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MOHAMED AHMED NAMED RECIPIENT OF 2020 CITIZEN DIPLOMACY AWARD BY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WASHINGTON, DC, Sept. 23, 2020 — Global Minnesota, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing international understanding and engagement, today announced that Mohamed Ahmed, Founder, Chairman & Executive Director of “Average Mohamed,” has been named the recipient of the 2020 Citizen Diplomacy Award by the U.S. Department of State.

Now in its fourth year, the award honors American citizens and organizations leading efforts to renew and strengthen U.S. relationships with the world that further U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives. Mr. Ahmed is being recognized for his grassroots work on countering violent extremism by engaging audiences in meaningful discussions about true Islamic values and democratic ideals, institutions, and civil society.

“We received a record number of nominations, and Mr. Ahmed stood out in his commitment and unique approach to countering violent extremism,” said a State Department spokesperson. “Through his work, he engages thousands of community leaders and students to combat radicalism, anti-democracy narratives, and intolerance.”

A proud American citizen, Mr. Ahmed immigrated to Minnesota from Somalia more than 20 years ago. Frustrated by the lack of messaging countering extremist propaganda and a high number of ISIS recruits coming from his community, Mr. Ahmed created and launched the cartoon, “Average Mohamed.” By speaking plainly and directly to Somali youth in Minnesota and abroad about the true teachings of the Qur’an, Mr. Ahmed encourages them to reject violent extremism and inspires them to think critically about diversity and community-building.

“Average Mohamed” has since evolved into a nonprofit organization of the same name, with Mr. Ahmed working across Twin Cities communities to help vulnerable youth; collaborating with other inter-faith organizations to promote intergenerational change and dialogue; and, through official U.S. State Department programs, engaging with community leaders from around the world.

Mr. Ahmed has played a crucial role locally in professional exchanges in his volunteer work as a resource for Global Minnesota. Global Minnesota is a proud host of the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program, hosting hundreds of professionals from around the world each year as they share best practices with their Minnesota counterparts. Mr. Ahmed

has met with over 30 of these visiting groups who want to share ideas and expertise on reaching young people to counter messages of extremism.

“Mohamed Ahmed is the epitome of a citizen diplomat,” said Mark Ritchie, president of Global Minnesota. “By tirelessly engaging youth and offering them alternatives to extremism, he has had a real-world impact on U.S. foreign policy priorities.”

Mr. Ahmed will be presented with the award by senior U.S. State Department officials in a virtual ceremony on Wednesday, September 30, at 2:00pm ET. Members of the public and interested media may join the event at <https://www.facebook.com/EngageStateDept>.

About Global Minnesota

Global Minnesota (www.globalminnesota.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, member-supported organization that connects individuals, organizations and communities to the world. Through a unique series of programs offered across the state, Global Minnesota takes relevant and timely information on global issues, foreign policy and cultural topics and provides the space and opportunity for Minnesotans to engage and discuss. Programs are designed for Minnesotans – from the 2nd grader to the CEO – to connect with others from around the globe, serve as citizen diplomats and gain a deeper understanding of the world. Global Minnesota is in the top-ten World Affairs Councils of America and received the Council of Ambassadors Award in 2014 from the Foreign Policy Association for expanding global discussion groups in Minnesota.

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