

NEWS LETTER

February-March 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

President signs electoral bill into law



President Farmaajo and the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament hold up the electoral bill which the President signed at the closing of Parliament's 6th session. Mogadishu, 20 February 2020

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmaajo" signed the electoral bill on 20 February 2020 following passage by Parliament of the draft electoral bill on 19 February. The Speakers of both Houses of Parliament observed the historic occasion along

with a number of dignitaries including the Prime Minister and members of the cabinet. The law has a number of gaps and contains provisions that make it difficult to implement. There is no provision to guarantee women's 30 per cent quota to ensure women's

representation in the parliament. Copies of the Amendments to the Political Parties Law were circulated to all MPs, but the first reading was deferred until the resumption of Parliament after recess.

Highlights

- ♦ Long awaited electoral bill signed by Somali President
- ♦ Amendments to the Political Parties Law reviewed
- ♦ Six Political Parties gain temporary registration from NIEC
- ♦ IESG provides one day training for NIEC logistics team
- ♦ Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections meets with NIEC
- ♦ National Electoral Security Task Force agrees actions to plan and coordinate security
- ♦ IESG and NIEC hosts Advisory Panel on Elections Workshop
- ♦ IESG provides simulation training on various aspects of electoral operations to NIEC Board of Commissioners and Secretariat
- ♦ NIEC conducts briefing for media on electoral process and preparations
- ♦ NIEC visit Federal Member States to hold consultation meetings with stakeholders

IESG and NIEC draft comments on Amendments to the Political Parties Law and the 2016 Political Parties Law

IESG and NIEC legal teams reviewed the draft Amendments to the Political Parties Law which will be tabled in the next session of the Parliament in April, as well as the Political Parties Law that was passed in 2016. Overall, the proposed Amendments to the Political Parties Law are not on their own sufficient to enable

a smooth operation and registration of political parties, neither for the NIEC nor for the political parties themselves. Further changes and alignment with the electoral law are necessary such as revising the necessary timelines for political parties to apply for full registration as soon as possible or to

register as a coalition to contest in the elections. Since the Political Parties Law as well as the National Electoral Law contain a number of flaws, it will be necessary to revise and align the electoral legislation.

NIEC conducts briefing for media on electoral process and preparations



NIEC hosted a media briefing for journalists on the electoral process and updates on NIEC's preparations for the one-person-one-vote elections in 2020. Mogadishu, 2 February 2020

On 2nd February 2020, NIEC conducted a briefing for the media. The purpose of the meeting was to raise the media awareness on the electoral process and provide updates on NIEC's preparations for the one-person-one-vote election. Elections will be one of the main topics discussed on the media this year. NIEC plans to conduct regular media briefings to ensure the media has accurate

information regarding preparations for the electoral process. NIEC Chairperson emphasized the importance of a free and fair election and said "the media is the right channel through which the public will get information; therefore, it is their responsibility to share the correct information with the public and avoid propagating fake news".

Joint operations field mission to Jubaland

A joint field mission was conducted to Dhobley, Jubaland, on 17 February by IESG, NIEC and UNSOS. The purpose of the visit was to meet with the

AMISOM, UNMAS and UNSOS staff based in Dhobley to discuss electoral operations and review storage facilities.



A joint field mission by IESG, NIEC and UNSOS to meet with UNMAS and UNSOS staff and review storage facilities for electoral materials.

Dhobley, Jubaland, 17 February 2020

IESG conducted orientation for newly recruited NIEC staff

On 2nd Feb 2020, IESG Training Unit conducted orientation for two newly recruited NIEC staff at the IESG office. Topics covered included electoral administration, electoral cycle and principles of voter registration. The trainers emphasized the roles and responsibilities of the NIEC staff and looked at how to plan, coordinate and organize training activities in the field and at the NIEC main office. The staff gained essential knowledge about the work of the NIEC which will help them in their daily work.

IESG provides one day training for NIEC logistics team

On 11th February 2020, IESG Logistics Unit provided one day training on development and designing of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for vehicle management. The aim of the training was to enhance the capacity of the NIEC logistics manager and his team to develop SOPs in the future so as to ensure the NIEC vehicles fleet management is fully operational both at headquarters and in their field offices. This is part of the institutional capacity building that IESG provides to NIEC under its electoral support project.

Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections meets with NIEC

On 28 February, in Mogadishu, the Speakers of both Houses of the Federal Parliament appointed a 17-member Joint Ad-Hoc Committee to draft recommendations to complement the Electoral Law, which is not implementable by the NIEC in its current form. The Committee met for the first time on 22 March and are tasked to review four key legislative issues in the electoral law: a) Seats allocation for both Houses of Parliament (constituency); b. Women's quota; c) Election of members of the two Houses hailing from the Northern Regions ("Somaliland"); d) Representation rights of Banadir region. The Committee will cooperate with the NIEC, consult with the Federal Member States (FMS) and other stakeholders.

On 30 March, with the technical and financial support of IESG, the NIEC met with the Committee for three days where they discussed the electoral issues at length. The Committee took note of the options and recommendations provided by the NIEC on the various issues. The NIEC had the opportunity to outline the technical issues that need to be harmonized in the Political Parties Law including the Amendments to the Political Parties Law which has yet to be tabled in the Parliament. The Committee are to present their report to Parliament by mid-April. However, there is uncertainty about the date of resumption of Parliament, as many MPs are either in their home states or out of country and cannot travel due to government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

NIEC visit Federal Member States to hold consultation meetings with stakeholders

NIEC Commissioners and secretariat staff conducted a tour of three federal member states: South West State, Hirshabelle and Galmaadug between 10-27 February. The aim of the visits was to conduct public consultations and awareness raising with different sectors of the communities including meetings with elders and state officials. The NIEC officials also visited their field offices and met with staff to hear their concerns and challenges on preparing for the elections in their area of operations.

National Electoral Security Task Force agrees actions to plan and coordinate security

The National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF), chaired by the Somali Police Force Commissioner, held its third meeting on 15 March in Mogadishu. The NESTF was established in September 2019. The meeting discussed the draft terms of reference and voter registration security plans. All Federal Member State (FMS) Police Commissioners, except Puntland and Jubaland, attended and endorsed the two draft documents. The Government submitted a separate budget of USD 1.1M for six months for the NESTF to establish the Secretariats at the various sub-national levels and requested donors' support.

The IESG presented the Peacebuilding Fund project to support the NESTF Secretariat and Joint Operations Centres (JOCs) at the central, FMS and regional level, along with AMISOM. Folke Bernadotte Academy (Sweden) presented its project to provide gender-mainstreamed training to Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and FMS

security personnel who will staff the JOCs. The meeting endorsed the TORs for the NESTF and reviewed the draft Concept of Security for Voter Registration. The Police Commissioners provided an update on the threat assessment for three of the Federal Member States (FMS) and Banadir Region (BRA). They also agreed to establish the State Security Task Forces immediately. Following the two-day meeting, the NESTF convened a 2-day workshop from 17 to 18 March to make assessment of the potential securable areas based on a list of 284 sites shared by the NIEC (list excluded Puntland and Jubaland). After the initial assessments were made by joint police and NIEC staff from the FMSs & BRA, it was agreed that further detailed assessment would be conducted in the FMS and BRA to refine the lists. Since the meeting, the NIEC has agreed to plot the sites on computer mapping tools and share with the NEST members in the FMS and BRA.

IESG and NIEC hosts Advisory Panel on Elections workshop

From 29 Feb to 5 March, an advisory panel was convened to offer independent advice to the NIEC on options for implementation on key issues and challenges in the Electoral Law and Political Parties law that require resolution to operationalize elections. The law remains vague on a number of key issues that require resolution. In addition, the law has a number of technical specifications that present major challenges to implementation. The panel was tasked to present feasible technical options to deal with each of the issues and identify which issues required a political solution. It offered support to the NIEC to ensure that critical political stakeholders including political parties and civil society were briefed on suggested resolutions and regulations to build consensus to make recommendations for endorsement by the FGS, Parliament and FMS leaders.

Joint Electoral Logistics Working Group updates on electoral operation preparations

On 12 March, the NIEC Director of Operations chaired the monthly Joint Electoral Logistics Working Group (JELWG). Participants included IESG, UNSOS Mission Support Centre, AMISOM Military and AMISOM Police. The NIEC provided an update on the electoral operations, including the impact of the electoral law on operational planning, especially with regard to the deployment and retrieval of voter registration and polling staff, material and equipment. Also discussed were the findings of the joint NIEC/UNSOS MSC/IESG field missions aimed at assessing storage capacity of voter registration and polling materials in the UN field offices

based in the Federal Member State (FMS) capitals. Provisional UN and commercial flight route maps for the deployment and retrieval of voter registration and polling materials were shared with participants for feedback. NIEC informed it was consolidating a matrix of commercial flight routes and carriers to cater for areas where UN regular flights were not available. Participants welcomed the NESTF plan to hold another meeting and a 3-day workshop the following week on the vetting of NIEC identified potential voter registration sites in Banadir, Southwest State, Galmudug and Hirshabelle given that timelines were becoming shorter.

Six Political Parties gain temporary registration from NIEC

On 2nd February 2020, NIEC organized a ceremony to award provisional registration to six political parties bringing the total to seventy-six parties. Three of the parties are headed by women. NIEC's Political Party Registrar emphasized the role women can and should play in political parties and encouraged the party leaders to ensure women are integrated into their party structures at every level of the party organization.

IESG provides simulation training on various aspects of electoral operations to NIEC Commissioners and Secretariat

IESG conducted a series of simulation exercises for the NIEC Board of Commissioners and Secretariat staff on 10 and 17 March. The exercises consisted of simulations on vote counting, tallying, identifying spoiled/invalid votes, and tally form retrieval activities. The purpose of the simulation was to help NIEC understand the step by step process for each of the activities including the benefits

of proposed options on centralized and de-centralized counting and tallying. Presentations were made on confidence building measures for NIEC's consideration including the importance of transparency, sensitization, communication, logistics, HR, training, operations, legal and security operations. The activity is part of the operational support that IESG provides to NIEC under its electoral support project.



IESG conducted a series of simulation exercises for the NIEC Board of Commissioners and Secretariat staff, Mogadishu, 10 March 2020



NIEC Commissioners say farewell to Ms. Hiroko Miyamura, Chief, Integrated Electoral Support Group. Ms. Miyamura has been reassigned to the UN Electoral Assistance Division, New York. Mogadishu, 17 March 2020



SRS James Swan with Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections, Hon. Ibrahim Yarow and Committee member Senator Mahdi. Mogadishu, 29 March 2020

Contact:

Mary Cummins, Deputy Chief Electoral Advisor, Elections, Email: mary.cummins@undp.org
 Irfan Mahmood, Project Manager, Elections, Email: irfan.mahmood@undp.org
 UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)