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For Immediate Release

PRESS STATEMENT 13/2013

SRSG Nicholas Kay calls for inclusive and fair electoral process in Puntland

Garowe/Mogadishu, 21 October 2013 – Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia Nicholas Kay completed a two-day visit to Garowe, the capital of the federal state of Puntland today, urging a free, inclusive and credible political process that should lead to a new Puntland parliament this year and presidential elections early in 2014.

“This will be the fourth government in Puntland and we salute the significant stability and progress made since 1998. Puntland has an important role to play in charting the way to a new federal Somalia,” Kay said. “I hope Puntland can renew its relationship with the Federal Government and help move the whole Somali state-building project forward.”

SRSG Kay met with Puntland President Abidrahman Farole, ministers, parliamentarians, clan elders, civil society and UN staff from 20 to 21 October. He heard from them the current state of preparations, timelines and issues of concern.

Community leaders and clan elders will soon begin the process of nominating 66 new MPs to the Puntland Parliament. Once in session, the MPs will elect a president of Puntland for a new term due to start in January 2014. Kay called for continued efforts to achieve one-person, one-vote democratisation for the future.

A vetting committee will review the nominated MPs to ensure they meet the criteria set out in Puntland’s constitution, and are people without a criminal record or history of violence. The appointment of the committee should be completed promptly and transparently, Kay urged.

Despite making up more than half of Puntland’s population, women occupy only two seats in the current Parliament (fewer than any time since 1998). SRSG Kay urged government, elders and civil society to work towards a greater representation of women in the next parliament. The representation of minorities and regions also needs careful attention, the envoy added.

All presidential candidates will need to be assured freedom of movement, association, security and should enjoy equal access to media. These issues are largely the responsibility of the current government. Journalists should be free to do their work without interference, Kay told government and other stakeholders.

The process should be conducted peacefully within a context of reconciliation, despite the inevitable raising of political temperatures during the campaign, he added.

At the invitation of the government of Puntland, the UN will continue supporting efforts for an inclusive, fair and credible outcome and will remain closely engaged in the coming weeks and months.

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