

NEWS LETTER

October-November 2019

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

NIEC Chairperson and UN SRSG Somalia address Security Council



NIEC Chairperson Halima Ismail Ibrahim addresses the UN Security Council, 21 November 2019

In her address to the Security Council on 21 November 2019, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) Chairperson emphasized the importance of universal suffrage elections in 2020 which will be a pivotal year for Somali citizens whose rights to political participation have been denied for over 50 years. It will also be a milestone for the international community who have been investing heavily in Somalia for several decades to promote democracy and good governance. The NIEC Chairperson requested the Somali leaders to treat the election 2020/2021 as a constitutional obligation and a national priority and to provide the necessary political and financial support to enable the NIEC to undertake the essential electoral preparations to conduct this historic election. The Chairperson estimated the costs of the election to be about \$53m not including costs for securing the electoral process. She made a special appeal to international partners to make available the necessary funds for election preparation activities.

UN Special Representative of the Secretary-

General James Swan also addressed the Security Council where he emphasized that progress on the ambitious agenda for 2020 election will require a high degree of political consensus and flagged the need for Somalia's Parliament to pass the necessary electoral legislation before end of December 2019. He encouraged the political leaders to act now to break the "stalemate" between the central government and federal member states.

The Security Council welcomed the commitment by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to adopt an Electoral Law by December 2019 in order to ensure that federal one-person-one-vote elections are held in late 2020/early 2021 and underlined that holding a peaceful, inclusive, credible and transparent election in line with Provisional Constitution, would be a historic step in the rebuilding of Somalia and would assist the country's continued democratic development. The members of the Security Council emphasized that the election process should be inclusive and include at least 30 per cent minimum quota for women parliamentarians. The members of

Highlights

- ◆ 1-2 Oct: Somalia Partnership Forum – mutual commitments made on elections
- ◆ Oct: NIEC Gender Advisor elected to Arab States EMBS' Executive Committee
- ◆ Oct: Updates on Voter Registration (VR) kits
- ◆ 16 Oct: NIEC meets Mayor of Mogadishu to discuss electoral preparations
- ◆ 21 Oct: New Commissioner appointed to NIEC
- ◆ 23 Oct: NIEC Chairperson meets with Deputy Secretary-General of UN
- ◆ Oct: Peacebuilding Fund approves projects
- ◆ 30 Oct: Construction of NIEC data centre and warehouse commences
- ◆ 11-12 Nov: Workshop on women's participation in political party leadership
- ◆ 21 Nov: NIEC Chairperson and UN SRSG address Security Council
- ◆ 23 Nov: Registration of Political Parties
- ◆ 27 Nov: Induction Training for new staff
- ◆ 28 Nov: Workshop on Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR)

the Security Council reiterated the need for the Electoral Security Task Force to meet and to set out a plan as soon as possible for the creation of a safe and secure environment for elections. The members of the Security Council called on FGS and FMS to resume their dialogue in order to resolve outstanding issues, finalize an inclusive political settlement, and pursue reconciliation talks at the local, regional and national level.



UN Special Representative of the Secretary General James Swan briefs the Security Council, 21 November 2019

Construction of NIEC data centre and warehouse



Construction work on the NIEC data centre and warehouse in progress and building is expected to be completed by the end of February 2020

The UN Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)/UNDP Elections Project is assisting NIEC with the construction of the NIEC data centre and warehouse for voter registration, to assist with the project's operational support for the voter registration in 2020. UNDP contractors started construction work on

30 October and building is expected to be completed by the end of February next year. Currently, the NIEC Headquarters is located in Villa Somalia, which is difficult for electoral stakeholders to access and it also creates a perception problem for the NIEC, being co-located with the Executive.

NIEC Chairperson meets with Deputy Secretary-General of UN

NIEC Chairperson Halima Ismail Ibrahim met with Ms. Amina Jane Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) of the United Nations, and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, in Mogadishu on 23 October. The NIEC Chairperson presented an update of the main electoral preparations and challenges, stating that electoral preparations are well advanced but donors are reluctant to commit sufficient resources until the electoral legislation is passed. DSG Mohammed reiterated her appreciation for the NIEC's ongoing efforts to enhance women's participation in the electoral process and said she will continue to

advocate for the need for the international community to support the electoral process in Somalia.



NIEC Chairperson Ms Halima Ismail Ibrahim with Ms. Amina Jane Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, Mogadishu, 23 Oct 2019

Update on voter registration (VR) kits

On 9 October, the UNDP/UNSOM Joint Programme held a Board meeting to seek funding commitments for procurement of electronic voter registration (VR) kits. Donors expressed concern about making a significant financial investment to the biometric VR option proposed by the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) without the Electoral Law and political consensus. The UN noted the need for technical preparations to move forward, as done in similar country contexts, so that NIEC is ready to hold elections on time, rather than start technical preparations only after a political accommodation is reached. Donors requested more time to consider the funding request and asserted their support for the overall process.

Peacebuilding Fund approves projects

Two projects submitted to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in September were approved in October. One project will support the activities of the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) while the second project will support the NIEC's Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) mechanism to enhance peaceful dispute resolution and minimize elections-related violence.

Somalia Partnership Forum – mutual commitments made on elections

From 1-2 October, Somalia and its international partners met in Mogadishu for the Somalia Partnership Forum (SPF). The participants took stock of the progress made since the previous SPF in July 2018 and agreed to priority actions in the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF). The Government's side commitment was to hold one-person-one-vote federal elections in late 2020/early 2021, adopt the two elections-related legislation by December 2019, contribute financially to the electoral operations and operationalization of the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF). In turn, the international community offered to mobilize resources to

supplement government financing following the adoption of the Electoral Law and the amendments to the Political Parties Law; and offer advisory, planning and logistics support to the electoral security plan if the NESTF was operationalized.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia and Head of UNSOM, James Swan said, "the passage of the Electoral Law is the crucial next step and we are pleased to see the commitment to make every effort to complete it by the end of 2019. Failure to meet this deadline will jeopardize the mobilization of essential funding and risks slippage in the electoral calendar".

Workshop on women's participation in political party leadership



On 11 & 12 November, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) organized a two-day workshop on women's participation in political party leadership in Baidoa, Southwest State. Participants included women and youth organizations as well as university students. During the two days training, information was shared on topics

ranging from the importance of political parties, how citizens can join their preferred party and how the NIEC works on achieving gender balance during the registration process of the political parties. Participants were also given time to deliberate on the role of women in political parties, the obstacles they face and how they can overcome them.

New Commissioner appointed to NIEC Board



Mr. Adam Abdinasir Mohamed was sworn in as a member of the Board of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) on 21 October 2019

On 21 October, the House of the People confirmed Mr. Adam Abdinasir Mohamed as the new member of the Board of Commissioners of the NIEC, following his nomination by the Cabinet on 22 August. Mr. Adam Abdinasir Mohamed replaces the former Commissioner and Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Sayed Ali Mohamed), who was dismissed in early January by the NIEC. The new and youngest member of the Board of Commissioners was subsequently confirmed by the Upper House and sworn in on 24 October. Mr. Mohamed was formerly the Chief Protocol Officer of the President of South West State.

Update on Electoral Bill

The Parliamentary Ad-Hoc Committee established in July 2019 to review the draft electoral bill completed its consultations and report which was shared with members of parliament (24 Nov) for their review ahead of the second reading of the bill expected in early December. The revised bill proposes a new electoral model based on 'first past the post' with 275 constituencies instead of the original proposal for a closed list, proportional representation system with a single national constituency. The adoption of the Electoral Law is essential for NIEC to plan for the start of voter registration in early 2020 to meet the constitutional timeline for elections as outlined in the Government's Inclusive Politics Roadmap.

NIEC meets Mayor of Mogadishu to discuss electoral preparations

On 16 October, NIEC Chairperson Halima Ismail held a meeting with the Mayor of Mogadishu who is also the Governor of Benadir region, Hon. Omar Muhamoud, at the Commission's offices in Mogadishu. They discussed the upcoming 2020 general elections and how the Commission and Benadir region administration can work together. They also discussed the establishment of a field election office in Benadir region.

The Mayor assured the electoral body of his administration's firm commitment to help lay the ground for the upcoming 2020 one person one vote elections.

NIEC has so far opened offices in all FMS in an effort to streamline its operations.



NIEC meets Hon. Omar Muhamoud, Mayor of Mogadishu at the Commission's office, Mogadishu. 16 Oct 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

Induction Training for new NIEC staff

On 27 November IESG together with NIEC Training Unit conducted training for newly recruited NIEC staff, 8 men and 3 women, to introduce the main aspects of the legislative framework which pertains to the mandate of the NIEC (vision, mission and core values) and enhance their understanding of electoral administration, the electoral cycle as a planning tool and principles of voter registration to enable participants better understand their roles within the organisational structure of the NIEC. The new staff will take up positions within Public Outreach, Electoral Operations, Admin & Finance, office of the Secretary

General and office of the Commissioners.



New staff participate in the induction workshop at NIEC, Mogadishu

Workshop on Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR)

On 28 of November, the IESG legal team organized a workshop on Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) for the NIEC legal department and the office of the Political parties Registrar. IESG presented and discussed with the participants different models of centralized and decentralized EDR processes. EDR expert Judge Kriegler (former Chair of South Africa's Independent Election

Commission) moderated a session on 'practitioner's knowledge, challenges to be expected and how to mitigate risks in EDR processes'. Participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss the EDR process with Judge Kriegler which helped to increase their knowledge and awareness to effectively manage electoral disputes.

NIEC Gender Advisor elected to the Arab States EMBs' Executive Committee in Tunisia

NIEC advisor on gender Ms. Fatima Ilhan Mohamed was elected to the executive committee of the Arab Network for Women in October 2019. The Executive Steering Committee consist of election management bodies (Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Jordan), regional civil society organizations and individuals in the Arab region. The objective of the Arab Network for Women is to help create solutions for the barriers that women face in their participation in political life.



L-R: Mais Al-Atiat, M&E Specialist (UNDP), Najia Hasheme, Regional Policy Specialist (UNDP), Fatima Ilhan Mohamed, Gender Specialist (NIEC), Commissioner Warsame (NIEC), Ban Kasto, UNDP (RBAS Amman Jordan).

Registration of Political Parties

On 23 November 2019, NIEC office of political party registration issued temporary certificates of registration to six political parties at a ceremony held at the NIEC headquarters in Mogadishu. The six newly registered political parties bring the total number of provisionally registered parties to 63.



Contact:

Mary Cummins, Deputy Chief Electoral Advisor, Elections, Email: mary.cummins@undp.org
Mahmood Akhtar, Communication & Reporting Officer, Email: mahmood.akhtar@undp.org
UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)