



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

IESG NEWS UPDATES



HIGHLIGHTS

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- Impact of COVID-19 on Somalia's electoral cycle
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The United Nations Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG)/UNDP Elections Project has provided support for the construction of a Data Centre at the NIEC's compound in Mogadishu. Construction had begun on 28 October 2019, and on 28 May 2020 the keys to the Data Centre have been handed over to NIEC.

Financial support of US\$ 835,922 was provided through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) for the Electoral Support Programme, and donors' list included European Union, Germany, Norway, Swedish International Development Agency, UKAID, United States Agency for International Development and UNDP. The Data Centre is part of the operational support provided by the UN to enable the NIEC to efficiently conduct electoral operations for the upcoming elections. Other ongoing projects include the construction of a hardwall warehouse with

support of UNSOM/UNSOS, and the construction of an Electoral Dispute Resolution Centre with support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund. Currently, the NIEC is in Villa Somalia, next to the Executive, a difficult to access location for electoral stakeholders. The new location will reinforce the independent and transparent nature of the electoral institution.





Impact of COVID-19 on Somalia's electoral cycle

The spread of COVID-19 and ensuing measures to halt the spread of the virus have both constitutional and technical implications for the timing and administration of elections in Somalia. The NIEC has issued work-from-home directives to its staff. While most IESG's staff are working from home, they continue to provide daily technical support to NIEC staff on a broad spectrum of electoral activities, using virtual meeting platforms and online tools such as WebEx, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. IESG has provided Zoom licenses to both the NIEC and the Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections to facilitate meetings with stakeholders.

IESG's work is currently focused on the following areas:

- support to NIEC meetings with the Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on the Electoral Law;
- support NIEC to prepare its operational

plan to be presented to the Parliament on 27 June 2020;

- review NIEC's Corporate Governance Framework to institutionalize corporate governance in its operations;
- support NIEC in conducting public outreach activities on the electoral process, through traditional and new media; and
- support in the construction of new NIEC compound and infrastructure.

In addition, IESG in collaboration with NIEC has prepared a number of documents for the Board Of Commissioner's consideration. These documents include:

- Coronavirus Policy and Protocol
- Business Continuity Policy, Plan and Checklist
- Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures
- Q&A on COVID-19
- Various reporting templates

Virtual ceremony: NIEC temporarily registers new political parties

The Political Parties Registrar and his staff have organized a virtual certification ceremony for six new political parties, bringing the total

number of temporarily registered parties to 84. Swiftly adapting to new working methods, the NIEC will discharge its oversight responsibilities

by conducting extensive online outreach meetings with political parties.



Upcoming: NIEC's report to Parliament on elections

The NIEC was due to make a presentation to Parliament on 27 May on their operational plan to implement the electoral law and hold federal parliamentary elections. On 21 May, the Parliament requested the NIEC to delay their presentation until 27 June.

The Speakers of the Parliament informed NIEC that the institution would resume on 6 June, after which the Ad Hoc Committee would present their report for debate and adoption.

This will be followed by the Amendments to the Political Parties Law, which require approval of the Parliament. The NIEC will then be in a position to deliver their report on holding elections. The delay will likely impact electoral timelines.



Latest Electoral Information Sharing Meetings



On 7 April and 19 May, two electoral information sharing meetings co-chaired by Halima Ismail Ibrahim, NIEC Chairperson, and Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, have been held virtually on WebEx.

During the 7 April meeting, Mr. Zenenga has commended the NIEC Commission, Joint Ad Hoc Committee and all partners for the sustained work despite challenges imposed by COVID-19 crisis.

He has outlined recent engagements by the UN and international community with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and each of the Federal Member States (FMS) on three key topics: the importance of cooperating with NIEC and allowing them to implement their mandate; provision of a political space to enable political parties to operate in the FMS; and the need for FGS and FMS to re-establish a decision-making forum to resolve outstanding issues and enable progress on key priorities as set out in the Mutual Accountability Framework. General Ahmed Ali, Head of the National Electoral Security Task Force (NESTF) Secretariat, has updated the meeting on the endorsement

of its terms of reference. He has noted that the draft Concept for Security for Voter Registration would be finalized shortly, and the lists of potential voter registration sites would be shared by the NIEC with the FMS members of the NESTF.

Ibrahim Yarow Isaq, Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Elections, a special guest at the meeting held on 19 May, has noted the progress of his Committee's work on preparing a report on the four key issues related to the electoral law that required further clarification. He has reiterated his Committee's intention to have the report ready when the Parliament would resume.

NIEC Chairperson has highlighted the continued support and advice provided to the Ad Hoc Committee through virtual meetings. She has appreciated the willingness of the Committee to cooperate with NIEC when considering the operational challenges arising from some articles in the electoral law.

Ms. Ibrahim also noted the preparation of the NIEC report to the Parliament on implementing the electoral law according to the constitutional timeline and electoral law. Articles 13 and 53 in the Electoral Law state that NIEC must present its report 180 days before the mandate of Parliament expires. *(Both Houses of Parliament were due to resume in mid-April following recess but delayed their return to early June due to COVID-19).*



Electoral security: NIEC's Google Mapping Tool



The NIEC has adapted a Google Maps application to be used as a tool to map potential locations of voter registration and polling sites.

The mapping tool offers a high-level view of the sites and allows to zoom in and view each site and its surrounding areas, both

on a map and a satellite image.

The tool will help security planners in the FMSs and Benadir Region to match their forces to the sites, and refine the lists of voter registration and polling sites to those that they are confident can be secured and protected.

This tool has particular planning benefits during the current COVID-19 pandemic due to restrictions on movement and assembly.

The mapping tool is owned by the NIEC and will be shared with selected users.



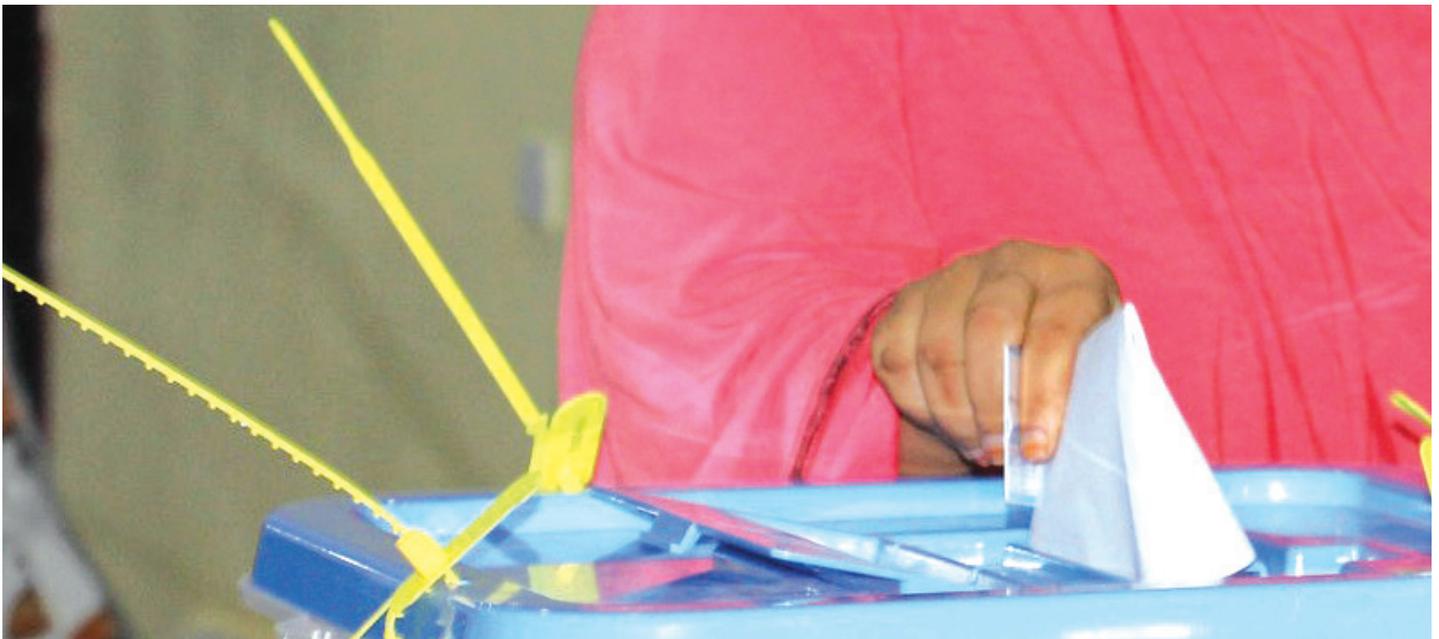
New: International Assistance Partners Group

In May, the NIEC in collaboration with IESG has established the International Assistance Partners Group, which will ensure coherence and complementarity of partners' various technical assistance initiatives and avoid duplication of assistance. The Group will meet every month.

Five sub-working groups have been formed to take forward complementary support activities focused on specific thematic areas such as: gender mainstreaming, public outreach and communications, political party

liaison, security, and capacity building/institutional strengthening, and professional development. The Political Party working group held its first meeting on 14 May. This group will be co-chaired by the NIEC Political Parties Registrar and the International Republican Institute. The Gender working group, co-chaired by NIEC Gender Advisor and UN Women, held their first meeting on 19 May with gender electoral assistance providers. It is expected that the other working groups will be fully established in June.

First e-meeting of the Joint Electoral Working Logistics Group



On 11 May, the Joint Election Logistics Working Group has held its first teleconference meeting since the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Chaired by the NIEC, the meeting has brought together representatives from UNSOS, IESG and AMSOM. The NIEC has briefed the meeting on progress made on the electoral process, the identification and vetting of potential voter registration sites, and its

collaboration with the Joint Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee.

The meeting has also noted the work of the NESTF, which had previously discussed its terms of references and the draft concept note for securing the voter registration process. The NIEC has presented the potential list of voter registration sites to the NESTF, and informed having finalized the software for the voter registration site mapping

tool, developed with IESG support. The software will be presented to the NESTF and aims to facilitate security and logistics planning.

The NIEC informed on progress made on the construction of its central warehouse at the new NIEC compound, supported by UNSOM funding and implemented by UNSOS. Construction is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2020.

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