



Somaliland Non State Actors Forum

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Civil Society Policy Position on Voter Registration process

The Somaliland Civil Society/ NSA endorsed the agreements reached by the Somaliland election stakeholders on the expected voter registration (2013). As a key stakeholder in the Somaliland Democratization process, the Civil Society urges the Government, the Political Parties, NEC, the International Community to cooperate for the common good of the people of Somaliland and the Somaliland Civil Society appreciates the continues generous support of the International Community on Somaliland elections and democratization process in general.

Hargeisa- On February 27, 28- 2014 the SONSAF Democratization Thematic Working Group has facilitated two days Round-table discussions with key stakeholders of the Somaliland Non State Actors to analyze and discuss the issue of voter registration in support of the unwavering consensus of the Somaliland election stakeholders to establish a work-plan for the process of holding a voter registration on time for the 2014 election.

The discussions focused on participants' experience on 2008 voter registration, assessed the misconducts and the lessons that can be drawn from the experience of how Somaliland has managed its first ever voter registration endorsed the agreements reached by the Somaliland election stakeholders on voter registration issues and inform them of the importance of civil society role in the voter registration process.

The participants took stock of the importance of a credible voter registration for Somaliland's budding democracy and the quest for free and fair elections on 2015 and beyond and largely agreed that though some progress have been made towards timely, free and fair elections, there are still outstanding issues mainly, gaps in necessary legal reform provisions, all of which can potentially hamper the prospect of timely, free and fair elections in Somaliland in 2015.

All the participants shared a passion for finding the right framework and level playing field for all political actors for free and fair elections in order to sustain Somaliland's vision for a peaceful, justice and democratic society.

The participants identified litany of problems which marred the results of 2008 voter registrations as mentioned in subsequent reports by Creative Associates, by Electoral Reform International Services and others, which included:

- Technical issues including administrative and system errors
- The direct fraud acts such as the registration of minors too young to be eligible to vote, deliberate multiple registrations with false names and other details, mobilization of communities by the politicians, under age voting and double voting have come persist ingredient in this cycle.
- Logistics and preparation including inadequate staff training on technology use as well as other operating skills, distribution of registration units and dispatch of registration kits.
- Very inadequate voter education awareness across the country
- Gaps in Legal provisions as well as Lack of Enforcement of laws
- Generally the time allocated for the whole exercise was very limited.

As such the participants proposed the following advice for the Government, Political parties, National Election Commission, Ministry of Interior, Intentional Community and Non state Actors of Somaliland:

- Stakeholders need to understand the Importance of Voter Registration as a pillar for Somaliland's young democracy, as a way to discourage multiple voting, a means to increase our elections turnout as well as a tool for election preparation.
- Strong civil society/NSA monitoring and observation on voter registration process is extremely inevitable at levels of planning, implementation and validating the final lists of the voters.
- For a successful and credible voter registration to take place, the process of conduct voter registration needs to be transparent, open and should allow the public and the civil society to play a role.
- Misconducts of the 2008/2009 should not be repeated and the decision makers need to immediately address those misconducts and inform the wider public of the consequences of repeating them again.
- The participants urge the Somaliland government to share information on the progress of the Voter registration process and overall its commitment to holding the elections on time with the public in order to reduce speculations, misinformation and improve transparency.
- The Somaliland opposition parties should also refrain from anything that can create tensions and disturb the smooth transition towards a credible voter registration and free and fair elections in 2015.
- The members of the civil society also spoke about the importance of awarding the tender and the bidding process, which is deemed not effective and well-thought out in

the previous exercise. Therefore, there is need to draw lessons from the problems we faced during the previous voter registration, hence a competitive and transparent bid process can play a huge role in ensuring a credible voter registration.

- NEC shouldn't take the existing polling stations for granted as happened in the last election, and needs to conduct a proper remapping on the available polling centers in order to avoid any delays and inconsistent.
- The Somaliland civil society is recommending the election stakeholders to support harmonizing the electoral laws in order to prevent any confusion and shortcomings
- Somaliland civil society/ NSA is highly recommending to the parliament of Somaliland adopting a comprehensive legal system that is allowing women and minority quota.
- Amble time needs to be given to the voter registration preparation, especially the personnel selection procedures and the training of operation team as well as a proper planning for the voting/polling centers.
- For a successful voter registration, the civil society urges NEC, the government and the International community to support conducting a comprehensive awareness and civic education programs in order to the wider population.

Furthermore, as a key election stakeholders, the Somaliland civil society played a prominent role in past elections and continues to liaise with all other stakeholders to play a meaningful role in the quest for free and fair elections and a level playing field for all actors.

The civil society fully supports the options selected by the stakeholders– parallel processes of registration each led by its mandated institution – Voter Registration for NEC and Civil Registration for MOI.

In the effort of supporting the process, the Somaliland civil society will continue to cooperate with all other stakeholders in order to safeguard the accountability and transparency of Voter registration process. It will participate in building public confidence for the voter registration and voter education exercises to ensure a credible voter registration. It will continue to creating an enabling environment for a credible voter registration through public dialogue, studies and researches.

Democratization Thematic Working Group

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