

UNDP/UNSOM INTEGRATED ELECTORAL SUPPORT GROUP (IESG) TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA



Photo: SCPAG/UNSOM

Project board meeting on 14 March.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Elections Project Board extends support to indirect electoral committees to March
- 91% of HoP seats elected by 31 March
- Deadlines slipped to conclude elections
- FEIT issues timeline for parliamentary members to take Oath of Office
- IESG engages TPEC

Project board meeting

On 14 March in Mogadishu, the United Nations (UN) Joint Programme for Support to Universal Suffrage Elections in the Federal Republic of Somalia held a Project Board Meeting to discuss progress on the indirect elections including support for the Goodwill Ambassadors (GwAs) to advocate for 30 per cent women’s representation in parliament and to close out two Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects related to security and electoral dispute resolution.

The meeting was co-chaired by the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) Chairperson Halima Ismail and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Jocelyn Mason along with representatives from the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), donors and UN. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) requested donors to allow any savings made with donor resources by the indirect electoral committees between July and December 2021 be used to pay the allowances for the indirect electoral committees between January and March 2022. FGS has committed to contribute to the operational costs for the indirect electoral committees, as well as supporting the delegates, and electoral security operations for the same period. The OPM underlined the government’s commitment to a transparent and accountable process for candidate fees based on the National Consultative Council (NCC) agreements.

Electoral developments

By 31 March, 91% or 249 out of the 275 House of the People (HoP) seats were elected. Fifty-one women were elected by the end of this reporting period (20% of the elected seats).

On 15 March, the Federal Election Implementation Team (FEIT) issued a timeline to conclude the federal parliament’s election by 14 April when a swearing-in ceremony will be held for the newly elected parliamentarians.

The Prime Minister (PM) Roble chaired a virtual meeting of the NCC on 9 February that was attended by all the five Federal Member State (FMS) leaders including the Governor of Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) and the Mayor of Mogadishu. Discussions focused on the need to accelerate the electoral process and ensure the HoP elections are concluded before 25 February as agreed during the NCC meeting held in January.

The NCC held a virtual meeting on 24 February to discuss the conclusion of the HoP elections scheduled for 25 February according to the NCC deadline issued on 9 January. The meeting concluded with several points including the extension of the deadline to complete HoP elections by 15 March.

On 21 February, the FEIT chairperson announced in a live conference that FEIT suspended the results of three HoP seats #103, 154, 204 in SouthWest State (SWS) and #086 in Hirshabelle. HoP seat #086 was won by Fahad Yassin (former National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) director) on 20 February. On the same day in Baidoa, SWS State Election Implementation Team (SEIT) published a letter from the FEIT dated 17 December 2021 that validated the results for HoP seat #103. In an accompanying message, the SEIT further noted that the results for seat #154 were never officially challenged. The SEIT warned the FEIT against the disruption of the electoral process and called the latter to work in the interest of the Somali people.

Support to NIEC

IESG assisted the NIEC Director of Public Outreach draft a concept paper on media coverage for its National Consultative Forum to be held after the formation of a new government – post indirect elections. IESG continued to assist NIEC Office of the Political Party Registrar in managing the Political Parties' Management Information System by reviewing the user interface software of the political party database.

NIEC capacity development

In February, IESG supported the drafting of the NIEC's Training/Working sessions plan for March-July 2022. The plan is based on the NIEC's priority needs and annual workplan. The NIEC has embarked on a capacity development process to build on the expertise gained over the years with IESG partnership. The NIEC's 2022-2026 draft Strategic Plan includes institutionalising a staff performance management system.

IESG legal/ procedures

Regular mentoring sessions between representatives of the IESG Legal/ Procedures team and the NIEC Legal Department took place during the first quarter of the year to provide advice and support on legal and procedural matters and ad-hoc issues. IESG provided advice on the draft regulation on NIEC Secondary Legislation, Policies and Guidelines. In addition, IESG and NIEC legal department continued drafting of procedures for Voter Registration based on the Voter Registration regulation.



Photo: UNSOM Flickr account

IESG meets with TPEC.

Assistance to the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC)

In late 2021, IESG began to engage TPEC following UNSOM new mandate allowing IESG to support constitutionally mandated electoral management bodies to conduct direct elections at the FMS and district levels. During 2022, this engagement grew to further provide technical support to different departments within TPEC.

Between 27-29 March, IESG undertook a field visit to Garowe, Puntland to meet with the

TPEC Chairperson and various heads of departments. TPEC welcomed the technical support in the development of a concept of operations and other key operational documents for voter registration and local elections schedules for 2022. TPEC has also requested training and capacity development for their staff as part of IESG's technical support which is currently focusing on public outreach initiatives, and more specifically the development of an outreach strategy. TPEC also expressed interest in IESG support for the revision of the legal framework.

IESG also held discussions with two prominent local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) engaged in electoral activities: the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) and the Puntland Non-State Actors Association (PUNSAA), as well as the UNSOM Head of Office for Puntland.

IESG and the TPEC Director of Awareness and Training met regularly over the months of February and March to discuss their 2022 voter education awareness strategy for voter registration and election. IESG provided advice on activities and target audiences for their planning and campaign. IESG also supported the drafting of a public outreach strategy, which was shared with other UN partners for inputs. IESG also advised on additional documents for planning voter information and education campaigns such as a public outreach operational plan, relevant budget and timeline. Drafting of the planning documents is expected to start in April.



Photo: UNSOM Flickr account

IESG meets with TPEC.

UN DSG meets with the FEIT

On 9 March, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) of the United Nations held a virtual meeting with Mr. Muse Geelle, the chairperson of FEIT.

During the meeting, the UN DSG and the FEIT chairperson discussed the HoP electoral progress including the 30 per cent women's quota. The DSG indicated that she would be continuing to advocate for the election of more women for the ongoing HoP elections.



UN DSG meets with the FEIT

Photo: UNSOM Flickr account

Election dispute resolution committee (EDRC)

The EDRC announced it had adjudicated six complaints related to HoP seats by 29 March. In addition, two complaints were informally resolved by EDRC with the help of traditional elders, two complaints were withdrawn by the complainants, and one complaint was invalid. However, the EDRC also received 25 complaints without the payment of the registration fee which will be referred to the NCC, after the remaining HoP seats are elected.

Women's 30% quota for parliamentary seats

By 31 March, 249 seats have been elected for the HoP elections, or 91 per cent of the total. Overall, 65 women parliamentarians elected, 14 in the Upper House (UH) and 51 in HoP elections equivalent to 20% women's representation in the Federal Parliament, compared to 24% in 2016. The completion of the elections for all the seats of the HoP is dependent on the resolution of the political and security obstacles faced in Garbaharey (16 seats) and Hirshabelle (6 seats in Jowhar and 4 in Beletweyne). Given the remaining number of seats to be elected, it is unlikely that the 30 per cent women's quota will be achieved. However, despite the disappointment on this front, the GwAs have continued their advocacy efforts with the support of the UN and other international partners to try and ensure that at least the 24 per cent achieved in 2016 is maintained.

On 7 March, the GwAs in collaboration with civil society women leaders held press conferences in Mogadishu, Kismayo, Garowe, Baidoa, Dhusamareb and Jowhar. The key purpose and messages of the press conferences were to demand that the members of the NCC, particularly the FMS Presidents implement the women's quota in the ongoing HoP elections. The GwAs and women leaders expressed their deep concern about the way the indirect electoral process is being conducted, the shortcomings in delivering the quota and urged Federal and State level leadership to uphold the commitments they made to secure women's representation in the elections. They also appealed to the International Community and partners to continue their advocacy and exert pressure on the electoral stakeholders to deliver the women's quota. The women leaders further vowed to continue advocating until their demands are met.



Photo: UNSOM Flickr account



Intelligence and data collection course.

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Election security preparedness

IESG in conjunction with AMISOM trainers have delivered two Intelligence and Data Collection Courses for Joint Operation Centre (JOC) personnel between 20 to 25 February in Mogadishu. The training is the final installation in a series of courses that have been delivered between 2020 and 2022 to improve security throughout the election period. The aim of the course was to equip JOC staff with the skills to collect, analyse and present intelligence and data relating to incidences of violence during the electoral period.

The first course (20 to 22 February) was well attended by 50 participants including 16 women from JOCs in Baidoa, Dhusamareb, Kismayo, Garowe and Jowhar. The second course (23 to 25 February) was attended by 60 participants from Benadir, Barawe, Bossaso, Beletweyne, Galkayo and Garbaharey. Participants were from a range of Somali Security Forces including NISA, Somali National Army (SNA), Somali Police Force (SPF), Women's Situation Desk (WSD) and civil society representatives working in the state administration offices.

Indirect electoral committees assets retrieval

During February and March, FEIT in coordination with OPM, the NIEC and IESG planned the retrieval of electoral materials and equipment from the polling locations. IESG logistics developed and shared the retrieval plan with both FEIT and the IESG field offices to ensure SEITs complete the handover of equipment to the respective NIEC field offices. As per the letter of Agreement signed between the OPM and the UNDP, the electoral materials and equipment will be handed over post operations to the NIEC.

Benadir and Somaliland SEITs officially handed over their assets to NIEC by 30 March, which are partially being stored in the new NIEC compound.



Retrieved equipment from SEITs being stored at the NIEC

CONTACT:

Mary Cummins, IESG Deputy Chief Electoral Advisor, mary.cummins@undp.org

Ereny Zarif, IESG Reporting Officer, ereny.zarif@un.org

UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)