

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

Elections to conclude on 25 February 2022, says NCC

The National Consultative Council (NCC) concluded its seven-day meeting in Mogadishu which started on 3 January. During its meetings, the NCC met with the Council of Presidential Candidates (CPC), civil society and the international community representatives. This NCC meeting focused on improving the electoral integrity, completing the House of the People (HoP) elections, enhancing electoral security and managing the drought. On 9 January, the NCC published an 18-point communique stipulating that the ongoing HoP elections will be concluded between 15 January and 25 February 2022.



The communique outlined some measures to enhance the electoral credibility, such as the publishing of the list of the Delegate Selection Committee (DSC) members and the sharing of the list with the Federal Elections Implementation Team (FEIT) and Election Dispute Resolution Committee (EDRC), ensuring the presence of the media and observers during the polling, removing the requirement for delegates to pay the security clearance fee for the criminal record certificate, and ensuring access of candidates to delegates for campaigning purposes.

The responsibility falls on the FEIT, State Election Implementation Teams (SEITs) and EDRC to ensure that the candidates, delegates and DSCs meet the requirements set out in the agreements and agreed procedures. Furthermore, the DSCs and delegates must be trained to carry out their duties as per the electoral procedures. The Communique also stated that AMISOM must strengthen the security of the Presidential Palace.

HIGHLIGHTS

- NCC communique sets 25 February to complete HoP elections
- Indirect electoral committees elect new leadership
- 31% of HoP seats elected by 31 January
- Advocacy towards the achievement of 30% women's quota continues

House of the People (HoP) elections

By 31 January, 31% or 86 out of the 275 HoP seats were elected in six Federal Member States (FMSs). Eighteen women were elected by the end of this reporting period (21% of the elected seats).

Electoral committees (FEIT, SEITs, EDRC)

In December, IESG drafted a set of mitigation measures aimed at improving the credibility of the ongoing HoP electoral process. These measures included, the publication of election timelines, seats reserved for women, delegate, candidate and delegate selection committee lists.

The FEIT member responsible for international stakeholder engagement met with the IESG External Relations Advisor on 6 December and discussed FEIT plans to hold thematic information meetings regularly for the remaining electoral period with the various partners including donors, national and international stakeholders, and ambassadors of various countries. The FEIT member noted the first thematic meeting would be on the 30% women's quota.



Delegate training on 16 January in Baidoa

House of the People (HoP) elections (cont'd)

On 13 December, FEIT issued a press release announcing the conclusion of the Upper House (UH) elections and the election of 24 HoP seats. The statement called on Puntland, Jubaland and Hirshabelle to start the HoP election as soon as possible and further requested the SEITs in these respective FMSs to provide a report within 48 hours on commencing the election or to clarify to the public the circumstances for delaying the process. The FEIT urged the NCC to fulfil its public responsibilities as the elections have been delayed due to political issues.

On 18 December 2021, the Prime Minister (PM) dismissed and replaced seven members of the EDRC including the chairperson. According to PM's statement, the members' dismissal was due to failure to act with transparency and impartiality. On the same day, EDRC issued a statement rejecting PM's decision which they consider is in violation of the NCC agreements and procedures, which establish that any change to or dismissal of EDRC members should be jointly decided by the NCC. On 20 January, EDRC elected Mr Ahmed Awil Warsame as the new Chairperson following the dismissal of 7 EDRC members including the Chairperson on 18 December.

On 22 December, EDRC rejected and did not accept or register the complaint of two out of the three candidates competing for seat HoP 225 allocated to Somaliland as unsubstantiated. The two candidates claimed that the process of the indirect election of the seat on 19 December was not in accordance with the election procedures and code of conduct. FEIT elected a new Chairperson on 15 January 2022. The newly-elected Chairperson is the former FEIT logistics director, Mr Muse Gelle Yusuf.



EDRC chairperson (centre) on 22 January.
Photo credit: EDRC Facebook page



SRSO meeting with the new FEIT chairperson and international partners on 25 January. Photo credit: UNSOM flicker

On 25 January, SRSO Swan convened a meeting with the new Chairperson of the FEIT, Mr Yusuf and International Partners/Election Donors to discuss the implementation of the 17 September and 27 May Electoral Agreements. The meeting discussed the progress made in advancing the electoral process under the new leadership of the FEIT Chairperson, following the issuance of the NCC's Communique on 9 January, and to reiterate the international community's continued commitment and support to the process. FEIT Chairperson informed that FEIT was planning to conclude elections in the first locations in all FMSs by 10 February and then undertake elections in the second locations for the remaining seats.

The Chairperson stated that the elections were proceeding well and that approximately 95% of the NCC's agreement had been implemented with no major challenges. The Chair reiterated that the implementation of the 30% women's quota was integral to the process and that the FMSs discussed how to ensure that the women's quota was respected and realized. He stated that he would continue to have similar discussions with the FMSs to ensure the quota was attained. He further informed that the election procedures were being implemented including the announcement of all the traditional elders and delegates.

During December and January, IESG held a series of meetings with EDRC to discuss electoral complaints registration and adjudication. EDRC Deputy Chairperson stated that EDRC receives many informal complaints where complainants complain without providing supporting documents such as evidence and complaint registration fees and they do not formalize their request.

EDRC has registered three complaints and adjudicated on two complaints related to the HoP elections by the end of January 2022. Two complaints were from Somaliland and one from Galmudug. The third complaint was lodged on 27 January by two complainants including an elder and one of the women Candidates for seat HoP 209. They claimed that the delegates' selection process was not in accordance with the procedures including the delegates who participated in the election for the three seats were not part of a particular clan/sub-clan and that one sub-clan already had representation in the Upper House. This complaint is under investigation and results are expected in early February.

Logistics

IESG is drafting a retrieval and disposal guide note for electoral polling materials electronic / ICT equipment and office furniture that were delivered to the indirect electoral committees with support of donor funds for the indirect electoral process. The guidance note will be used as the principal document to assist the FEIT and SEITs in transferring all assets and equipment procured under UNDP and the African Union (AU) funds to the NIEC upon the conclusion of the indirect electoral process.

Women's 30% quota for parliamentary seats



High level consultative meeting on women's participation 2 December 2021. Photo Credit: MoWHRD Facebook page

On 1-2 December in Mogadishu, the Federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development (MoWHRD) held a high-level consultative forum on realizing women's 30% quota in the HoP elections. The forum undertook a thorough analysis of the work, achievements and challenges of women leaders, Women Ministries at the FMSs level and the Goodwill Ambassadors (GWA) to achieve the 30% quota in the Upper House (UH) elections. It also took stock of strategies that worked and those that did not work and outlined actions with the most potential to be effective for the advocacy campaign during the HoP elections. Participants included FGS and FMSs representatives, CSO activists, leaders, GWA, MPs and

Senators elect. The Forum was supported by the UN Gender and Elections Task Team.

Since the commencement of the 2021-2022 indirect elections, GwAs have been advocating for the achievement of the 30% women's quota both for the UH and HoP. Their advocacy has been supported by the international community, the UN, Office of the Prime Minister, Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and FMSs, Women Affairs Ministries, women civil society leaders across the country to ensure the quota is attained.

GwAs submitted a proposal, for the second phase of their advocacy, which will adopt a two-pronged approach. This includes conducting field missions to the FMSs, sustaining and coordinating campaigns in all FMSs, Somaliland, Banadir, and a robust media communication advocacy campaign.

Between 27-28 December, GwAs held a conference on Women's Political Participation and 30% women's Quota in the 2021 Federal Election Process in Mogadishu. The two-day conference was attended by approximately 150 people including Somali Women Ministers at both federal and FMS levels, civil society, human rights activists, and women aspirants. After the conference, the GwAs issued a communique encouraging stakeholders to fulfil commitments towards the 30% quota. UNSOM Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group (SCPAG) provided communication support for the GWA conference.



Mogadishu, GwAs conference. Photo Credit: GWA's Facebook page

Election security preparedness

As the HoP elections get fully underway, the IESG security team has begun to assess the impact and functionality of the Joint Operation Centers (JOCs).

Puntland and Galmudug JOCs are fully operational. As such they have actively been coordinating with the Somali Security Forces (SSF) during the election period and supporting to build a secure election process for all.

IESG is planning to organise an Intelligence and Information Training package with AMISOM for JOC staff and obtain updates on how the JOCs are supporting the security of elections.



Radio installation in JOC Garowe on 25 December 2021

Election security preparedness (cont'd)

The installation of phase 2 radio systems (National JOC-to-JOC network) has concluded with systems installed in ten of 12 sites. Kismayo and Bossaso are yet to be installed due to security and political reasons. Motorola has offered an online learning package aimed at the user for JOC staff which includes four courses (9 hours total). The goal is to maximise user capability as well as develop a basic understanding of how to fix issues affecting radio operability.

Communications

SCPAG collaborated closely with IESG to support editing an infographic explaining the mandate of the EDRC. Ten social media-friendly advocacy videos on the 30% women's quota were rebroadcast in December on 11 radio stations and television across the country; two animated videos on the indirect electoral process and functioning of Somalia as a democracy; a video clip of the song on women's 30% 'Let's make the women's quota a reality!' and key messages in Somali on the women's quota were published on 42 billboards across the country.

NIEC capacity development

The National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) undertook several trainings with IESG support for their staff during the reporting period. Workshops on the role of the media in raising awareness and holding the electoral process to account were held for field office staff. Information sharing sessions were conducted on the role of election observation in ensuring a credible electoral process in Somalia.

IESG held several meetings with the NIEC Acting Public Outreach Director during December and January to provide guidance on the department's near-term planning including key NIEC communications/outreach strategies. Other areas of discussion included near-term planning including key NIEC communications/outreach strategies.

IESG provided input for the NIEC draft social media policy. The social media policy provides guidelines for all NIEC staff on their professional and personal use of social media to be in line with the Code of Conduct of the National Independent Commission Act Lr. 01/2019, the Civil Service Law (Law Number 11/2016), and NIEC Human Resources Policies. Regular mentoring sessions between representatives of the IESG Legal/ Procedures team and the NIEC Legal Department took place in December to provide advice and support on legal and procedural matters and ad-hoc issues. IESG advised on the draft regulation on NIEC Registration regulation requiring consultations with other NIEC departments, and on the draft regulation on NIEC Secondary Legislation. In addition, IESG supported the NIEC legal department in translating the draft regulations.

Assistance to NIEC Office of Political Party Registrar (OPPR) was provided on the software development for the political party database. Discussions between IESG IT advisors and OPR IT staff were held on hosting of the application at the NIEC premises and the way forward including changes to the system.

IESG held a number of discussions with NIEC counterparts on preparations for the planned NIEC Consultative Forum due to be held during this year.

IESG meets with TPEC

On 11 January, the IESG team in Garowe facilitated a meeting between the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) and IESG HQ to discuss potential support to the upcoming district council elections in Puntland. Another meeting with TPEC Commissioners was held on 25 January to explore avenues of cooperation. More discussions will follow to agree on the technical support that IESG can provide to assist the direct elections process for local elections.

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