

NEWS LETTER

January-March 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 - Monthly News Updates

UN Security Council Resolution 2461 – UN Electoral Support to Somalia

On 27 March 2019, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2461, which extends the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 March 2020, emphasizes the UN's "political, technical, operational and logistical support to the federal government for the delivery of inclusive, peaceful, free and fair one-person-one-vote elections in 2020/2021". UNSCR 2461 underlines in particular the UN's support to National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) at national and sub-national levels, for the Commission to fulfil its constitutional mandate in line with its Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. The Resolution also specifies the UN's support to a nationwide voter registration exercise in early 2020 and consequent polling operations for the 2020/2021 elections, as well as the coordination of international electoral support to Somalia. While the Security Council welcomed the agreement in Baidoa in June 2018 between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States on the electoral system of representation, it expressed concerns about the delay in the passage of the Electoral Law, and urges the Government and Parliament to finalize and adopt the Electoral Law by mid-2019.

IESG-NIEC strategic session on electoral timelines and voter registration methodologies



NIEC Commissioners addressing representatives of political parties on electoral issues and concepts of voter registration methodologies. Mogadishu, 7 March 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

In March, the UNDP/UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) held a series of strategic sessions with Commissioners and senior members of the Secretariat to discuss electoral timelines, crucial decisions for next year's voter registration, and issues on institutional governance. During a retreat in Mogadishu from 17 to 19 March, different potential voter registration methodologies and their practical implications were debated at length to identify a system that is most suitable for the context in Somalia. Pros and

cons were outlined for different voter registration methodologies, ranging from manual or electronic registration to different forms of biometric registration. The NIEC decided to focus on two options and further elaborate on the details of each. In the upcoming period, after further consultations with key stakeholders, the NIEC will make a formal decision which methodology it selects to register voters. In parallel, on 13 March, IESG held a briefing for key international partners at their request on

Highlights

- ◆ 20 Jan: NIEC delegation to South-West to establish Baidoa office
- ◆ 23 Jan: NIEC-IESG electoral information sharing meeting
- ◆ 26 Jan: NIEC delegation to Puntland
- ◆ 28 Jan: NIEC by-election in Baidoa
- ◆ 4-7 Feb: IESG-NIEC workshop on strategic plan
- ◆ 6 Feb: NIEC participated in 3rd General Assembly of Arab EMBs
- ◆ 10 Feb: NIEC attended inter-ministerial sub-committee meeting on electoral security
- ◆ 12-13+26-27 Feb: NIEC workshop with youth and women on Voter Education
- ◆ 20 Feb: NIEC delegation to Hirshabelle to establish Jowhar office
- ◆ 25 Feb: NIEC-IESG electoral information sharing meeting
- ◆ 28 Feb: IESG-NIEC training on electoral logistics
- ◆ 28 Feb: NIEC meeting with Prime Minister
- ◆ 2, 6 March: IESG strategic sessions with NIEC on voter registration systems
- ◆ 3-7 March: IESG workshop with NIEC on 'training of electoral master trainers'
- ◆ 7 March: NIEC meeting with political parties and women groups on electoral processes
- ◆ 10 March: NIEC delegation to Galmudug to establish Dhusamareb office
- ◆ 12-14 March: IESG workshop with NIEC on strategic communication
- ◆ 13 March: IESG briefing to donor partners on voter registration systems
- ◆ 17-19 March: NIEC-IESG retreat on electoral timelines and voter registration methodologies
- ◆ 27 March: United Nations Security Council resolution 2461 – UN electoral support to Somalia

different voter registration methodologies and corresponding technologies, budget and procurement timelines. During an electoral information sharing meeting on 15 April, the NIEC will inform international partners on the latest decisions and updates.

NIEC-IESG electoral information sharing meetings



*NIEC-IESG monthly electoral information sharing meeting.
Mogadishu, 23 January 2019 (Photo credit: IESG)*

On 23 January and 25 February, the NIEC and IESG held electoral information sharing meetings with international electoral stakeholders. The meetings were jointly chaired by the Deputy Special Representative for United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (DSRSG) and the NIEC Chairperson Ms. Halima Ibrahim and Ms. Khadija Osoble, NIEC Commissioner. IESG also introduced to international partners its new Chief, Ms. Hiroko Miyamura, who has extensive electoral experience with the UN and was in 2014 in Somalia leading the UN electoral needs assessment mission (NAM)

to establish IESG.

The NIEC Chairperson provided updates on election preparations and pointed out that the gains made in 2019 will determine the readiness for holding credible elections in 2020. The NIEC stated that the success of planned operations in 2019 will depend on adequate and timely funding.

The NIEC also updated on the by-election in Baidoa, registration of the new political parties, NIEC's participation in Arab EMBs conference held in Jordan, the establishment of the election security task force, opening

of three new field offices in Garowe, Baidoa and Jowhar, as well as the recruitment of NIEC staff for the field offices.

NIEC Commissioner Ms. Khadija Osoble emphasized that 2019 is a critical year for all stakeholders concerning planning and preparation for voter registration by early 2020. She requested all implementing partners to update on their activities related to elections and stressed the importance of working together to make 2020 elections successful.

Ms. Hiroko Miyamura, the Chief of Integrated Electoral Support Group, outlined IESG's support to the NIEC on electoral preparations including facilitating the NIEC in revising its 2017-2021 Strategic Plan and preparing a zero draft of the voter registration site mapping exercise as well as the voter registration operational plans and budget.

The UNSOM DSRSG reiterated the UN's commitment to support the NIEC's work in preparations for the 2020 elections and underscored the importance of women's participation in electoral processes. He stressed the need for united efforts, determination of the NIEC and strong support from Somali institutions and the international community.

IESG technical assistance and capacity development workshops with NIEC on electoral preparation

To strengthen the NIEC's institutional capacity and electoral knowledge, IESG provided different workshops for NIEC Commissioners and members of the Secretariat, including briefings and discussions on voter registration methodologies and technologies and electoral operational timelines (2 and 6 March), on 'training of electoral master trainers' (3-7 March), on strategic communication (12-14 March), and a high-level workshop on institutional governance, electoral timelines and VR decisions (17-19 March).

The 'Training the Master Trainers' (3-7 March) is a professional development programme, part of the international BRIDGE curriculum (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections). In combination with a follow-up workshop in April, the training elaborates on the system of master trainers and the mechanics of a cascade training approach which has to ensure proper knowledge transfer, skills development and quality assurance of the implementation of future electoral operations in the field by the thousands of temporary/short-term election workers.

From 18 to 22 February, the newly appointed Secretary-General of the NIEC was invited by the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa for a study tour to experience first-hand electoral operations and challenges. South Africa is at the apex of preparations for its national and provincial elections planned in May 2019. With support from IESG, the study tour was an opportune time for the SG to learn the behind-the-scenes preparations, planning, leading and coordinating with other stakeholders, with ideas on how best to steer the NIEC on its developmental path in electoral management.



*Conduct of BRIDGE training of the master trainers
Mogadishu, 7 March 2019 (Photo credit: IESG)*

Electoral body holds meeting with Somali Prime Minister



NIEC team in a meeting with the Prime Minister on 2020 elections. Mogadishu, 28 February 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 28 February, a team of the NIEC led by Chairperson Ms. Halima Ismail met with the Prime Minister Hassan Kheyre in his office in Mogadishu. The purpose of the meeting was to update the Prime Minister on the Commission's achievements and challenges ahead for the upcoming elections in 2020.

NIEC discussed the electoral body's 2019 work plan. The Commission stressed the importance of having crucial laws enacted to pave the way for the 2020 elections, saying the electoral law and review of the political parties act were the most vital legislation to be passed once Parliament resumed.

During the meeting, the Commission's budget, voter education and sensitization, voter registration, opening of new NIEC offices, security for elections and the establishment of the electoral security task force were discussed.

The Prime Minister took note of the Commission's accomplishments. He thanked the electoral body for their clearly laid out plan towards ensuring the country's readiness for timely elections. He assured them of his Government's sincere commitment to the electoral process and helping the electoral body to achieve its goal of conducting universal suffrage elections in 2020.

NIEC attend Inter-Ministerial Sub-Committee meeting on electoral security

In response to the NIEC proposal for the establishment of a task force for planning and execution of election security, the Prime Minister endorsed the proposal and instructed the relevant agencies to commence work on the establishment of an electoral security coordination task force. On 10 February, the NIEC attended Inter-Ministerial Sub-Committee on security chaired by the Prime Minister where he reiterated the Government's commitment to establish the task force.

Temporary registration of political parties – 43

To date, the NIEC has provided temporary registration certificates to 43 political parties.

3rd Regional Conference for Election Commissions of Arab Countries



NIEC Chairperson, Halima Ismail Ibrahim, chaired the session on Electoral Complaints & Appeals related to Gender Equality Jordan, 5 February 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

From 3 to 5 February 2019, the NIEC Chairperson Ms. Halima Ismail and two other commission members attended the 3rd Regional Conference for Election Commissions of Arab countries in Jordan.

The three-day conference gave an

opportunity to the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) from the Arab States to exchange views about international principles and standards in the field of electoral complaints and identify the key challenges facing the Arab EMBs and the

judiciary in charge of electoral dispute resolution.

Ms. Halima Ismail chaired the last session of the conference which discussed electoral complaints and appeals related to gender equality in the Arab region. The participants discussed ways for women to struggle for their rights during the election period with reference to electoral complaints and appeals policy and highlighted ways on how EMBs can cater for women rights.

UNDP's Regional Electoral Support Project and the Independent High Electoral Commission of Jordan assisted the Organization of Electoral Management Bodies of Arab countries in the preparation of the 3rd General Assembly of Arab EMBs and of the international conference on the electoral dispute resolution.



NIEC Chairperson met with South-West President in Baidoa



NIEC Chairperson with the newly elected South West State President Baidoa, 20 January 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

On 20 January 2019, a delegation from the NIEC met with the newly elected President of South West State, Mr. Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed "Laftagaren". The Chairperson briefed the new President about the role that the Commission is playing to implement their mandate of achieving universal suffrage elections in Somalia by 2020. The President thanked the delegation for their visit and welcomed the Commission's decision to set up the Commission's office in Baidoa, the South West State capital.

NIEC delegation to South-West State

A team from the NIEC visited Baidoa on 19 January. The team which consisted of NIEC Commissioners and its secretariat staff conducted several activities in South West State. The team oversaw the opening of the NIEC state office, conducted a sensitization workshop on the electoral process as well as the recruitment of the staff for the new office. They also conducted the by-election for a vacant seat in the House of the People.



NIEC Chairperson present in Baidoa for several engagements in South West State 19 January 2018, (Photo credit: NIEC)

NIEC Delegates met with new Puntland State President

On 26 January, a delegation from the NIEC met in Garowe with the new Puntland State President, Said Abdullahi Deni, in Garowe.



NIEC team with new president of Puntland. Garowe, 26 January 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

Ms. Halima Ismail congratulated Mr. Deni on his election victory. She highlighted the support and the cohesive working relationship NIEC had provided to the past administration and stressed the importance of the Commission and the new regional state

administration working together to accomplish its mandate of conducting nationwide elections in 2020.

The Chair underlined the Commission's accomplishments of opening the first regional electoral commission office being opened in Garowe, Puntland, followed by the South-West State office opening in Baidoa. She said the NIEC intend to open offices in the remaining regional states.

The NIEC is preparing the ground work for one person one vote elections by 2020 and is keen to foster a close working relationship to ensure NIEC accomplishes its mandate of conducting universal suffrage elections in the federal member states. The NIEC is also keen to ensure universal suffrage elections are conducted in an inclusive political process.

Conduct of by-election in Baidoa

On 28 January, the NIEC conducted by-election in the South West State capital of Baidoa. The seat was vacant from the House of the People of the Federal Parliament following the death of Hon. MP Khalif Sheikh Abdullahi Dheere. Prior to the voting on 28 January, the NIEC registered the electoral delegates and organized for them a training to give them information and skills that enabled them to vote on the Election Day. Abdullahi Sheikh Mohammad has been elected member parliament in the by-election.

NIEC Workshop to increase women's participation in electoral process

On 20 January, a workshop to increase Somali women's participation in the electoral process was held in Baidoa, South West State that brought together participants from women organizations and civil society.

The workshop was officially opened by the Minister of Women and Human Rights of South West State government and NIEC Chair Ms. Halima Ismail. In the workshop, women raised the challenges they faced in the political landscape that currently prevailed in the country.



Workshop to increase women's participation in electoral process. Baidoa, 20 January 2019 (Photo credit: NIEC)

NIEC workshops with youth and women on voter education



Youth in a seminar on Voter Education organized by NIEC. Mogadishu, 12-13 February 2019. (Photo credit: NIEC)

From 12-13 February, the NIEC conducted a two day seminar in Mogadishu on voter and civic education to sensitize youth for the 2020 electoral process. More than 100 participants from local youth organizations, political parties, NIEC Outreach Departmental staff, 3 NIEC Commissioners and an official from the Political Party Registration Office also attended the seminar.

On 26 and 27 February, NIEC organized another seminar on voter education and awareness raising for the women in Mogadishu. The seminar was attended by local women organizations, political parties, marginalized groups and people with disabilities.

The workshops were hosted by the NIEC Public Outreach and Voter Education Department. Its aim was to sensitize, exchange experiences and to identify strategies to strengthen and ensure women and youth participation in the electoral process.

The participants were given presentations on several topics derived from the recently developed national voter education curriculum. The topics covered in the workshops included: the NIEC mandate, functions, achievements and plans; the importance of elections; rights and responsibilities of citizens with regards to elections and political parties' registration and the role of the youth.

IESG-NIEC training on electoral logistics management

To strengthen the NIEC's capacity and electoral knowledge, IESG provided a series of technical trainings to NIEC counterparts in Mogadishu, such on electoral procedures, regulations, codes of conduct, as well as on electoral logistics. On 28 February, the IESG conducted electoral logistics management training for the NIEC Operations staff in Mogadishu. The training was focused on logistics work-plan for the electoral cycle. The participants were trained on the three phases of the electoral logistics process including pre-election, election (voting) period, and the post electoral period. The key topics covered: electoral logistics planning and implementation, procurement of materials for voter registration and polling, voter education and public awareness, voting (polling and counting), tabulation, etc

NIEC field offices

In preparation of the planning of voter registration and other electoral operations, the NIEC is establishing a field presence in each of the capitals of the Federal Member States. Following the establishment of an office in Puntland in late 2018, the NIEC also opened offices this quarter in South-West State, Hirshabelle and Galmudug. In April, the NIEC plans a trip to Jubbaland to set up the last of its sub-national hubs. These offices will spearhead the Commission's electoral operations at state level. They will help the NIEC with the exploration of potential voter registration sites in each of the States, followed by security and logistical planning, as well as engagement of local electoral actors to inform the electorate on upcoming electoral processes.

The UNDP/UNSOM Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) provides logistical support to the establishment of the NIEC's subnational offices, including hand-over of some assets from the previous 2016 electoral process.

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