation and compliance within the East African Minnesotan community, ensuring their voices are more widely heard in local governance and community affairs.

Additionally, the project seeks to elevate Minnesota on the global stage by fostering stronger business connections between the State of Minnesota and East Africa, promoting both economic growth and cultural exchange.

Highlights of the evening include:

- **Keynote Address:** Ambassador Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, will deliver a keynote briefing on the current situation in the East Africa region, highlighting its geopolitical and economic significance. He will also emphasize the importance of fostering strong relationships between Minnesota and East Africa, underscoring the region's potential as a hub for trade, cultural exchange, and shared development opportunities.
- **Fireside Chat:** Featuring Dr. John Pournoor, Mathew Woodlee, and Abdiwahab Mohamed, with moderation by Thomas Hanson, the discussion will focus on Strengthening U.S.-Africa Ties Through Community Contributions and Diaspora Diplomacy.
- **Documentary Presentation:** Abdurrahman Mohmud, Director at City of Nations Story Telling Studio, Fiscally Sponsored by Mixed Blood Theatre Company and a board member of MNIHAS, will present a short documentary exploring the contributions of the East African community to the State of Minnesota’s economy.
- **Musical Performances:** Enjoy performances by the renowned Saint Olaf Somali-Scandinavia Music Collective and traditional and East African musicians, offering a rich cultural experience that celebrates the vibrant heritage shared by Minnesota and East Africa.

Join us for an inspiring evening as community leaders, scholars, diplomats, and advocates come together to celebrate cultural exchange and explore new avenues for collaboration.

Please RSVP [Online](#) as soon as possible - Space is limited



Contact MNIHAS with question
info@mnihas or 612 779 1300

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



H.E. Amb. Mohamed Siad Doualeh

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations and the Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States.

Ambassador Mohamed Siad Doualeh is the Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations and the Ambassador to the United States. He has previously served as Djibouti's Ambassador to the UN, WTO, and Switzerland. Ambassador Doualeh has played significant roles in various diplomatic and peace processes, including being a Special Envoy to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development IGAD-led Process for Somalia and the Sudan Peace Process. He was involved in preparing the Somali case for international forums and participated in organizing the national reconciliation conference for peace in Somalia.

During his tenure in Geneva (2006-2015), he held several leadership roles, including Vice President of the Human Rights Council, Chairman of the Francophone Group of Ambassadors, and Chairman of CDIP. He has delivered numerous presentations on conflict resolution, human rights, and maritime security.

Ambassador Doualeh holds a Master's degree in British and American Literature and Civilization and has conducted comparative research on the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Carlyle. He is multilingual, fluent in French and English, with a working knowledge of Spanish and Arabic. He has received prestigious awards for his diplomatic efforts, including the “Médaille de l'Order National du 27 Juin” and “Commandeur de l'Order National du 27 Juin 1977”. Born on December 27, 1968, he is married with four children.



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F I R E S I D E C H A T S



Thomas Hanson
Diplomat in Residence

Thomas Hanson is a former U.S. Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State whose diplomatic postings included East Germany, France, Norway, the Soviet Union, Sweden, and the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. He also participated in the opening of new U.S. embassies in Mongolia and Estonia, worked on the Foreign Relations Committees of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and served as Director for NATO and European Affairs at the Atlantic Council of the United States in Washington, D.C.

Thomas Hanson is the Diplomat in Residence at the Alworth Institute for International Affairs at the University of Minnesota – Duluth and has taught diplomacy at Carleton College. He serves as Chair of the Minnesota Committee on Foreign Relations, Co-Chair of the Minnesota China Business Council, and is involved with several other organizations, including the U.S. Foreign Policy Working Group of the British International Studies Association.

Hanson frequently speaks on international issues, contributes to media, and delivers an annual U.S. Foreign Policy Update. He holds a BA from the University of Minnesota and graduate degrees from the Fletcher School, the Institute of Advanced International Studies in Geneva, and the National School of Administration in Paris.



Abdiwahab Mohamed
Assistant Commissioner,
Minnesota Department of
Employment and Economic
Development (DEED)

Abdiwahab Mohamed is the Assistant Commissioner for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs in Minnesota, where he develops strategies to improve employment and business opportunities for New Americans and leads cross-agency efforts to enhance services for immigrants and refugees.

Abdiwahab served as the Minnesota Trade Office's Regional Trade Manager for Africa, the Middle East, and India, promoting international trade and assisting Minnesota businesses entering global markets. He coordinates visits from foreign dignitaries and led the state's first trade mission to an African country, while also engaging the local diaspora to strengthen business ties with those regions.

Abdiwahab holds a master's in international studies and a bachelor's in political science and economics from the University of Nairobi.



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FIRESIDE CHATS



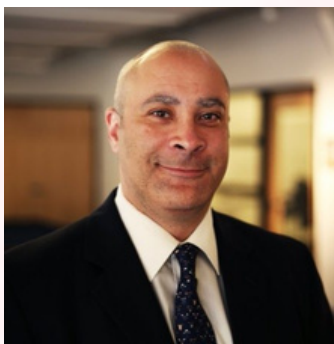
Dr. John Pournoor
CEO and founder of
Government Analytica

John is the CEO and founder of Government Analytica. He has 35 years of experience working at the nexus of governments and industry, most recently as VP of Government Affairs at 3M with operations in 29 states and in over 37 countries. Government Analytica provides its private and public sector clients research, analysis, and public-value thought leadership insights and content to better engage governments in health care, infrastructure, technology, trade, supply chains, safety, and security sectors.

In September of 2001, John was asked by 3M, his employer, to chair a consortium of companies to respond to US Government needs.

During a challenging time in our nation's history, CBRTA Alliance, which included Beckton Dickinson, Black and Veatch, Cargill, Mayo Clinic, Motorola, Honeywell, Lucent/Bell, General Dynamics, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab, and 3M proved to be ideal grounds to work with leading organizations that employ a variety of strategies for effective U.S. government engagement and service, after 9/11.

Soon after, he was asked to form 3M's International Government Affairs Team while a new megatrend was taking hold. Governments had begun to produce large amounts of data. Access to this new wave of digital information on economic, social, and a myriad of other indicators was open to the public.



Mathew Woodlee
Director, U.S. Commercial
Service (USCS)/International
Trade Administration
(ITA),

Mathew Woodlee currently serves as the Director of the U.S. Commercial Service (USCS)/International Trade Administration (ITA) office in Minneapolis, MN. Before this role, he served as a Senior International Trade Specialist and as the Global Safety & Security Industry Team Leader for ITA, where he worked supporting U.S. exports within the security technology and public safety sectors. Mathew also served in the New Mexico state government as Director of International Trade for the State of New Mexico, a state legislative analyst and in private consulting.

Mathew attended the University of New Mexico for his undergraduate (Political Science) and graduate (MBA-International Management) degrees. In his spare time, he teaches International Business and Marketing courses at a local university and enjoys staying active with his wife and son in the Twin Cities area.



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DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATION

Contributions of the East African Community to the State of Minnesota's Economy



Abdurrahman Mahmud

Entrepreneur, Tech Innovator, and Executive Producer

Abdurrahman Mahmud is a dynamic and passionate community leader dedicated to empowering individuals and fostering thriving communities. He currently serves as a Creative Small Business and economic development Consultant for City of Minneapolis' BTAP (Business technical assistance program) and is serial entrepreneur and investor as he is the founder of TWINIST Inc, a job search engine and hiring platform aimed at providing opportunities for minorities and immigrants. Abdurrahman is also a board member of the Minnesota Institute of Horn of Africa Studies (MNIHAS) and a storyteller and Executive producer for a number of Documentry films and his latest production debut was Unscripted stories about George floyd's murder and subsequent riots in the Twin cities.

Before immigrating to the United States in the early 2010s, Abdurrahman served as a senior human rights and humanitarian program coordinator and field manager for the Danish Refugee Council and UN funded programs in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, where he worked to safeguard vulnerable populations.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Service and Health Care Management from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and a Master of Business Administration (MBA).



Sanda CHAO

Ethiopia Desk Officer
Office of East African Affairs

(U) Sanda Chao is a civil servant, serving as Ethiopia Desk Officer, Bureau for African Affairs/East Africa, U.S. Department of State, since February 2022. She has worked in the bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs; South and Central Asian Affairs; and African Affairs.

Sanda has also completed short-term temporary duty assignments as Acting Public Affairs Officer in Vientiane, Laos (2010); Asia Program Officer in Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) (2016); Country Coordinator in the Bureau of Foreign Assistance Resources (F) (2019);

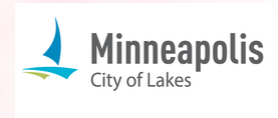
Quad Lead for the India Desk (2021); and Special Assistant for the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa (2022).

(U) She holds a B.A. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park and a M.Sc in Development Studies from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies.



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