

NEWS LETTER

Dec 2019-Jan 2020

Support to Universal Suffrage Elections
in the Federal Republic of Somalia

UNDP / UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) to the Federal Republic of Somalia

IESG News Updates

UN and International Community meet with key stakeholders on elections



NIEC Commissioners meet with UN SRSG and International Partners, Mogadishu, 2 December 2019 (Photo credit: UNSOM)

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia, Mr. James Swan, and Somalia's International Partners held a series of separate meetings with the NIEC Board of Commissioners, the Speakers of the Federal Houses of Parliament and the Police Commissioner during December 2019 and January 2020 on progress of the draft electoral bill and plans to conduct one-person one-vote election in 2020.

The discussions focused on providing updates on electoral preparations and progress on the draft electoral bill amid concerns that Parliament will go into recess in early February. Discussions centered around the importance of Parliament in finalizing the revision of

the draft bill before the end of its current session in early February and on ensuring that key elements of the electoral bill would be addressed before its adoption so as to ensure the law is implementable. In addition to the revisions to the electoral law, the Amendments to the Political Party Law can allow the NIEC to hold parliamentary elections within the constitutional timelines.

The Speaker of the House of the People informed that Parliament would remain in session until the review of the electoral bill is finalized. The SRSG and the International Partners expressed their commitment and support, and stressed the need for the Federal Government and the Federal Member States to play a responsible and

constructive role to make elections in 2020/21 inclusive and credible.

Responding to the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament's invitation, the NIEC and IESG have jointly prepared and submitted two technical documents to the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament which outline options to address the key gaps in the law. A long list of comments compiled jointly by NIEC/IESG on the electoral bill was also submitted to the Upper House. It is hoped that both the technical options and the detailed comments will be considered positively by Parliament before the final adoption of the electoral bill during the current parliamentary session.

Highlights

December

- ♦ NIEC Commissioners meet with UNSOM SRSG and international partners
- ♦ Workshop on Building Trust in Electoral Process
- ♦ First National Electoral Security Task Force meeting
- ♦ Political party consultations on electoral timelines and draft law
- ♦ NIEC Chairperson addresses Parliament

January

- ♦ NIEC Commissioners elect Deputy Chairperson
- ♦ Electoral Information Sharing Meeting
- ♦ NIEC & Speakers of Somali Federal Parliament meet UN and international partners
- ♦ NIEC and IESG meet Upper House Ad Hoc Committee to discuss draft electoral bill
- ♦ Provisional registration of Political Parties.

Building Trust in Electoral Process



4 December 2019, Judge Kriegler and IESG staff meet with members of civil society in Mogadishu.

The Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) hosted the renowned and highly regarded Judge Johann Kriegler from South Africa in Mogadishu for a short visit in December to follow up on his previous discussions with the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) earlier in 2019 and to conduct a

series of workshops on building trust in the electoral process in a politically difficult environment. He provided guidance and advice to the NIEC on defining the way forward on establishing an electoral dispute resolution mechanism. As a result, the NIEC now has an overall framework on how the

electoral dispute resolution mechanism can be established within the NIEC. Judge Kriegler also met with representatives of Civil Society in Somalia to hear their views about their role in building trust in the electoral process, supporting peacebuilding and promoting democratization in Somalia.

NIEC Chairperson addresses Parliament



Chairperson NIEC addressing the Federal Parliament on the NIEC's preparations for the 2020/2021 elections, Mogadishu, 15 December 2019

On 15 December, the NIEC Chairperson Ms. Halima Ismail addressed the House of the People and provided an overview of the NIEC's work in preparation for the forthcoming federal parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in 2020/2021. The Chairperson welcomed efforts by lawmakers to move the country towards a more inclusive electoral model. She welcomed the support of international partners as one of the stakeholders in the electoral process for their financial and technical support for a credible electoral process in the country and reminded MPs of the pledge by the UN Security Council to support universal suffrage elections in Somalia. The Chairperson urged Parliament to seriously consider the NIEC's submission of their concerns about the draft electoral law during their deliberations on the law.

Electoral Information Sharing Meeting



Chairperson NIEC presenting progress and challenges on preparations for the 2020 election during the Electoral Information Sharing meeting, Mogadishu, 15 January 2020 (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 15 January, with IESG assistance, the Electoral Information Sharing Meeting co-chaired by the NIEC Chairperson and the UNSOM DSRSG was held to take stock on electoral developments. The NIEC Chairperson stressed the necessity to ensure that the election law is implementable in order to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process. She mentioned concerns related to the political impasse between the Federal Government (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) and appealed to international partners to encourage the FMS and FGS to resume their political

engagement so that the gains made in the past decade are not lost.

The DSRSG emphasized that the electoral process is at a critical stage as the electoral bill is under review by the Upper House Ad Hoc Committee and their report would be submitted soon for its second reading. He urged the partners to interact with the members of the Upper House to ensure that the electoral bill they pass is politically credible and practically viable.

Political party consultations on electoral timelines and draft law

The NIEC conducted information sharing meetings on 9 and 15 December 2019 for provisionally registered political parties, focusing on electoral models and party registration. The NIEC updated the political parties on the timetable for delivery of voter registration equipment which may be purchased once the electoral law is adopted. Also shared was preparations underway to plan for voter registration including voter education outreach activities and the timeline for voter registration. Party representatives were informed that every citizen who wishes to vote, must register to vote; otherwise, they will not be able to vote on election day. Political party representatives called on Parliament to protect women's rights and ensure 30% quota for women in the next parliament.

NIEC and IESG meets with Upper House Ad Hoc Committee to discuss revisions to draft electoral bill

On 23 January 2020, NIEC and IESG met with the Upper House Ad Hoc Committee to discuss concerns related to the draft electoral bill. The NIEC outlined the various articles that require revision including ensuring 30% women's representation in the bill and requested the Ad Hoc Committee to consider the proposed revisions that would enable the electoral law to be implementable. The Ad Hoc Committee's report was submitted to the Upper House on 29 January for second reading.



NIEC and IESG meeting with the Upper House Ad Hoc Committee to discuss concerns related to the draft electoral bill, 23 January 2020

National Electoral Security Task Force meetings

With support of IESG and the Peacebuilding Fund, the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) held their inaugural meeting on 9 December followed by another meeting on 21 January which were attended by Police Commissioners from some of the Federal Member States (the representative from Jubaland was not present, and no one has been appointed to represent Puntland yet). UN representatives briefed on 'Lessons Learned from 2016 Elections' and on the proposed project to equip and train NESTF joint operations centres. AMISOM

and UN shared a draft Concept of Security for Voter Registration and a draft TOR for the Task Force. During the second meeting of the NESTF, it was agreed that in future the Police Commissioner's Office will be responsible to chair NESTF meetings and will establish a secretariat, confirm the names of the members of the Task Force, and will convene the next NESTF meeting within two weeks. A key priority for the NESTF will be to ensure that women and youth can participate safely in the electoral process both as candidates and as voters.

Provisional registration of Political Parties

On 4 January, NIEC office of political party registration issued temporary certificates of registration to the seven political parties at a ceremony held at the NIEC headquarters in Mogadishu. The seven newly registered parties bring the total number of provisionally registered parties to 70.

IESG organises simulation of options for tabulation of votes for NIEC staff



29 January 2020: NIEC HQ Mogadishu, IESG and NIEC conduct simulation of options for tabulation of votes for NIEC staff (Photo credit: IESG)

On 29 January, IESG organised a simulation exercise based on the draft electoral law for the NIEC Board of Commissioners, NIEC Secretary General, and senior members of the NIEC Secretariat on tabulation of the voting data, consolidating and reporting results from polling station level to polling center and then to NIEC HQ. The objective of the exercise was to demonstrate the practical application of the legislative requirements and identify appropriate administrative processes that promote the transparency, credibility and integrity of the tabulation process. The current draft electoral law presents a number of serious

administrative and logistical challenges which make the tallying process complicated, and the timelines impossible to meet. A senior official commended the training saying that "this training was essential as it has helped us better understand the implications of the draft law on the electoral process and we can propose how best to manage the legal requirements through appropriate regulations and procedures." NIEC will also review potential ballot paper design for the Upper House elections with IESG support and requested further training on concepts such as spoiled and invalid votes and other related electoral terminology.

NIEC Commissioners elect Deputy Chairperson

On 9th January, the NIEC Commissioners elected a deputy Chairperson. As per NIEC law, the Commissioners can elect among themselves a Chair and a Deputy Chair. The post of the Deputy Chairperson was vacant since January 2019 and the Commission awaited Parliament to fill the vacant Commissioner post. Mr. Adam Abdinasir was eventually confirmed by Parliament to join the NIEC as Commissioner. Mr. Adam Abdinasir was elected as the Deputy Chair in the second round of the voting process, during which members from both houses of Parliament and representatives from civil society organizations and officials from the Office of the Mogadishu Mayor were present.

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