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Somaliland: Change and continuity

Report by International Election Observers on the
June 2010 presidential elections in Somaliland

Michael Walls and Steve Kibble

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© Progressio May 2011

ISBN 978-1-85287-339-4

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Cover photo: A woman holds her voter ID card

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In writing this report, Steve and Michael are grateful for the input of Mark Bradbury, Conrad Heine, Ed Hobey, Sarah Howard, Quman Jibril, Fiona Mangan, Cecilia Milesi, Ayan Mahamoud Mahamed, Hussein Nur, Sucaad Odowa-Nielsen, Claudia Simoes, Daniel de Simone, and Aly Verjee.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the British Embassy in Addis Ababa for providing funding for our mission, the European Commission for the flights they provided for observers to travel to and from Hargeisa and Nairobi, and the Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC) with whom we signed a memorandum of understanding that laid the basis for our collective work. We were grateful for the liaison with Interpeace, NEC consultants, domestic observers and security forces. We thank Dr Adan Abokor, Progressio's country representative in Somaliland, and his team for their hard work in ensuring the mission's success. We reiterate our thanks to the Somaliland people for their patience, commitment to peace and democracy, and warm welcome.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CHD	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
DPU	Development Planning Unit of University College London
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
EMC	Electoral Monitoring Committee
FOPAG	Forum for Peace and Governance
HCTV	Horn Cable TV
IEOs	international election observers
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISG	Independent Scholars' Group
Kulmiye	'Peace, Unity and Development' Party
NAGAAD	network of women's organisations in Somaliland
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSP	Somalia NGO Safety Programme
SFUK	Somaliland Focus (UK)
SHURONET	Somaliland Human Rights Network
SLNTV	Somaliland National Television
SOMRA	Somali Relief Association
SONSAF	Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum
SONYO	Somaliland National Youth Organisation
SORADI	Somaliland Research and Development Institute
SPU	Special Protection Unit
SSC	'Sool, Sanaag and Cayn' militia group
SSCTV	Somaliland Space Channel
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UCID	Justice and Welfare Party
UDUB	United Democratic People's Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN DSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security

Introduction

On 27 July 2010, Dahir Riyale Kahin, President since 2003 of the internationally-unrecognised Republic of Somaliland, handed power peacefully to his successor Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo. The new President had been the victor in a presidential election held one month earlier. This event marked both change and continuity – a change of government (from the UDUB party to Kulmiye) as well as president, but continuity in taking further steps in Somaliland's democratic transition.

In 1991 Somaliland unilaterally declared the restoration of the independence the territory had enjoyed for several days in 1960. This represented an end of allegiance to a greater Somalia. In the late 1990s, Somaliland's political leadership declared a commitment to representative democracy, and local elections in 2002, presidential elections in 2003, and parliamentary elections in 2005 all contributed to this process, though not without problems and some continuing tensions.

The holding of the latest presidential elections on the scheduled date (26 June 2010) marked a major turnaround from before September 2009. By that stage, political party infighting had caused repeated delays from the original 2008 date and the prospects for successful elections looked bleak. The deadlock was finally broken when a six-point agreement was signed on 30 September 2009. This was the basis for the appointment of a new National Electoral Commission (NEC) and the establishment of a viable electoral timetable. Many commentators now see the fact that the elections took place peacefully, fairly and in accordance with a predetermined timetable as a strong indication of the effectiveness of the new NEC. In stark contrast to their predecessors, the new NEC members remained united, speaking with a single voice, acting with notable competence and avoiding politicisation of their role.

The elections went ahead on schedule despite some concerns over security. An incident involving alleged political Islamists in Burco in early June gave cause for concern, and subsequent bombings in Kampala, Uganda, on 11 July, in which 76 people were killed and for which Somali Islamists claimed responsibility, showed caution on security was warranted. Just before election day there was a warning from the Mogadishu-based Islamist group Al-Shabaab¹ that Somalilanders should not vote or they would face the consequences. However, Somalilanders in effect ignored this threat, turning out to vote in large numbers in most areas, and in the event the elections proceeded relatively peacefully. The one significant incident took place near the locality of Kala Baydh in Sool region, and resulted in the death of an election official.

International election observers (IEOs) had to operate under strict security guidelines but were able to go about their work unhindered, and security constraints did not seem to affect the work of other observation teams with whom we maintained close contact. The team responsible for this report provided coordination for 59 international observers, while the US-based International Republican Institute (IRI) brought an international observer team numbering 19.

Election observers

There are many similarities in the roles played by IEOs and their domestic counterparts.² Both are mandated to collect information and make informed judgements on the electoral process. Both work within a framework dictated by the oft-quoted refrain of 'free and fair', whereby an election is evaluated in terms of respect for fundamental human rights and the provision of a level playing field.

Both domestic and international observers instil credibility and legitimacy to the electoral process by examining its every stage. The presence of both sets of observers is expected to deter overt acts of electoral fraud, as well as less flagrant abuses, by ensuring adherence to ethics, laws and codes of conduct. There are no common observation standards, but it is generally agreed that

all observations should be political, considering the circumstances and climate in which elections are held; and technical, assessing the conduct and administration of campaigning, voting, vote counting, and the formation of the new government. Unlike monitors, neither international nor domestic observers have an inherent right to intervene in violations, offer assistance or mediate in disputes.³

The definition of international observers – external actors invited or accredited by a national authority to observe impartially and verify whether an election is conducted in a free and fair manner – differs only by a single word from that afforded to their domestic counterparts. The inferences that can be read into the word ‘external’ can, however, be hugely significant. It suggests participants not bound by partisan interests, political pressure or parochial concerns and not entangled in local power structures; it offers protection from accusations of partiality.

This perception of neutrality means that international observers have an important role in boosting confidence domestically. The almost symbolic nature that this affords foreigners is particularly vital in nascent democracies, where public trust in the impartiality of the electoral process may be lacking. On occasion, the presence of independent IEOs can reassure voters and candidates that it is safe to participate in a way which domestic observers might find difficult.



Men and women queuing to vote

As with any form of analysis, the independence of the reviewer is integral to how much credence their conclusions are afforded. The findings of observers only bear weight if they are able to demonstrate credibility and impartiality. As with justice, impartial observation should not only be done, but be seen to be done. The perception of the equation that ‘external’ is therefore ‘objective’ is integral to the role of international observers.

The history of international election observation shows that this has not always been the case. In 1857, when external observers were first present during a plebiscite in Moldavia and Wallachia, the scrutiny of the Ottomans and the Congress of Great Powers had more to do with geopolitical machinations than democratic considerations. The concept of geographical impartiality has, however, gained currency since the Cold War, and the number of elections witnessed by IEOs has correspondingly increased. The independent findings of an international election mission make it harder for political parties or candidates to dispute the results; they know that accusations of partiality will be harder to substantiate and that the world is watching their actions.

This is not to say that domestic observers are necessarily less impartial than their international colleagues, or that domestic observers are unable to put aside any personal opinions that they may hold about the protagonists in the election or the wider political context. In Somaliland, the domestic observers with whom we engaged were wholly professional.

One advantage that domestic observers generally have is a knowledge of local language and politics which enables them to pick up on nuances that might be missed by international observers. In Somaliland, we were fortunate to be able to allay this last concern to a great degree by involving members of the diaspora, those with a long-standing interest in the country, and veterans of the 2005 Parliamentary elections. A code of conduct committed our observers to respecting Somaliland sovereignty and remaining objective.

The role of IEOs is not to supplant domestic efforts but rather to complement local observers during an election and to empower them for elections to come in the future. This can be done through provision of technical assistance or by offering recommendations to the government that political space for local observers be expanded in future elections.

The other importance of externality is that independent observer teams are perceived as being a voice of the international community. Representing the wider global community allows such missions to bestow a degree of legitimacy that domestic observers alone may not obtain. While the presence of international observers alone should not be seen as bringing credibility to an election, their conclusions are likely to strongly influence the way in which the international community views that election. An objective evaluation followed by a proclamation of 'free and fair' by an internationally recognised body makes it more likely that the outcome of the election will be internationally respected. The newly elected government gains legitimacy in the eyes of external commentators, and its decisions are more likely to be seen to be in line with the will of the people. While some governments have simply brazened out criticism from IEOs, an international presence can make it harder for them to flout electoral expressions of the popular will than might otherwise be the case. In the case of Somaliland, which still lacks international recognition of state sovereignty, the significance of the implied legitimacy lent by an external body of observers assumes a heightened relevance.

Local initiatives

One of the main objectives of the Somaliland NEC was to guarantee a peaceful and fair election. Two local initiatives co-organised by the NEC in partnership with national and international civil society organisations – the electoral mediation and local (or domestic) observation projects – made a notable contribution to both the success of the elections and the empowerment of Somaliland citizens more generally.

Prior to the elections, we were able to follow the training and preparation of more than 600 mediators and 700 local observers who were to be deployed throughout Somaliland. On election day itself, our observer teams were able to interact with those mediators and domestic observers directly.

One of the most significant features of the two initiatives was their success in mobilising hundreds of mainly young people. Each project identified and trained a large number of Somalilanders who committed themselves to supporting their fellow citizens on voting day through a diverse range of activities: informing the public on voting procedure; observing the voting process itself as well as the count; mediating in disputes inside or outside polling stations; and registering and notifying authorities about irregularities in an effort to avoid further complications. In our view, these initiatives contributed greatly to the smooth running of the election and in terms of civic education and local empowerment.



Young women enjoying the atmosphere on election day

Electoral mediation

This initiative was co-organised by the NEC, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD – an independent mediation organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland), the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) and independent Somaliland civil society organisations. It was set up within the framework of a broader strategy on electoral dispute resolution, the objective of which was to guarantee the impartial and peaceful running of the presidential elections. The specific aim of the electoral mediation project was to deploy 600 respected community leaders to be available across the country on election day to intervene in any conflicts that occurred outside or inside polling stations. The Somaliland Research and Development Institute (SORADI) was sub-contracted to provide training to the mediators.

IEO teams were able to confirm that in most stations visited, mediators were indeed present, clearly distinguished with a t-shirt, and involved in dialogue with voters and electoral authorities in a range of interactions falling within their prescribed responsibilities. Our clear impression was that the mediators made a positive contribution on election day.

It should be noted, though, that their contribution was largely confined within polling stations. Here, they were able to advise and assist voters and authorities, contributing to a decrease in the level of misunderstandings. However, from our observation, their presence was far less effective outside polling stations, where conflicts were addressed either by members of the community itself or by the army or police. The latter on occasion used long sticks rather than mediation to control crowds. Equally, though, it was often the voters themselves who, following Somali custom, reacted to maintain order.

Mediation is entrenched in customary Somali culture, and the initiatives designed to train and mobilise community members as formal election day mediators did seem to build on those customs. It seems possible that there might be value in retaining such initiatives for future elections.

Local (or domestic) observation

In mid-2008, the European Union initiated funding for training of local observers through a new community-based umbrella organisation, the Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum (SONSAF). In order to distance the EU from a perception that they were providing support for national elections

in an unrecognised state, SONSAF funds were to be channelled through the UK-based international NGO Saferworld.

The NEC subsequently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SONSAF, committing local observers to review the following on election day:

- the adequacy of preparation of each polling station for voting
- the degree of freedom, order and security inside and in the surrounding area of the polling stations
- the degree of professionalism and impartiality shown by polling officers in implementing polling procedures
- the universality of freedom allowed to voters in the exercise of voting
- the degree of access permitted to political party agents, the media and observers to review the conduct of officials and voters on polling day
- the level of transparency applied during the polling and vote-counting processes.

With election day looming, it was clear that SONSAF would be unable to provide the necessary complement of observers in time, so the training programme was augmented by three major NGO umbrella organisations, NAGAAD (the network of women's organisations), the Somaliland National Youth Organisation (SONYO) and the Forum for Peace and Governance (FOPAG). In the event, some 800 local observers were trained (500 by SONSAF and 300 more through NAGAAD, SONYO and FOPAG). In spite of these challenges, the training that was provided was generally reported to be effective and appropriate.

On election day, domestic observers were largely confined to a single polling centre, as few had access to authorised transport on the day. In some urban sites, polling centres included up to seven polling stations, so observers were able to move between stations. However, in general, restrictions on transport did mean that domestic observers were unable to cover as many polling stations as they might otherwise have managed.

Party agents

The IRI was also engaged by the NEC in 2009 to provide a training programme aimed at training 5,346 party agents (one for each party for each polling station). Only UCID was able to provide a full list of agents in time for the training, although in the end just over 5,000 agents were in place, with the majority having received at least some training.

The party agent shortfall was, for some time, a significant concern to the IEO team. While the law was amended to allow polling station results to be signed off by NEC officials should some party agents be absent, past elections (particularly 2005 when a similar system was adopted) showed the value of having agents from each party present during both polling and vote counting. In a number of past instances, disputed results had been accepted on the basis that party agents had signed them off, and a significant shortfall in this election could have seriously complicated the process of declaring agreed results.

The eventual deployment of the great majority of the necessary personnel alleviated these concerns, although the limited training permitted by the lateness of their identification remained a cause for some concern.

Electoral Monitoring Committee

The Electoral Monitoring Committee (EMC; originally the Electoral Monitoring Board) is an independent body of locally-respected people tasked with monitoring breaches of electoral codes and laws and making known their complaints, publicly where necessary. Their remit gives them no statutory powers beyond making their findings public, and they are required to refer unrectified

concerns to the NEC who have the power to discipline those in breach of the regulations.

As detailed elsewhere in this report they received numerous complaints from all parties, though with the greatest volume coming from the opposition. They took action over the perceived pro-government bias of state-controlled TV, and also expressed concern over bias in favour of the opposition by Horyaal radio. However, their censure of Horyaal reflected an assessment that the bias was not as strong as was the case with Somaliland National Television (SLNTV), for whom they reserved their strongest criticism.

As in past elections, we were also made aware of allegations that the incumbent was using public resources including vehicles in campaigning, and that civil servants were playing an active role in promoting the governing party. These complaints had been directed to the EMC who ultimately concurred with a number of them. We consider that such abuse had the potential to compromise the fairness of the election campaign, although in our opinion the EMC and the NEC took appropriate action, not least drawing the issue to the attention of the public. While the practices did not cease prior to the election, we do not feel that they are likely to have fundamentally compromised the election as a free and fair expression of the popular will.

Several other complaints were seen by the EMC as minor, and no action was taken. The Committee remained active during polling day, providing a central phone line for complaints. They released a statement on 28 June, calling on the parties to remain patient and to refrain from declaring victory until the NEC had processed all ballots and announced the result themselves. The statement also thanked EMC and NEC staff and local and international observers for helping to ensure the success of the election.

The role of the diaspora

The Somaliland diaspora continues to play a prominent role in the development of its homeland. In addition to providing material assistance through remittances, its involvement has ranged from investment in various sectors and financial support for the reconstruction of schools, hospitals and roads, to members of the diaspora returning 'home' to pursue business opportunities or actively participate in the political landscape.

Despite the Somaliland diaspora being unable to register and vote in the 2010 presidential elections, it was instrumental in mobilising support for the benefit of both individual voters and political parties. Given its contributions to the state and nation-building processes, the Somaliland diaspora felt that it had an important stake in ensuring that a peaceful and credible election was organised.

A number of key diaspora initiatives were:

- Strong condemnation of measures which were perceived to threaten Somaliland's democratisation process, including the multiple delays to the presidential elections. The diaspora community issued various press releases and articles in the Somali-speaking media urging political parties to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner.
- Extensive campaigning, rallying and fundraising in their respective host countries to garner support and financial assistance for the three competing political parties. The financial contributions made by the externally-based members of the parties facilitated the presidential candidates to conduct comprehensive campaigning in all of Somaliland's six regions.
- Assistance to individual voters to register. Private networks of friends and family members financially supported individual voters, who as a result of an internal push, were encouraged to register in the regions of their clan base rather than the locality where they lived. This caused voters to incur costs (predominantly relating to transport, food or loss of earnings) which they would not have been able to afford without sponsorship from externally based family and clan members.

- Good representation (and some allege over-representation) in key leadership positions in the political institutions of Somaliland. This was most notably evidenced by two of the three presidential candidates and some members of the NEC being returnees from Europe or North America.

Members of the diaspora community provided practical assistance and were particularly noticeable on polling day. In Togdheer and Sanaag, some IEOs noted delegations consisting of members of the diaspora who were conducting 'shadow' monitoring of the polling stations on behalf of the parties. This was not considered by those observers to have caused any interference, but helped complement the functions of the party agents who were present at most of the polling stations.

See also Appendix 1 for a personal reflection by an IEO team member on the role of diaspora women.

The Progressio/DPU/SFUK international observation team

In January 2009, the NEC invited Progressio, the Development Planning Unit of University College London (DPU) and Somaliland Focus (UK) – SFUK – to be the official NEC facilitation point for the international observation mission. This role was to involve inviting and helping to coordinate international observers. This followed similar work performed by Progressio (then CIIR) for the parliamentary elections of 2005.

The team comprised 59 observers from four continents and 16 countries, namely Argentina, Canada, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Uganda, the UK and USA. There was a fairly even split between men and women. 40% of the team were Somalilanders from the diaspora. Some members of the team were already based in Somaliland, working as expatriate staff of international NGOs.

The IRI also sent an international team of 19, for which they provided full logistical support. We liaised closely with the IRI team but have not numbered that group amongst the team contributing to this report.

Our team was allocated sufficient Special Protection Unit (SPU)⁴ personnel to cover all our observers. This ensured we were able to balance the desire of IEOs to achieve the widest possible coverage against issues of personal security. The national distribution of international observers was vital in maximising our contribution to a free and fair election. We were keenly aware of the great desire of the people of Somaliland to see a peaceful election and their commitment to welcoming outsiders as contributors to that objective.

IEOs were provided by the NEC with identification badges and caps, as well as vehicle authorisation to permit travel on election day. Those IEOs coordinated as part of our team were required to sign a code of conduct and to provide full contact details in Somaliland and at home along with photographs for our own and NEC files. They were also required to attend a series of logistical and security briefings. They were shown sample ballot papers and copies of the electoral law and amendments were made available. A presentation by a NEC consultant explained the process that would take place on election day, including polling station staff responsibilities and voting procedure.

We made arrangements with local observer groups and the IRI to ensure close communication throughout the pre-election week as well as on election day and immediately after. We held a joint meeting on the day after the election at which representatives from local observer groups and the IRI were present, and we invited them all to our own post-election press conference on 28 June. We also continued to liaise with major local bodies involved in some way in the elections, including the NEC, the EMC, and various civil society groups including the Academy for Peace and Development, SORADI, SONYO and NAGAAD.

The IEO mission deployed 26 teams in all six regions and no major problems were experienced by IEOs. The teams visited 571 polling stations – a 32% coverage rate. On 28 June the teams' findings were released at a crowded press conference and we announced that in our view, the electoral process had been reasonably free and fair. Provided the results, when announced, reflected that process, they would represent an expression of the free will of the people of Somaliland. We also expressed some concerns that we thought should be taken up by the NEC – details of which are covered in this report.

The IEO teams recognise that Somaliland elections are linked to and occur within the context of hopes for international recognition of Somaliland. This is of course beyond our remit as international observers and, as observers, we do not take a position on this issue.

The IEO media presence and international media coverage

For the 2005 parliamentary elections, the IEO media effort was handled in a fairly low-key fashion: one IEO team member had responsibility for generating press releases on the ground, which were then fed back to the Progressio (then CIIR) office in London for distribution to CIIR's media lists. International coverage of both the election itself and the IEO's mission was consequently modest.

For the 2010 presidential elections, the media effort was stepped up, reflecting the importance of the election campaign to the future of Somaliland after such a period of delay. From mid-2008, when the mission itself first became a possibility in line with the scheduled election date, through to the confirmation of the eventual date, regular press releases were issued. These regular releases, while attracting minimal media interest, served to remind the various stakeholders of the evolving situation in Somaliland, including periods of progress and crisis.

Once the date of the mission was confirmed, the foundations were laid for the media effort on the ground. One core team member assumed responsibility for coordinating the media effort as in 2005, but this time playing a lesser role in other activities in order to allow greater focus on media coverage and a reliable line of contact for dealing with media inquiries. A second team member – a professional photographer – was given responsibility for photography.

Material was once again fed back to the media via Progressio's London office, but the international observation team also built its own efforts on the ground, by liaising with media present in Somaliland and the region (including local media) and making its own contacts, which resulted in an extensive media contacts list being developed.

Through the mission's duration in Somaliland, four official press releases were issued: at the time of the arrival of the core team as on-ground planning was underway; on the eve of polling day; following polling day, when the mission's initial declaration about the conduct of polling day was announced; and upon release of the provisional results of the election. A further release accompanied the inauguration of the new president in the month following the conclusion of the mission. (These press releases are reproduced in Appendix 3.)

The press releases were fed back to the Progressio office in London for release to Progressio's own media lists. The release post-polling day was accompanied by a well-attended press conference at the Hotel Mansoor in Hargeisa on 28 June, at which the initial declaration was presented to international and local media, and the mission's coordinators were interviewed by journalists both present and telephoning in.

The press releases were built upon by having the media coordinator focusing on generating interviews throughout the mission's duration and ensuring the IEO coordinators and other team members were willing and available to be interviewed. On polling day itself, the media coordinator remained present at the mission's base at Progressio's offices in Hargeisa in order to ensure that channels of communication remained open.

Such a level of focus paid off in terms of results, with the mission's base in Hargeisa becoming the principal port of call for international media covering polling day. There was much more extensive coverage of press releases in international media than was the case in 2005, with a good number of broadcast interviews by the mission's coordinators and a substantial amount of direct coverage of the mission itself in Britain, Europe, North America and further afield. Local media made enthusiastic use of media releases as they had in prior elections.⁵

Extensive coverage of the mission and the election itself was provided by the BBC, *The Economist*, Al-Jazeera, Voice of America, Bloomberg, Associated Press and many other outlets. In particular, Al-Jazeera's three-minute report of the election campaign⁶ put the observation mission centre-stage with footage of the observers at their base and a talking-head interview with one of the mission coordinators.

The Economist's report in the week following the poll likewise gave the mission due prominence:

In the event, despite an election-eve warning by Al-Shabaab, the poll went ahead smoothly in most of the country. International election observers reported, with some qualifications, a well-organised and fair vote... There was, for example, the reported distribution of false voter cards and widespread underage voting around the town of Borama near the Ethiopian border, home territory of President Dahir Riyale Kahin. There were problems in the regions of Sool and eastern Sanaag, where some clan leaders are unenthusiastic about Somaliland and where Puntland, another part of Somalia that asserts its autonomy, lays claim to territory.⁷

Of particular value was the presence of the mission's own dedicated photographer. This ensured that appropriate and timely images were available for pick-up by the media covering the event, with *The Economist*⁸ and Voice of America⁹ in particular making good use of the photographer's services.

The media coordinator encouraged all members of the observation mission to utilise their own media contacts, especially in their countries of origin, where their presence on the ground functioned as a useful news peg for stories drawing attention to the election and Somaliland in general. This resulted in coverage as far afield as Argentina and New Zealand.¹⁰

Some team members stepped into the role of journalists, reporting on the campaign and aspects of Somaliland – for example, Sarah Howard, a member of the IEO team, published on the Index on Censorship website:

Somalilanders seem united in their determination to maintain peace and stability. The media has contributed by taking seriously their responsibility to raise awareness about the need for increased vigilance. Joint coordinator of the international election observer mission, Dr Steve Kibble, said: "We are encouraged by the overwhelming desire of the people of Somaliland to see a peaceful election, recognised as such both nationally and internationally. At this stage, we expect that such an outcome can be achieved."¹¹

Further coverage came (and has continued) via websites and blogs maintained by partners to the mission, including Progressio¹² and SFUK,¹³ among others. These more personal efforts provided scope for detail and colour often absent from official media reports and have added to the tapestry of coverage of Somaliland – as in this extract from a blog by Steve Kibble, published by Progressio:

In the president's home area everyone seemed to be pulling out the stops for him. Sheaves of voting cards were given out to kids who queued as patiently as the adults in the hot sun. Some were turned back but other 'slow growing nomads', as Somalis put it, apparently got through the system. However, given the freeness and fairness we witnessed elsewhere, this did not seem to affect our verdict on the election being an authentic expression of the will of the people.¹⁴

Since the mission's conclusion, Progressio, the mission coordinators and the media coordinator have remained principal contacts for members of the media wishing to find out more about Somaliland, with information inquiries and requests for contacts often being fielded. The mailing list for media has been retained and continues to be updated, to ensure continuity for future observation missions in Somaliland.

The electoral process

The elections should originally have taken place before mid-March 2008 in order to allow the constitutionally required period of a month for a possible transition of power prior to the end of the presidential term on 14 April 2008. With little progress on key issues such as voter registration, it became obvious that this date would not be achievable and new dates were announced for both local and presidential elections. The poll for local mayors was to take place on 1 July 2008, with the presidential elections on 31 August. With these dates looming and key electoral milestones still unattained, the NEC and political parties signed an eight-point agreement in June 2008. That accord confirmed that local elections would be postponed indefinitely, with a presidential poll occurring first, and before 6 April 2009. In line with this agreement, a date of 29 March 2009 was subsequently announced for the presidential vote.

The agreement also specified that voter registration would be completed as a matter of urgency. Registration duly commenced in mid-October 2008, but then had to be suspended for several weeks in late October after a series of coordinated suicide bombings in Hargeisa and in Bossasso in neighbouring Puntland. In Hargeisa, the attacks targeted the presidential compound, the offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the compound of the Ethiopian representative to Somaliland, killing at least 25 people. A further five people were killed in the bombing of the Puntland intelligence offices in the port town of Bossasso.

Even aside from the delays, the registration process was plagued with problems. The most severe of these was multiple registrations by large numbers of intending voters. There was ample evidence at the time that both government and opposition groups were complicit in these fraudulent registrations and the extent of the problem led to a protracted stand-off between the government, opposition parties, the NEC, and donors. The NEC itself was shown to be partisan and to lack the competence to manage what was anyway a difficult pre-electoral programme. It is also significant that each of the political parties deviated quickly from the terms they had agreed in their eight-point memorandum, marking this period out as notable for the blatancy of the political manoeuvring of the different groups involved.

In an effort to wrest the initiative, the NEC accepted a presidential request and proposed an election date of 31 May 2009. While that date appeared theoretically feasible at the time, it was not accepted by Kulmiye, the largest opposition party. This led donors to conclude that one of their fundamental demands, for the election date to be agreed between the political actors, remained unfulfilled; and, coupled with severe concerns over the competence of the NEC to organise the elections, donor funding was withdrawn.

With the crisis apparently intractable, the Guurti, Somaliland's upper house of elders – after heated debate and a series of recounts – voted by a narrow margin to delay the elections again and extend the president's term to 29 October 2009. This represented a narrow victory for the incumbent president over the opposition, who had argued strongly for the institution of a caretaker presidency from the expiry of the existing term on 6 April 2009. In accordance with the Guurti vote, the NEC announced an election date of 27 September.

Once again, though, delays and disputes over many issues, but focusing in large part on the 'cleaning' of the data gathered during voter registration, rendered this date unattainable. Donors had become increasingly vocal in demanding that the NEC be reformed, with the existing politicised commissioners wholly or largely replaced. Civil society groups within Somaliland were also increasingly adding their voices to calls for the NEC to be reformed. The influential Independent Scholars' Group (ISG), in particular, issued periodic reports noting increasing NEC partisanship and collusion with the government and calling for their replacement.

The political crisis reached a climax from mid-2009, eventually leading to violent suppression on 12 September of a popular demonstration in Hargeisa calling for elections to take place. The severity of this crisis eventually forced the parties back to the table, with discussion focusing on a proposal from international partners, including donors, that involved dissolution of the NEC, and a process of preparation for the elections. That memorandum was signed on 30 September, and the subsequent installation of a new and more competent NEC saw significant and rapid progress in preparations.



Women waiting for a bus to go to a campaign rally

IEO pre-election assessment

The core IEO team had been monitoring the electoral process since one of the joint coordinators made a pre-election assessment visit in February 2008 (when the election was expected to take place later that year). Another visit by the other coordinator was made in July 2009 when expectations of a resolution to the range of technical and political obstacles was low. The signing of the memorandum and the installation of a new competent NEC meant that the process began to speed up, to the extent that we were able to send out an advance IEO team which arrived on 10 June 2010.

Immediately prior to the election, we again interviewed significant figures – this time including the three presidential candidates, the commissioners of the NEC, its consultants, the political parties, the EMC, the ISG, NGO security personnel, local NGOs and their networks involved in voter education and monitoring, mediator groups, women’s groups, local analysts, and those monitoring the codes of conduct of political parties and media. We also hired a respected local journalist to monitor print and broadcast media coverage of the election (see Appendix 2).

Briefly, our immediate pre-election findings were that:

- The campaigning had been peaceful and enthusiastic, with many young people, especially young women, taking part. Unlike in 2005, there appeared to have been broad adherence to the agreement in which parties were permitted only to campaign on specified days.
- Unfortunately – and similarly to 2005 – there were allegations of incumbent government misuse of official vehicles for campaign purposes, use of civil service personnel in active campaigning, and unequal access to national state television. The complaints were based on sufficient evidence for the EMC to have gone public after failing to encourage changes in the practices in question.

- There was limited policy-related campaigning. The government emphasised their development achievements while in office, while Kulmiye targeted the same, claiming that the record in fact demonstrated a lack of progress. UCID's campaign focused primarily on calls for stronger application of sharia law and public spending on infrastructure and education.
- All parties on occasion stressed their commitment to respecting the verdict of the electorate and they explicitly repeated this commitment to the international observer mission.
- All parties stressed the need for peace, as did many religious leaders and elders.
- Security considerations had led some international organisations to adopt a hibernation mode or to send staff out of the country.

Our conclusion from the period immediately before the election was that despite security and other constraints, the conditions were such that a reasonably free and fair process was possible. We were also reassured in this assessment by the fact that while there were also security worries during the 2005 elections, in the event the people of Somaliland had demonstrated an impressive commitment to a peaceful process and democracy.

Political party campaigning

Party leaders agreed a number of points in a code of conduct signed prior to the election. Primary amongst these was a commitment to abide by the results – a promise that was reiterated in the media and to election observers on several occasions, albeit accompanied by occasional implied or explicit threats to the contrary. The code of conduct also held parties to campaign in good spirit and only on designated campaign days.

Campaigning started on 4 June and there were no reports of serious disruption to party rallies or of campaign-related violence. Parties were notably impressive in their adherence to the agreement that rallies be held on separate, designated days. There is also anecdotal evidence that voters were turned off by aggressive 'anti-other' party rhetoric with reports that audiences deserted rallies in which this kind of invective was felt to have gone too far. Not all rallies were well-attended. Given that most students completed their exams during the campaign, the run-up to the election provided an opportunity for youth, and particularly young women who are otherwise more socially constrained, to enjoy the occasion, contributing to something of a carnival atmosphere.



Kulmiye campaigners driving past a Kulmiye campaign poster

At one stage, there were suggestions that a debate be organised between the three presidential candidates, but ultimately this did not attract the agreement of all the leaders and the idea was shelved.

Rumours also circulated widely that certain parties were buying voter cards, offering prices ranging from US\$1 to \$50 and above. These rumours were persistent and voting irregularities in several areas, and most particularly in Borama (see 'Case study: Borama district'), suggest that they may have had some substance. However, we were not able to corroborate these reports prior to the election. The rationale for this practice was also not always clear: some suggested that the intent was to withdraw the cards of voters sympathetic to the opposition from circulation, while others saw it as an attempt to collect cards for distribution in order to facilitate multiple or underage voting. Direct observation by IEO teams, again particularly in Borama, suggest that the latter intention was the more likely.

The campaign itself tended to revolve around claim and counter-claim on the government record while in office. This was particularly true of the positions adopted by Kulmiye (the main opposition party) and UDUB (the governing party), with the latter placing heavy emphasis on the international political standing of the President and the domestic achievements of the incumbent government. Kulmiye, conversely, criticised the same record. UCID caused considerable debate when the leader, Faisal Ali Waraabe, declared at a rally in Burco that he would institute sharia law if he were to win. He rationalised the statement as a commitment to the level of sharia enshrined in the Somaliland constitution. Otherwise, the UCID platform promoted public investment in infrastructure (particularly roads) and education, and downsizing of the state. A number of commentators noted the apparent contradiction between a commitment to foster state investment while simultaneously pledging to reduce the size of that state.

Media

The joint coordinators of the IEO team commissioned a respected local journalist to monitor the print and broadcast media and much of this section is based on his reports (see Appendix 2 for his final report).

In general terms, while the issue of bias did surface, it appears that the local media made a positive contribution to the successful conduct of the presidential elections, with the media as a whole displaying more maturity than during the 2005 elections.

Representatives from most local media signed a code of conduct brokered by the NEC. Adherence to the code of conduct was monitored by the EMC which was also charged with dealing with complaints.

In the pre-campaigning period, the local media were instrumental in raising awareness among the general public about the distribution of ballot cards in order to correct irregularities of the 2005 elections. The media sector as a whole also shared common ground on the need for peace, stability and increased vigilance among the public against threats from Al-Shabaab.

In general it appears that the media reported fairly on parties and issues, although there were exceptions. The most egregious was that of the national state television (SLNTV) which showed significant bias towards the candidates from the ruling party. In early June the station was chastised by the EMC for failing to adhere to the campaigning days rule (the condition that limited parties to campaigning only on designated days was also extended to media coverage). There were also complaints that images broadcast on SLNTV of government rallies were altered to make them appear better-attended than they actually were.

SLNTV bias worsened as the campaign progressed. The EMC dealt with this issue by formally requesting that the government direct the state broadcaster to address the imbalance. When no positive change was forthcoming, the EMC held a public press conference in an effort to apply further pressure. Neither of these tactics appeared to effect the desired change, and the issue was referred to the NEC which holds the power to impose fines. However, despite this public highlighting of the issue, the SLNTV's pro-incumbent bias remained a feature of the campaign.

The print media were generally more balanced than television, covering the campaigns of all parties. This is not to deny that each of the print titles is known to sympathise with one or other of the parties. However, coverage displayed reasonable restraint given that fact. The one notable exception to this lay with a single and heavily pro-government newspaper, *Yoo!*, the editorial staff of which had not signed the media code of conduct. That paper engaged in vitriolic anti-opposition rhetoric which clearly exceeded the reasonable expression of opinion envisaged in the code of conduct.

Radio Hargeisa, also state-owned, provided commendably even-handed coverage, although news bulletins tended to provide greater airtime to government activities. This represents a substantial improvement on performance in the 2005 election. The station was also the main vehicle for raising awareness about voting procedures, women's rights and other civic information.

The opposition-affiliated Horyaal radio station was less even-handed in its coverage, and as SLNTV's coverage became increasingly pro-government, Horyaal shifted its own position to exclude government coverage altogether. The EMC censured Horyaal for this bias.

In the last few days before election day, the conduct of the local media deteriorated in general and there was an increase in negative campaigning. Unsubstantiated smears on candidates' characters were broadcast, including about misuse of funds and allegations of links with Al-Shabaab.

One particularly positive point was a notable lack of intimidation or harassment of journalists by the government. This is not to say the campaign was incident-free. Al-Jazeera's Mohamed Adow was detained for two hours on election day in the politically sensitive border area with Puntland, and an independent website editor was detained a number of times in the weeks leading to the election, according to a report from the independent NGO, Committee to Protect Journalists.

The profile of women across the various media is reported to have increased markedly through the campaign, and Radio Hargeisa broadcast programmes advocating political and human rights for women. The media also carried messages from religious leaders urging Somalilanders to choose their future leadership wisely and to be vigilant in maintaining peace and stability.

Security

As with 2005, there were security incidents prior to the election. The most serious was in Burco involving a police raid on alleged political Islamists.

There was disagreement between the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UN DSS) and the Somalia NGO Safety Programme (NSP)¹⁵ as to the seriousness and risk to NGO workers of the Burco incident. The UN DSS gave greater credibility to reports that the Burco group were an Al-Shabaab cell, while the NSP was more sceptical and discounted suggestions that 'humanitarian workers' were at risk as a result of this group's activities.

Our assessment was that, whichever of these views was the more accurate, the fact that the operation had resulted in the dismantling of a possible terrorist operation represented a positive step in security terms. We felt that the lack of evidence that other cells might be active warranted due care, but did not amount to a sufficiently credible threat for us to alter our plans at that stage.

There was nevertheless a withdrawal of international NGO (INGO) and UN staff to secure locations outside Somaliland. This decision added a significant challenge to the task of procuring sufficient vehicles for use by IEO teams. Whereas in 2005 (when the security assessment was largely quite similar), the generosity of INGOs in lending vehicles and drivers was essential in enabling the international observation effort, in 2010 a changed INGO perspective meant that very few international organisations were present or willing to lend material support. As a result, the international observation effort relied heavily on the support of domestic community-based organisations, local NGOs and a handful of locally-based international organisations.

We also noted the possibility that a very close electoral result might lead to street protests and possible violence on the part of supporters of the losing party; or else that, were one party to feel the election was effectively lost at any point, it may attempt to undermine the electoral process or to 'steal' the vote through ballot stuffing or other means. However, while all the parties we spoke to appeared confident of winning the election, they also agreed on the need to maintain peace in order to be able to do so.

In the event, we were able to send international observers to all of the major centres outside Hargeisa, given the assurances of the police that sufficient SPUs would be provided. While there were some difficulties in implementing this promised security support, it was in fact supplied to a satisfactory level.



Inside a polling station

The procedure on election day

The new NEC and their advisers had inherited a corrupted system which required a great deal of cleaning up. They quickly won plaudits for their commitment to that task and for their competence and avoidance of partisan politicking. By the time of the election, they believed they had largely succeeded in removing multiple, underage and other invalid voter registrants through a combination of software filters along with public display of voter lists and the issuance of new voter ID cards (incorporating a photo of the cardholder). Their estimate was that, using these methods, they had succeeded in reducing the error rate to 10%.

In addition to weeding out ineligible voters, they also aimed to ensure as far as possible that those who were eligible to vote were able to do so. The main measure on the day intended to ensure this happened was to provide a Help Officer outside each polling station.

The total number of registered voters was 1,069,914 with voters required to vote where they were registered. The NEC hoped to maintain the register for forthcoming elections for local councils and the House of Representatives (and possibly the Guurti).

With regard to election day organisation, the electorate was divided into 1,129 polling centres, each including between one and seven separate polling stations, depending on the number of registered voters in each district. Most polling centres included one or two polling stations, with a total of 1,783 stations planned. Each polling station was scheduled to open for voters at 7am, with staff and accredited officials arriving to set up from 6am. IEOs were asked to arrive at their first polling stations in time to observe the set-up process. Polling stations were to remain open until 6pm, although anyone already in the queue by 6pm was entitled to vote, so in fact it was possible that polling stations would need to remain open for longer than the specified time.

Voting procedures were to follow the electoral laws and codes of conduct.¹⁶ A brief review of the intended procedures follows.

Voter cards were to be collected from each voter when they started the voting process, checked for validity and held until the voter had cast their vote and was ready to leave the polling station. (Some people who had not received their voter card in time for the election had been given validation certificates, which they exchanged at the polling station for a temporary voter card which enabled them to vote.)

Voters were required to apply their thumbprint to the voter list once their eligibility had been confirmed, thus indicating that they were present to vote; a rule which applied equally to those who are illiterate and to those who are able to sign. Voters were then issued with a uniquely numbered, stamped and folded ballot paper, and were instructed to move by themselves to a curtained booth where they were to mark their ballot paper. They then placed their ballot paper in a transparent ballot box and their little finger was inked with silver nitrate solution.

Counting was to take place in polling stations, in closed sessions attended only by election officials, party agents, and accredited domestic and international observers. Each vote was to be read out one at a time, displayed to the staff, party agents and observers present, and then recorded on a tally form. The results were to be announced in the polling station itself with both polling station results and ballot papers then sent to the district NEC office, where they were to be tallied and disputed ballot papers reviewed. Should the district officials and party agents be unable to agree on voter intention, these ballot papers would be referred to regional level. (Further details on the procedures for invalid and disputed ballot papers are available in the relevant legislation and code of conduct.)

Once disputes had been dealt with (including referral to the national NEC offices if necessary), a provisional national result was to be announced by the NEC. While not referred to explicitly in the legislation, the NEC noted the possibility that a preliminary result might be announced if this was necessary in order to circumvent premature declarations by political parties.

The voting process in pictures



An information poster explaining the voting process



A sample ballot paper and a poster identifying the three parties, taped to a polling station wall



Polling station staff welcoming voters



The voter's name and the ID picture on their voter card are checked against the voting list



A voter applies his thumbprint to the voter list after his voter card has been checked



Each voter receives a uniquely numbered ballot paper



A voter marks his ballot paper in a screened-off voting area



Directed by a member of the polling station staff, a woman places her ballot paper in the ballot box



After voting, the voter's little finger is marked with indelible ink



The inked finger of a woman who has already voted

On election day

Our observer teams were present in all six regions, at 571 polling stations, distributed as follows:

Awdal	122
Maroodi-Jeex	255
Saaxil	35
Togdheer	111
Sanaag	24
Sool	24

Teams were able to observe stations setting up from 6am, and then opening to voters from 7am. Of polling stations observed by IEOs, 97% opened on time and followed correct procedures. Many had no electricity, and in some cases insufficient lighting which led in some instances to delays. The same was true of closing down procedures which in some cases lasted until 7.30pm given that queues were long and those who were in those queues at 6pm could by electoral law exercise their right to vote.



Women waiting outside a polling station

There were some incidents involving violence – one of which in Kala Baydh village in Sool regrettably involved the death of a NEC official. However other incidents appear to have largely been the result of inexperience. It must be said that the thoroughness of checks on those eligible to vote varied and IEOs observed some persons who appeared younger than 16 apparently voting successfully. The problem of underage voting was far and away most serious in Borama (the main city in Awdal region; see ‘Case study: Borama district’ for more details).

The single most frequently reported problem was the absence of Help Officers outside polling stations. This was a greater problem than it might have been as a result of a late decision by the NEC to organise polling stations within centres with large numbers of prospective voters along strict, alphabetically-determined lines. Many voters were unaware of this arrangement and queued in the wrong line, being informed of their mistake only when they reached the front of the queue.

Tempers did rise on occasion, particularly over the queuing arrangements, although the day was largely marked by enthusiasm and tolerance. Queues were very long in many areas, especially in the morning and latter part of the afternoon; the majority of voters appeared to be women and young people.

There were some polling stations, particularly in Awdal, where IEOs reported a significant lack of order outside the polling station, but according to the vast majority of reports, order was at least adequate.

Positives

- Rural and many urban stations had calm and organised queues
- Huge voter turnout, with enthusiastic participation
- No or very little intimidation of voters
- The counting process was transparent and meticulous in most places, with few discrepancies
- Widespread recognition of the value of the elections and the democratisation process
- A substantial number of women participated as polling station staff, domestic observers and party agents
- Many of those attempting to multiple vote were turned away
- Widespread commitment by voters and staff to abide by electoral law
- Party agents were good at following the process and all parties were represented at each station
- Illiterate, remote nomadic and elderly voters were prioritised and assisted to vote in a transparent and well-intentioned way
- Good distribution of ballot materials and procedures
- In the majority of cases the equipment and materials functioned well
- Most polling stations opened on time, or thereabouts
- Equal access to polling stations was allowed to both men and women
- Mostly secret voting (except those that needed assistance)
- Generally good organisation by local NEC offices
- Security for IEOs well organised
- Well trained chairpersons and polling station staff in most cases

Negatives

- Lack of female candidates
- Attempts at voter fraud (underage and multiple voting in particular)
- Polling stations on occasion too small
- Secrecy of the vote was compromised in some cases due to illiteracy or lack of voter confidence, particularly amongst women
- In some areas the ban on non-official vehicles did not seem to be followed, and some instances of organised transport by political parties were reported
- Some rural polling stations lacked local observers and/or effective staff training
- Inadequate provision of lighting in some polling stations (especially for opening and count)
- Inadequate training for polling staff to count votes effectively
- Fatigue of all staff, in particular the polling station Chair, due to pressure of logistical issues, long working hours and large number of responsibilities
- Reported cases of voters crossing national borders
- Reported cases of party agents doing the duties of polling station staff
- Campaign materials were evident near the polling station in a minority of cases
- In a minority of cases, queues were disorderly
- Women often received less voter education than men, especially in rural areas



Women flanked by security staff at the door to a polling station

Outside polling stations

A vast majority (91%) of polling stations were reported as being calm and orderly, but in some cases, considerable disorder outside the station was noted. This problem was worst in Awdal where 18% of stations were reported by IEOs as lacking order. Saaxil (11%) and Maroodi-Jeex (10%) also recorded significant instances of reported disorder.

The most frequent negative observation by IEOs related to the absence of Help Officers. One such officer was meant to be in place outside each polling station in order to assist prospective voters – both those carrying validation certificates (which required checking for validity, with temporary voter cards issued where appropriate), and those with other queries. In 27% of polling stations nationally, IEOs noted the absence of such officers, with the problem being worst in Awdal and Saaxil where more than 50% of polling stations lacked a Help Officer.

As noted previously (see Introduction), mediators too were largely absent outside polling stations, in spite of the intention that they intervene in conflicts both within and outside each venue.

Inside polling stations

Conduct by polling station staff

Despite some early problems due to overcrowding, lack of information and some confusion over which stations inside polling centres voters had to go to, polling station staff were largely exemplary, especially given the lack of time for training.

Secrecy of vote

The secrecy of the vote also improved from 2005, when more than 20% of stations did not permit adequate privacy. In 2010 this was an issue in only 1% of stations observed.

Inking the fingers of voters and checking for ink

The incorrect inking of fingers was an issue in 11% of observed stations. This represents a significant improvement compared with 2005, when 17% of observed stations experienced problems with inking. Maroodi-Jeex had the best performance with only 4% of stations encountering this problem. In Awdal the situation was significantly worse with 37% of stations insufficiently inking fingers.

In 6% of reported instances, fingers were not adequately checked for ink before ballots were issued. This problem was again most significant in Awdal, where 24% of stations observed did not follow the correct procedures.

Confusion over polling station organisation

Significant confusion was observed in the early hours of voting over the split alphabetisation of polling stations. In polling centres with large numbers of registered voters, these were divided into polling stations nominally averaging 750 voters each. This resulted in up to seven polling stations in a polling centre, with voters allocated to each station on an alphabetical basis. Voters were meant to vote (and therefore queue) in the polling station to which they were allocated. Many intending voters did not understand this system, and ended up queuing (sometimes for hours) for the wrong polling station. When they were then told they had to move to a different queue, some became angry and scuffles occasionally broke out. The problem was particularly notable in Hargeisa, where such instances were observed at 13% of polling stations visited.

Underage voting

Attempts to vote by people under the voting age of 16 were observed in all regions, but in all but Awdal the phenomenon was limited and occasional. Regrettably, in Awdal, apparent underage voting occurred in more than 20% of stations observed, thus constituting a significant problem. IEOs witnessed some apparently successful efforts by polling station staff to reject such underage voters but there were just as many reports of underage voters apparently being allowed to vote.

The greatest number of irregularities were observed at polling centres with a large number of stations and in urban areas of Borama. Underage voters were observed at 10 Borama polling centres, covering at least 18 polling stations. Most children attempting to vote appeared to hold valid voter cards, although some doubtless belonged to other people. In some instances, polling station staff insisted that anyone holding a valid voter card should be permitted to vote, regardless of age. In one polling centre, IEOs estimated that more than half of those queuing to vote were underage while a different IEO team estimated that they could see more than 100 children holding voter cards queuing to vote at two polling stations.

In one case, polling station staff attempted to eject underage voters, but the UDUB party agent insisted they be permitted to vote. The agent then made a phone call and a more senior NEC official arrived and ordered the polling station staff to accept anyone with a valid voter card.

IEOs retained photographic evidence of these incidents and maintained notes on the issue, which were used as the basis for a section of the IEO report to the NEC, and are summarised in the section 'Case study: Borama district' later in this report.

Multiple voting

Attempts to vote more than once were reported by IEOs, though these were much harder to detect. Again, the problem seems to have been greatest in Awdal. At one polling station, IEOs estimated that almost half of the voters were attempting to vote multiple times. In several other centres, people were attempting to vote at more than one station. In some places officials recognised that persons were trying to vote more than once and prevented them from doing so. At one polling station, IEOs witnessed youths cleaning their fingers with bleach and then attempting to vote again.

Conduct by party agents

After early concerns that there would be a substantial under-supply of party agents, in the event it was pleasing to note that a great majority were in place. Indeed, the situation improved slightly from 2005, when IEOs observed 94% of party agents to be in place. In 2010, this percentage increased to 98%. Nevertheless, a small but significant proportion of polling stations did lack agents from one or more of the parties – possibly with the problem greatest in more remote stations which were not observed by IEOs.



Party agents observing the voting process

In many polling stations, agents seemed to be attentive and to be contributing constructively to the maintenance of a transparent process.

A bigger problem, though one that was not always apparent to IEOs, lies in the limitations to training imposed by the late nomination of many party agents. With the exception of UCID, the parties themselves did not nominate agents until well after the deadline; consequently, training for the majority of agents was truncated. IEOs were not able to confirm these suspicions, although the IRI, who were tasked with that training programme, did share concerns along these lines.

Conduct by police

Although according to the electoral code soldiers and police were supposed to stay out of polling stations unless specifically called in by the Chair of the station, this was frequently ignored. Indeed, of those polling stations observed by IEOs, police were observed inside in some 17% of cases; a figure almost unchanged from the 2005 election. However, IEOs report that voters were intimidated in only 3% of cases, marking a decrease on the 4.6% reported in 2005. In many instances, police were noted assisting voters, with many of the latter showing their appreciation. No instances were reported in which police attempted to alter voter selections. Early in the morning at a number of stations in Hargeisa, police appeared overwhelmed by the numbers of people pressing to vote and did use arguably disproportionate force in keeping the peace, including firing shots into the air (or in one case into the ceiling). However, these problems seemed to dissipate during the day.

Voter card checking

Voter cards were correctly checked in 94% of observed cases. However, cards were not checked correctly in 11% of stations observed in Awdal and Saaxil.

Campaign material in or around polling stations

In 95% of cases, the areas around polling stations were free of campaign material. This is comparable with 2005 statistics. The presence of campaign material or activity was most significantly an issue at polling stations in Awdal (15.6%) and Saaxil (17%), although large party-political billboards for all three parties remained in place throughout Hargeisa.

Provision of assistance to illiterate and disabled voters

Assistance to illiterate and disabled voters improved in comparison to 2005 when inadequate assistance was observed in 19% of stations. In 2010, this figure fell to 3% of stations observed.

Case study: Borama district

Six IEO teams from Progressio were present in Borama district (Borama is the main city in Awdal region) on polling day, covering approximately 60 polling centres in four areas of the city and two rural areas. At both urban and rural polling centres, people were extremely keen to vote, queuing from as early as 4am to be the first in line. Election officials, party agents, domestic observers, mediators and security personnel worked hard throughout the day to ensure that events ran smoothly and, for the most part, adhered to the rules and regulations of the elections. The majority of polling station Chairs were students from the University of Hargeisa, posted there in an effort to minimise the potential for collusion. Counting of the votes in Borama district was completed on the night of 26 June. The observers visited the NEC regional office on the day after polling day and observed that all the boxes in Borama district had been transferred to the NEC office.

General management of the polling stations

The election process was generally well-organised. Polling stations were provided with all necessary materials, demonstrating impressive planning and logistics by the NEC. The set-up of the polling stations was adequately managed, with the exception of a small number of polling stations which had an insufficient number of temporary voter cards. In addition, nearly all the polling stations opened on time.

The layout and flow of voters through polling stations was inconsistent. Some stations were well arranged, with sufficient space, light and a ballot area allowing for voter confidentiality. Others were cramped and too small. A number of Borama polling centres had more than one station per room, making it difficult for polling station staff to manage in crowded, and often chaotic, spaces. Inadequate lighting also produced problems as limited visibility in some stations during the late afternoon made it difficult to check fingers for ink and identify photos on voter cards. It was also a problem during some of the vote counts.

While abilities varied, the station Chairs generally understood the polling day procedures and managed situations effectively. In some cases, members of the polling station staff were unclear about their individual roles. Unauthorised persons were admitted to the stations and in more than one case were observed assisting the staff. The order of the process was not always followed step by step. In some cases this led to people's fingers not being adequately checked for ink before voting. In the better-organised stations the throughput of voters worked better.

There were also inconsistencies in the display of voter education materials. In some polling stations they were well-positioned for easy viewing by the voters. In other polling stations the materials were badly displayed or absent. By afternoon in some of the polling stations, the materials had been removed or fallen from the walls.

In general, the three political party agents were present at almost all of the urban polling stations. At some rural polling stations UCID representatives were not present or left early while voting/counting was still proceeding. Most party agents were ticking off the individual votes as votes took place. In most stations the party agents played their role and signed the voting book. In more than one station a party agent was observed assisting the station staff with processing voters. During the count, the party agents were generally observed as participating fully in the process.

Managing long lines of queuing voters was challenging. Security forces were mainly tasked with crowd management. For the most part, they did a good job. The enthusiasm of the crowds and frustration with long queues in urban areas led to some physical interventions between guards and voters. Disputes frequently arose when voters realised that they were in the wrong queue at the station and had to go to another line. This was compounded by inconsistent transliteration of names between Somali and English and the low level of literacy among voters. In addition, Help Officers were generally absent and little signage was provided to indicate line divisions.

In almost all the locations, armed guards were present inside the polling stations. They were not observed as interfering or intimidating voters but attempting to organise the voting process and help the election officials with maintaining order. In more than one case, the polling station Chair noted that they wanted them there for their own security. Small instances of violence were observed. At Dugsiga Ardaale (#109) observers noted a disturbance which arose when an election official admitted that he was paid to organise the lines for one of the parties and had not shared the money with other staff. He was chased and beaten by a crowd at the station. In other instances, guards lost patience with impatient voters in line. At one station a guard was observed striking a voter with the butt of his AK-47. In other cases guards hit persons lightly with sticks in an effort to control the crowd.

Underage voting

Observers in Borama noted a discernible difference in the nature of voting between morning and afternoon in terms of the composition of voters at polling stations. Several observation teams noted that, by late afternoon, queues at a number of stations consisted of large numbers of boys and girls under the eligible voting age of 16. At polling stations Xaafadda Xallane (#94), Dhirta Iyo Daaga (#115), Hanuuninta Dhexe (#89), Xaauuo Taako (#88), Caragaranug (#56), Jir-jir (#81), Abassa I (#76), Qunjed (#51, #112) and Xaafadda Xallane (#94) underage voters were observed. Some children had valid voter cards complete with their own picture and others had valid voter cards that were not their own. At polling station #94, election officials stopped a number of minors from voting. At several other stations underage voters were allowed to vote because they held valid voter cards. At polling station Dugsiga Aloog (#96) and Dugsiga Ardaale (#109), an estimated 100 children, both boys and girls, as young as nine to 12 years old, were observed standing in line with voter cards in their hand or were inside the station voting. The dates-of-birth shown on voter cards held by underage voters were noted as generally ranging from 1991 to 1993.

Attempts at multiple voting

Teams observed attempts at multiple voting at a number of polling stations, particularly in the afternoon. While efforts to curb this practice were observed in a number of instances, concern remains that extensive efforts to vote on multiple occasions may not have been prevented at all polling stations. For example, in Tuli (#99) polling station staff noted that almost half of the voters were being turned away as they were suspected of attempting to vote multiple times. In several other instances station Chairs reported that large numbers were attempting to vote at more than one station. Outside Dugsiga Aloog (#96), children bragged to observers that they had voted several times. At polling stations #94 and #109, observers witnessed youths and adults cleaning their fingers with bleach in an attempt to remove ink and try to vote again.

Distribution of voter cards by unauthorised persons

After 4pm on polling day several teams observed persons distributing large numbers of voter cards in the immediate vicinity of polling stations. Observers saw two men handing out voter cards outside #96 to people of all ages. When they saw the observers' car they moved to another area to continue the process. Other teams observed similar activities take place outside polling station #94. At #94 an individual wearing an UDUB cap was among those distributing cards in the street, and an UDUB marked truck was observed at a nearby junction, with the door open and a small crowd gathered around.

Similar activities were observed at a large, rural polling station, Idhinka (#71), in the morning. Unauthorised UDUB-marked vehicles were observed at this station and people were seen handing out cards. Another team noted a young man in Qunjed – near polling stations #51 and #112 – wearing an official election day t-shirt and holding 20-30 voter cards. Additionally, at approximately 5:15pm an observation team observed men distributing voter cards outside and inside #109.

Despite the open distribution of cards, observers did not witness any attempts to stuff the ballot boxes. For example, at polling station #94, the final total vote was not significantly higher than the number of people who were recorded as having voted by 5:15pm (see table).

Polling station	Registered voters	Numbers voted by 5.15pm	Final total vote at 9.00pm
94.1		191	225
94.5	906	161	225
94.6	915	225	299
94.7	914	310	340

The observers were informed that a significant number of voter cards which had not been collected by voters during the display period (part of the pre-election registration process) had not been returned to the NEC from Borama. It is possible that these were some of the cards the team witnessed being distributed.

Disparities in voter numbers

At nearly all polling stations there were large disparities between the number of persons registered and actual voters. For example, at 2pm at one station there were 250 votes cast out of more than 800 registered voters, and there was no one in line. The same phenomenon was observed later in the day by different teams at most polling stations. At the counts observed by the six teams the total votes counted were typically 20% to 50% of the number registered at each station. (See the table for some examples.)

Vehicles and campaigning

Despite bans on vehicle movement and campaigning on polling day both were observed in Borama. Over the course of the day several vehicles were seen by different teams moving freely within the city and rural areas without authorisation stickers, indicating that the vehicle ban for polling day was not being observed.

Cars were also observed as being used actively for campaigning. At polling station #71 observers noted that cars were present displaying UDUB posters and that the occupants of the cars were instructing persons queuing to vote for UDUB. Observers saw the movement of at least three big trucks near the Ethiopian border filled with people. The trucks displayed the political party colours of both UDUB and Kulmiye. Trucks were observed carrying large numbers of people to polling station #71. At #72 a truck with the UDUB insignia was observed. At #53 a car with campaign posters was observed parked outside the polling station. Another team witnessed campaigning at Jir-jir (#81) and use of a loudspeaker for campaigning in Qunjed (#51 and #112).

Interruptions to polling

At the Xaawo-Taako polling station (#88) one team was informed that the local observers had been ejected by the Governor of Borama. The Governor's reason for ejecting observers was that there were too many people in the station. The Kulmiye and UCID party agents complained and the police chief arrived and threatened to arrest the party agents if they challenged the wishes of the Governor. The Kulmiye party agent threatened to withhold signing off the final voting tally if the observers were not allowed back in. The observers were readmitted and polling continued. Shortly thereafter they were again ejected. A district NEC officer was called in and the local observers were re-admitted. This incident was not fully observed in person but was confirmed by the mediator, NEC officials present and the polling station Chair.

In another instance at Sheekh Nuur polling station (#105) polling was interrupted while disagreements over validation certificates were resolved. Observers noted that polling station staff were exemplary in their careful adherence to procedures but that the resultant confusion did slow and interrupt polling for a period.

Vote counting and political manoeuvring

The process of counting took five days, with the provisional result being announced formally by the NEC on the evening of 1 July. During the intervening period, parties largely displayed a commendable patience, refraining from comment.

As part of our IEO mission, we ensured an observer was in attendance for much of the critical Hargeisa count. This, as with other counts observed, was conducted in a thorough and orderly fashion. Initially the capital city count proceeded very slowly, but the introduction of several more counting tables and a shift system for the count saw a welcome increase in the speed.



President Kahin pictured in the days leading up to the election

The early restraint of political parties was compromised on 30 June when Osman Hindi, an influential government figure, dominated a press conference in which the ruling party called on the NEC to delay release of the results. The rationale they offered was spurious: they claimed massive irregularities in all the areas won by Kulmiye, but offered neither detail nor evidence. At any rate, the call amounted to an extra-judicial attempt to buy time at a point when it was becoming apparent that the opposition was on track to secure a large majority.

Before this UDUB press conference, police had seized and impounded ballot boxes from Gabiley, and subsequently they did the same with ballot boxes being transported from the Sanaag areas of Garadag and Ceel Afweyn and from Borama. The rationale for this action was not clear. The ballot boxes themselves contained undisputed ballots, all of which had already been counted. Some claim was made that the boxes were meant to have been sent to the regional offices of the NEC rather than the Hargeisa headquarters. Again, our understanding is that this was incorrect as only disputed ballots were required to be sent to regional offices for resolution.

The NEC showed considerable resolve in the face of these apparent challenges, making it clear that neither the seizure of ballot boxes nor the UDUB press conference would result in a delay in announcing a result.

Pressure was also applied by other groups for the government to allow the NEC to complete their due process and announce the result in their own time. One influential group of 25 religious figures from around the country issued a press statement later on the day of the UDUB press conference calling on the government to respect both the electoral process and the result itself.

Various external actors are also reported to have applied pressure on the government in the same direction. These interventions seemed to place effective pressure on the President, and he convened his own press conference on 1 July in which he stated explicitly that he accepted the NEC's mandate to complete the vote count and to announce the results. He apologised for the previous day's press conference, noting that it was wrong and would not be repeated. He also reiterated his commitment to allowing a peaceful transition of power if he lost.

Declaration of results

The President's statement helped to defuse the situation, and allowed the NEC to go ahead with an announcement in a much less tense atmosphere than might otherwise have been possible. That announcement took place at the Hotel Mansoor on the evening of 1 July.

The atmosphere at the announcement meeting was generally festive and took place in a packed hall. Kulmiye figures were prominent, with senior members of UCID also present. UDUB was barely represented. A number of respected elders, officials and political figures aligned with different parties or with non-affiliated groups expressed their support for the electoral process. The result itself was greeted enthusiastically by those in the hall, with Kulmiye supporters unsurprisingly providing the most vocal input.

The results were declared as follows:

Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo	Kulmiye	266,906 votes	(49.59%)
Dahir Riyale Kahin	UDUB	178,881 votes	(33.23%)
Faisal Ali Waraabe	UCID	92,459 votes	(17.18%)
Margin for Kulmiye ticket		88,025 votes	

The total number of votes cast was 538,246. Given the total number of voters listed on the register as eligible to vote of 1,069,914, this would suggest a turnout of some 50.31%. However, the likely flaws in the voter register along with past voting patterns suggest that the actual number of eligible voters is likely to have been somewhat lower than this, meaning the turnout was probably higher.

On 2 July, President Kahin made it clear on a BBC broadcast that he accepted defeat and was prepared to hand over the presidency to Ahmed Silanyo within the constitutionally specified period.



Ahmed Silanyo

Recommendations

We are pleased to note that several recommendations that we made in 2005¹⁷ appear to have been fully or partially taken up. Among the recommendations of the 2005 IEO team were the need for a voter registration process and national census to resolve many difficulties. We pointed to the need for full voter registration and voters being issued with voter ID cards. We saw the need to increase the number of polling stations and improve accessibility in rural areas.

We called for the replacement of the ballot bags used in 2005. We highlighted concerns over the inking system (and were pleased in 2010 to notice changes). We also thought replacing serial numbers on ballot papers with random numbers or bar codes would be useful. The 2005 mission also called for the provision of sample ballots and voter education material with pictures outside polling stations to assist voters. We saw the need for a better gender balance of polling station chairpersons.

This time, our recommendations are as follows:

Main points

- Need for greater civic education and polling staff/candidate training on all aspects of voting process
- Need to begin preparations for future elections earlier
- Need to take message back to donor/international community that without their support and commitment further phases of the democratisation process are unlikely to happen
- Need for a permanent electoral commission (with an established and permanent secretariat) with a dedicated section dealing with domestic and international observers – again we call for this after similar calls in 2002 and 2005
- Urgent attempts to ensure that more women are involved in future elections, both as candidates and as officials

Identification and multiple voting

- Consistent and stricter sanctions on those attempting to vote more than once (including sanctioning parties as well as individuals)
- Notices to be posted about these sanctions in polling stations to deter parties/would-be multiple voters

Polling station staffing

- The polling station Chairs were often overburdened; they should take a supervisory and coordinating role only, with sufficient devolution of responsibility to other members of polling station staff to make this feasible. This would require more resources, training and staff.
- Second person other than Chair to assist and support illiterate and disabled voters
- Consider having a day and a night shift for all staff, or other measures to reduce fatigue
- Ensure food and drinks available for polling station staff
- Examine options in relation to qat chewing in polling stations, which can be intimidating and not helpful for performance of duties
- Soldiers and SPUs need greater guidance on their role, in particular about not engaging in the voting process in any way and staying outside polling stations

Polling station logistics

- Some polling stations were very small and overcrowded and some suffered with problems over lighting. There is a need for more appropriate buildings for polling stations, especially in terms of size and lighting. Voting could take place outside in rural areas.
- Two doors on polling stations (entrance and exit), where feasible
- Increase efforts to have more ballot papers on hand and readily available when requested

- Diagrammatic instructions, like those printed in the voter training manuals, should be clearly displayed inside the voting booths to help voters in making more secret and independent voting decisions (this would also help reduce the polling station Chair's workload)
- Pens should be fastened to the table in the voting booth

Closing and ballot counting procedures

- Ensure clarity about closing procedures, with the NEC taking overall responsibility at national level. At polling station level the Chair announces imminent closing to comply with electoral provisions that those in the queue at 6pm are allowed to vote but no one can join the queue after that. Once that announcement has been made, no additional voters should be permitted to join the queue.

Transport

- Enforcement of prohibition of vehicle movement, including fining parties for transporting voters on election day
- However, consideration should be given to the possible need to provide transport for disabled and remote nomadic voters

Education, training and information

- More civil society education to empower and enable civil society organisations to promote key issues more effectively
- Civic education and awareness campaigns for the electorate on individual choice with greater emphasis on multiple voting being both wrong and illegal. If religious leaders were willing to help on this issue, their word would count for a great deal.
- Clearer training for polling station staff on the following points: setting up of polling stations; inking procedure; how to seal the ballot box; the counting process; use of record book; return of ballots to the district/regional office; and culture of respect towards voters.
- Earlier and increased party agent training and also training of others on the role of party agents so that they are not asked to facilitate the voting process other than within their defined role. The main recommendation in this regard is directed at parties: it is very much in the interests of each party to ensure their agents are available for a full induction and training process.

Further reflections

Women

There appears to be growing recognition that women's skills and experience are resources to be called upon, although there is obviously a long way to go. There were female polling station Chairs, although the majority remained men.

Donor role

In general donors operated effectively and on occasion helped with other forms of external intervention to broker solutions to crises – not least in the key period of September 2009. We were concerned however to hear that Interpeace,¹⁸ who were the main conduit for donor funding for the elections, were forced to borrow to cover an unexpected cashflow shortfall due to delays in the release of funds from donors. This could have compromised the election process given Interpeace's critical role in support provision, and it was only Interpeace's commitment and initiative that allowed it to secure an alternate credit line, and so minimise the impact of donor delays.



Future elections would benefit from more female polling station Chairs

Transport

We know that the ban on travelling on polling days is both a security issue and an attempt to cut down on attempted multiple voting. There is, however, a clear need for better transport for voters, particularly those who are elderly, disabled and live in rural areas.

It will obviously be crucial to distinguish between people being transported on polling day to exercise their democratic rights and those being transported to attempt multiple voting at different stations. Transport by political parties is not uncommon in other countries and does not necessarily determine which way people will vote in a secret ballot.

However we also agree with the proposition that if political parties/candidates are allowed to provide transport there is the danger that those with more money and access to greater resources, especially the incumbent party, might be given an unfair advantage and thereby reduce the chances of a level playing field. Here both electoral law and its implementation are crucial. We note that the provision of additional polling stations may have reduced the need for transport on polling day.

Polling stations

Concern was again raised by many IEOs on the distribution of polling stations and the effectiveness of their layout. We recognise that lack of resources, particularly money, and the practical restrictions within a country like Somaliland make advances in this area difficult. Attempts at standardisation of polling station layout and processes were made but, particularly in rural areas, the constraints imposed by lack of resources meant this was not always possible. Poor lighting – a problem experienced extensively in past elections – was to some extent addressed by providing more lamps than in 2005. Some domestic observers also had small penlight torches and some counting staff used the lights on their mobiles, but the lamps themselves had to be packed away in the dark at the end of the count.

Identification and multiple voting

Observers, especially in Awdal and Saaxil, noted shortcomings in identification procedures. Instances of multiple voting appeared to be facilitated by an unwillingness or inability to apply consistent procedures. Consideration should be given to putting polling station staff in areas other than their home ones, so they are less likely to be swayed by local political considerations (although there may be gender considerations to be taken into account in implementing such an approach).

Sanctions on individuals and parties can play a role in reducing multiple voting. This should be backed up by other mechanisms, particularly at the polling stations, such as displaying posters stating that voting more than once is against the law. The NEC needs to publicise the consequences of attempting to multiple vote.

Clan

Somali society has been highly democratic for a great many generations – at least for males. The negotiation and change that has enabled increasing stability and a string of successful elections since 1991 should not therefore be seen as ‘democratisation’ itself, but rather as a transition from one form of democracy to another. Somali democratic custom emphasises consensus-building over voting. The traditions of representative or elected democracies are quite different, and the challenge of negotiating that transition is substantial.

One of the keys to understanding the discursive processes of Somaliland electioneering lies in unpicking some of the complexities of clan which underpin Somaliland’s social structure. However, while it should come as no surprise that clan plays an important part in political decision-making, it is also important to understand that the nature of that role varies widely. As important as kinship affiliations are in Somaliland, they do not carry an automatic obligation for a given group to support a particular candidate. Clans or sub-clan groups do not simply ‘follow the leader’, and clan politics varies widely from the explicit and obvious endorsement of candidates through to subtle influencing.

While clan affiliations are ubiquitous, prized and play a vital role in social and political relations, they are also dynamic and much more fluid than many imagine. Mobilising support in an electoral democracy is a complex process, and in many ways, one can see clan in much the same light in political terms as social and cultural groups in other societies. Nevertheless, in Somaliland, clan dynamics will continue to influence, and add a layer of complexity to, the political transitions that occur in the future.

Beyond the elections

Justice

On the first day of the new regime, the government delivered on a pledge to abolish the unpopular security committees. Originally established to address urgent issues of security in the wake of the civil war, these committees had been permitted to imprison without trial and they lay outside any due judicial process. A new National Security Board was established, to provide security, defend borders and fight against terrorism.

There has at the time of writing been no impact on other parts of the judicial system. The judiciary remains ineffective and subject to executive pressure arising from its lack of independence. It is also alleged to be corrupt and non-professional with untrained clerks acting as judges. A seasoned observer described the system as “a hell of a mess which will take a lot of cleaning up. It’s still based largely on judicial practice under Siyaad Barre – ie, who has the most money wins.”

Women

The position of women has been another key element in the fight to further and deepen representative democratisation and Kulmiye has, as well as its clan base, majority support among women, youth, civil society and the diaspora. Activists cautiously welcomed the increase in female cabinet ministers from 5% to 20% but pointed out this still only means two ministers and an assistant minister (although the cabinet as a whole has shrunk in size). There is also a woman commissioner on the Human Rights Commission. The new (female) Minister for Labour and Social Affairs is, unlike her predecessor, open to dialogue with civil society.

Women’s groups welcomed these developments, with the umbrella network NAGAAD promptly submitting an advisory paper on gender issues to the government. However, women’s groups are looking for much more tangible progress and this still appears largely distant. There is, for example, little movement on key issues such as proposed 30% quotas for women in parliament.

Civil society

There has been a much improved relationship with civil society. A new NGO Act defining roles and responsibilities for NGOs as well as giving them legal protection was signed into being, while a number of new ministers have civil society backgrounds. These include one of the female cabinet members, Zamzam Abdi, now Minister of Higher Education and formerly Executive Director of the Committee of Concerned Somalis and ex-Chair of the Somaliland human rights network, SHURONET. The new Minister of Planning was himself a founding member of the NGO the Somali Relief Association (SOMRA) in the UK in the early 1990s, and has spent the past few years working with the private sector *hawala* (money transfer company), Dahabshiil. Early in his new ministerial role, he held his first coordination meeting with the UN and international NGOs and presented new guidelines for aid coordination. In addition, there is the promise of forums for domestic civil society to engage with government and to monitor performance, including input into the budgetary process.

Foreign relations and international recognition

Before the elections, Mohamed Abdillahi Omar, the (then Shadow) Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke of taking a far more nuanced approach to Somaliland’s neighbours, including pursuing reconciliation with Somalia and Puntland, as well as with other Somali groups and neighbours in the Horn in general. This necessarily requires that Somaliland address specific sensitivities on the question of recognition, on which neighbours remain the key.

One suggestion floated has been the concept of ‘incremental recognition’ whereby Somaliland leaders could engage in confidence-building measures, such as pursuing the possibility of greater engagement with regional bodies such as the IGAD forum (Intergovernmental Authority on

Development). The premise is that this would allow Somalilanders themselves to assume a more active and self-directing role in the pursuit of recognition, setting modest incremental objectives that are nevertheless achievable and should one day lead to a situation in which full recognition represents mere acceptance of an *ipso facto* condition. Such an approach would contrast with past tendencies to emphasise recognition as a one-stop solution requiring a single, substantial policy shift on the part of other nations.

The new approach seemed to reap rewards with the unexpectedly positive presidential visit to Djibouti in November 2010, in which President Silanyo was awarded red carpet status as if he were a recognised head of state. The long-closed Somaliland liaison office was also reopened, marking a shift from the rocky relations between Djibouti and the Riyale regime. It may be that this change is linked to the new fibre-optic cable coming into Somaliland via Djibouti. A number of government advisers themselves have links with Djibouti, and there were accusations within Somaliland that the agreement had favoured Djibouti against Somaliland interests.

Having initially viewed the new Somaliland government with suspicion, Ethiopia also hosted a Somaliland delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In so doing they indicated a willingness to work with the new administration. Hargeisa has also seen a visit from the new UN Envoy to Somalia, apparently at the invitation of the Norwegian Refugee Council. Significantly, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Mahboub Maalim, also visited Sheikh Veterinary School and met the President, noting that his visit marked a new era in the relationship between IGAD and Somaliland.

However, relations with Puntland have continued to be tense, with the contested sovereignty of areas of Sanaag and Sool complicated by recent accusations from Puntland that Somaliland was harbouring and indeed promoting the ‘terrorist’ Mohamed Said Atom. Puntland forces had clashed with Atom in the mountainous area of Galgala, and accused Somaliland variously of sending militia to fight alongside him and of sheltering him when he fled. The Somaliland account inevitably differed from this, with senior politicians declaring Atom a terrorist and insisting that the two territories were cooperating over terrorism. These claims were repeated by the Somaliland President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in London in November 2010. They suggested that the dispute was essentially between the Puntland administration and local clan groups. Since that date, the situation in the border areas with Ethiopia near the town of Buhodle has also deteriorated, with renewed fighting early in 2011 between Somaliland forces and those of a breakaway militia titling themselves SSC¹⁹ resulting in significant fatalities. The same group was responsible for the election day clash near Kala Baydh.

Media freedom

A further significant problem lies in the seeming continuation (following the previous Riyale administration) of government suspicion of and attacks on media freedom. This started with the suspension of the right of the popular Somali cable broadcaster Universal TV to work in Somaliland in retaliation for having ‘treated Somaliland unfairly’. That suspension was subsequently lifted, but was renewed when the broadcaster was caught displaying bodies from southern Somali areas and claiming that they were fatalities of the SSC clashes.

The chief editor of the partisan *Yool* daily newspaper was also threatened by ministers and security personnel for unfavourable coverage. A further instance saw Mohamud Abdi Jama, the editor of the daily newspaper *Waaheen*,²⁰ sentenced to three years imprisonment for publishing articles which accused the government of nepotism and an official of having appointed his own clan members to posts. Other journalists from the *Saxafi*, *Hargeisa Star*, *Ogaal* and *Yool* are also facing charges of criminal defamation – all of which has attracted international criticism.

Hopes that the new administration would not resort systematically to the measures of the prior regime, which had a tendency to lock up perceived opponents including journalists for lengthy

periods, are beginning to fade. The presidential pardon granted to the *Waaheen* editor was welcome but did little to alter the perception that moves against the media tend to be far too arbitrary and open to political manipulation.

Vision for the future

This relates to the wider worries that commentators and people on the street see little evidence of a unifying vision. In the 10 months since taking power the concentration appears to be on reshuffling the institutions and getting rid of supposedly corrupt civil servants, while creating new agencies such as the Anti-Corruption Commission. Essentially some commentators allege that Kulmiye did not have a plan for governing. This line holds that the party concentrated too hard on winning the election on an anti-government platform and, despite the high expectations of the population, they are now weighed down by the day-to-day job of governing. One commentator opined that the President seems to be overwhelmed and that he lacks the stamina for the job, relying instead on others to do the work for him.

At the time of writing, it is still too early to tell whether such criticism is well-founded. Complaints about a lack of vision and unnecessary levels of negativity seem to hold some validity. Too many civil servants were fired for what appeared no fault of their own other than (inevitable) ties to the prior administration. In the process, competent as well as less able individuals were lost. Equally, there have been concerning indications that the government has lacked a consistent agenda, with ministers too willing to embark on action at odds with the positions of other members of the executive. It is possible that the anti-media moves described were a manifestation of this tendency.

Donors

There is nevertheless donor goodwill. In September 2010, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs announced a new policy on Somaliland that would see 'aggressive' engagement with the administrations there and in Puntland. Given that such engagement is likely to be highly focused on an anti-terrorist/anti-political Islamist agenda, these words are not necessarily reassuring for Somalis. Can Somaliland try to use this to its own advantage? As it attempts to reach out more actively and to establish a more nuanced approach to international and regional players, increasing international acceptance of Somaliland as an autonomous political entity could assist significantly. The US shift is part of a 'dual track' strategy which will see the US continue to support the Mogadishu-based Transitional Federal Government (TFG), but which will also result in an increase in direct aid to Somaliland, so the possibility for this and similar adjustments in attitude to result in tangible benefit for Somaliland is real.

Donors have promised to channel an increased proportion of aid directly to Somaliland amid talk of direct budget support for the government. If implemented, which has not yet happened, this would mark a significant shift in donor engagement with Somaliland, contributing materially to the process of incremental recognition mentioned above.

Somaliland has a significant opportunity given the impending expiry of the mandate of the TFG in the south. The TFG has long represented an explicit obstacle if Somaliland is to extend the depth and breadth of its formal engagement with the international community. Negotiation with donors over the future therefore represents a very real opportunity for Somaliland, along with those amongst the international diplomatic community who would like to see a change in the nature of that engagement, to leverage a further and more substantial enhancement in international acceptance of Somaliland.

Appendix 1: The role of diaspora women – a personal reflection by an IEO team member

During the past 20 years in which I have been living in the United Kingdom, I have had the opportunity to follow many memorable election campaigns. The 2010 presidential election process in Somaliland was similarly remarkable: exciting, moving, and brilliant, and certainly the most emotion-eliciting election of my life. Following the election, Somaliland, the country I had fled, on foot, as a teenager, became immediately alive with the anticipation and excitement of a new dawn, with renewed hope for a great future.

What was just as remarkable in this election campaign was the undeniably significant role played by women. The Somaliland women of the diaspora made their contributions to the election in three main ways: first, by providing financial support for the political parties; second, by organising campaign activities; and, third, via their contributions to the development of party policies.

During the 2010 election cycle in Somaliland, women sought to form the backbone of political parties, especially the opposition parties. In so doing, they used traditional and tribal structures to organise themselves. By working within those existing social structures they encouraged their supporters to take responsibility for attracting their fellow women to attend fundraising events. As a result, women eventually made noteworthy financial contributions to the parties.

In Britain in particular, women contributed to the successful electoral process by energising party supporters and involving them further in the political process. The method used was to hold small, but effective, gatherings of no more than 100 to 150 women. Such events held in west, north and east London encouraged each district to compete with the others in the quest to raise increasing amounts of funding for the various political parties.

Similar formats were employed in other countries by Somaliland diaspora women. This was to become a highly effective tactic to expand the number of supporters. Such events were often covered by the international Somali-language media, spurring the holding of even more events. Tribal allegiances, friendships, and tradition all contributed greatly to the eventual flavour of the party politics and development of policies.

The second contribution of the women of the diaspora was to play a key part in campaigning. Women were well-organised, resourceful and articulate in conveying party policy, not only in the country itself, but in Somaliland enclaves throughout the world. In order to engender more enthusiasm and create hope for a better future for Somaliland, their slogan for the campaign was 'There is a need for change'. Women seemed to have been much more persuasive than men in convincing their friends and families to believe in their preferred party...

Even though Somaliland society is very conservative in many ways and frowns upon the mixing of men and women, this was occurring quite comfortably during the campaign rallies. Furthermore, women were not only at the forefront of the campaign, but women of all ages turned out in huge numbers to vote.

Somaliland women were therefore able to exert a major influence on party policy. It was known to be crucial for the parties to get the support of the women in their campaigns, particularly to have greater access to funds and to reach a greater number of supporters. As a result, political parties were willing to amend their policies, albeit if only to a certain degree. For example, Kulmiye promised that 20% of their eventual administration would be women, while UCID earmarked the Foreign Minister position specifically for a woman. Political parties were willing to acknowledge the power and importance of women, but at this juncture the offers made were still a reflection of the glass ceiling.

The political parties like to maintain that the current political system is fair to women in Somaliland and that its validity is based on recognition of the mandates of tribal structure. Although women significantly contribute to all aspects of the social, economic and political system of the country, present policies still work against them. In a democracy it should not be acceptable that women (and youth and minority groups) remain so heavily under-represented. If public institutions are to reflect the society they serve, then all of us, men and women, must continue our efforts to modernise our system of government to reflect the needs of the greater community, with special emphasis on the role of women, and thereby improve the quality of life for us all.

Sucaad Odowa-Nielsen

Appendix 2: Media monitoring report

This is an edited version of the final report on media coverage of the 2010 Somaliland presidential elections submitted by Hussein A Nur.

Scope

This report assesses coverage of the presidential elections by three television stations, one run by the state (SLNTV) and two private channels, Somaliland Space Channel (SSCTV) and Horn Cable TV (HCTV); two radio stations – Radio Hargeisa, which is state run, and Radio Horyaal, which is closely associated with the opposition party Kulmiye; and nine newspapers.

Pre-election

In the early pre-election period there was only one major activity that was covered by both the electronic and print media: the distribution of the new voter ID cards. This issue was covered in an appropriate manner with awareness programmes and songs to encourage people to take the new cards and hand in the former identity and voting cards. In general, the different mediums covered the issue in a successful manner in accordance with guidance given by the NEC.

Party programmes

The Media Code of Conduct signed by the three political parties, media representatives and the NEC allotted that a 20-minute programme be given to each party in the electronic media (TV and radio) and that newspapers should publish details of the policy platforms of each party in serialised form. The time allotted for the electronic media was very small in comparison to their general daily transmission.

Radio Hargeisa released party programmes [party political broadcasts] twice a day (at mid-day and early evening). It gave equal time to all the three parties to release the programmes that they had prepared.

Radio Horyaal scheduled a 30-minute political broadcast for each party, plus a regular 10-minute slot to cover campaign news and rallies in the first few rounds. However, this changed after 12 June when SLNTV stopped releasing opposition programmes, after which time Horyaal coverage became much less balanced, focusing on Kulmiye at the expense of the government.

SLNTV in the first few rounds of the campaign gave good coverage of the party programmes as agreed by NEC and the political parties. But this balance deteriorated over the campaign. Eventually, the EMC called the manager of SLNTV and directed him to give equal time to each of the different parties. Instead, SLNTV stopped covering opposition programmes at all, rather using the time for broadcasts supportive of the ruling UDUB party.

SSCTV and HCTV gave full coverage of all the party programmes.

News coverage

Radio Hargeisa released all news related to the campaigns in their transmissions beginning from mid-day, starting with minimal coverage but updating the evening programmes with bulletins from its reporters.

The radio gave more coverage of news (by time) to the ruling party when the President, his Vice-President or senior government officials were involved in government activities with only an indirect relevance to the campaign. For example, it gave more time for covering news related to the opening of new projects, meetings or visits to the different districts and regions. However, in its main Radio Show programme, rallies by all the parties were covered. It also used the first part of this programme for raising public awareness on the importance of voting. In spite of a tendency

to favour the government in coverage (although this coverage was arguably not directly campaign-related) and in spite of the fact that they are state-owned and operated, Radio Hargeisa has shown a great improvement from the last election and has to be commended for that.

SLNTV gave brief news items in small slots for the opposition parties while giving full coverage and in one package for the ruling party. It repeated and updated the coverage of party rallies. More coverage time was given to the news when the President or Vice-President were on the campaign trail. Reporters from the regions did on occasion offer their own views in news reports, such as saying that the opposition has no support in some areas and districts (eg north of Erigavo).

SSCTV and HCTV, the two privately-owned television stations, covered all the news on the campaign and especially the party rallies on rally days. They also transmitted all news regardless of whether it was that party's rally day, for example when they dealt with different events by the government. They gave daily coverage of opposition rallies even on rally days for the ruling party. Officials from the two television stations said that the two opposition parties had bought airtime for political advertisements, which the ruling party didn't.

Radio Horyaal covered news of the rallies for the different parties on their different days but stopped releasing ruling party programmes and rallies once the SLNTV coverage had ceased to include substantial time for the opposition. It replaced the 10-minute programme which it had used to cover the campaign with analysis, comments and criticism of the government.

The print media covered all campaign activities, devoting considerable space to the campaign. Some of the papers published the party policy programmes in serial format [covering specific themes or areas sequentially]. There were at times tendencies to lean to one or the other party, but overall print coverage was reasonable. Some of the papers at times broke the Media Code of Conduct they had co-signed with the NEC. A notable exception was the newspaper *Yool*, which had not signed the code of conduct and whose political coverage was so biased as to have been unethical.

Increase in government activities

Beginning from the President's visit to Sanaag and the Vice-President's extensive campaigning in Saaxil region, the media began covering their visits in the news and other programmes. These included meetings the executive had with officials in the regions and districts and with traditional leaders, the opening of different projects, visits to government offices and the opening of new party offices. These were included as part of the campaign coverage on SLNTV but were covered only as news on Radio Hargeisa and its Radio Show programme.

Code of conduct

The code of conduct signed by the media covering the pre-election, election and post-election period was implemented to a great extent except by SLNTV and one extremist newspaper [*Yool*], which used unethical and unprofessional words and phrases against the opposition.

The state-run paper, *Maandeeq*, was acting according to the code of conduct signed but gave minimum coverage to opposition campaign activities. It gave more space to the achievements of the government.

The greatest blunder during the whole campaign was the altering of photographs of a rally by the ruling party in which speakers were speaking to an almost empty Independence Park. SLNTV transmitted to the public in the evening programme images of an overcrowded rally purporting to be the same event. This was clearly against the signed code of conduct.

Live presentation of speeches by ruling party candidates, supporters and campaigners was transmitted by SLNTV but it didn't transmit any such programme for the opposition except in the last days of the campaign for the Justice and Welfare Party [UCID], for which it provided good coverage.

The inclusion of personal political views by some reporters in the electronic and print media was also a breach of the code of conduct.

At no time (with the exception of one issue) did the media give or offer candidates the opportunity to respond to what had been said against them. The sole exception was when the opposition campaigner, Mohamed Hashi, accused the government of misusing \$200,000,000 of public funds. On that occasion, an opportunity was given to the Finance Minister to respond.



A woman using a loudhailer during pre-election campaigning

Change brought about by the Burco terrorist issue

This news [the discovery and dismantling of an apparent terrorist cell in Burco] was covered fully by all the media. The coverage resulted in the raising of the issue of security and stability widely amongst the public. It resulted in an increase in sermons given by religious leaders in mosques, civil society messages in the media and the inclusion of religious programmes in the media calling for peace and stability during the election.

Party policies during the campaign

These were based on six main issues, with each party presenting a different range of positions on each issue, and with different individuals including the main candidates taking part.

The ruling party (UDUB) was campaigning on the need for continuity of its programmes and the preservation of peace. They emphasised the fact that there was no [major] armed conflict during their term in office.

Opposition party Kulmiye was campaigning on the lack of development and progress during the ruling term of the incumbent President. Kulmiye laid a foundation stone for a road in Hargeisa during the campaign. This made the Mayor of Hargeisa [an UDUB politician] furious, claiming that "constructing roads is not the business of the opposition and they have no funds to undertake this project".

The opposition Justice and Welfare Party [UCID] campaigned on broad change to the whole national infrastructure plus a promise to implement sharia law as enshrined in the constitution.

Campaigning advances

- For the first time a first lady standing by her husband in a public rally called on the people to vote for her husband, the President.
- Women's participation and campaigning increased enormously during this presidential election and women constituted the majority of many audiences in the rallies. This is an indicator of their strength.
- Programmes on the rights of women were released by Radio Hargeisa in which women's political rights and unity were actively advocated.
- Messages by religious leaders and prominent individuals in the society were being released requesting the people to make the right choice and at the same time be vigilant against Somaliland's enemies in order to ensure the preservation of stability and peace.

Special events to remember

- The first lady addressing a campaign rally in Borama's Khayria Square.
- The release of 'peace pigeons' by Kulmiye in Hargeisa's Independence Park.
- The air shuttle by UCID on its last campaign day, covering five regions.
- The campaign was almost free of character smearing of candidates except on a few occasions.
- The picturesque rallies of the parties.
- The peaceful completion of the whole campaign.
- Campaigning in Las Anod for the first time.
- The death of one person and the injuries of three in car accidents.

The election

- The electronic and print media fully covered the election on 26 June 2010. The coverage was on voting, the long queues, the enthusiasm of the people. Coverage by the TV stations included female voters and their being the majority of those who were voting.
- The media gave full coverage of the candidates and their assistants voting in Hargeisa and regional capitals.
- They also covered NEC press conferences and statements warning the media and the three political parties to avoid speculation about the result before the official announcement.
- The media covered the exchange of gunfire and the death of NEC staff in the exchange of fire in Sool [Kala Baydh], but had no pictures.
- International and local observers' statements on the election were released and published.
- The NEC request for media to avoid speculation on the result prior to announcement was breached by one paper, when they published a speculative result and winning party while the counting was still going on. This created confusion and tension in the public. The EMC strongly condemned the speculation.

Appendix 3: IEO press releases

Somaliland: Election date draws near

17 June 2010

Somaliland: Coordinators of international election observers give cautiously positive assessment for the holding of election

International development agency Progressio, the Development Planning Unit at UCL and Somaliland Focus (UK) welcome the good progress being made toward the holding of Somaliland's long-delayed presidential elections on the scheduled date of 26 June 2010.

The three organisations, whose advance mission is now established in Hargeisa, were invited in January 2009 by Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) to act as coordinators of the international observation mission for presidential elections in the internationally-unrecognised Republic of Somaliland.

Given past difficulties, recent months have seen rapid progress towards a free and fair election. The election looks set to take place on the scheduled date. This is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the new NEC, put in place after the parties agreed to a revised timetable for elections.

Since campaigning started in early June, there have been no major campaign-related incidents of violence. The agreement between the three parties to hold rallies on separate days appears to be holding. In security terms, an incident involving alleged political Islamists in the town of Burco in early June regrettably resulted in the death of a member of Somaliland's police force. This has given cause for concern in the context of threats to disrupt the election, but also demonstrates the preparedness of the Somaliland population and police.

There are outstanding logistical issues to be resolved around the security of observers, which are essential for the mission to proceed, but we look forward to a speedy resolution of these. Michael Walls, a joint coordinator, said: "We hope to have around 70 international observers from a wide variety of countries, along with 800 local counterparts. Naturally, we are actively monitoring the security situation in order to ensure that a balance is maintained between the widest possible coverage of the poll and the personal security of the observation teams."

His colleague, Dr Steve Kibble, said: "We are encouraged by the overwhelming desire of the people of Somaliland to see a peaceful election, recognised as such both nationally and internationally. At this stage, we expect that such an outcome can be achieved."

Somaliland elections: Ready, steady, go!

25 June 2010

The international mission to observe Somaliland's long-delayed presidential election on 26 June 2010, led by UK-based development agency Progressio, the Development Planning Unit at University College London and Somaliland Focus (UK), notes that good progress is being made towards holding the scheduled vote this Saturday. The first teams of observers left the mission's base in Hargeisa for Somaliland's regions on 24 and 25 June. Country-wide, all teams are expected to commence observation of the vote on the morning of 26 June.

The three organisations were invited in January 2009 by Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) to act as coordinators of the international observation mission for presidential elections in the internationally-unrecognised Republic of Somaliland. Given past difficulties, recent months have seen rapid progress towards a free and fair election, a clear indication of the effectiveness of the new NEC which was put in place after the parties agreed to a revised timetable for elections in late 2009.

In the week since the team assembled in Hargeisa (comprising 59 individuals from 16 countries, including diaspora Somalilanders) much work has been done. The teams have met the incumbent president and the two opposition candidates to hear points of view on the progress towards polling day where all three candidates pledged to accept the result of the vote.

However, the team has noted various complaints from the political parties about each others' actions and of media bias. Fears about gaps in the voter registration process and the potential for attempted fraud have also been raised. Nevertheless, the observers mission agrees that the campaign has generally been peaceful and good-natured; that campaign 'rules' have on the whole worked well; and that the people of Somaliland are still enthusiastic about the election, despite the many delays. Indeed, a carnival atmosphere has prevailed in Hargeisa in recent days.

The potential for unrest does however remain high, the mission notes, and security threats around the election cannot be underestimated (ensuring the security of observers themselves, especially those in the regions, has been of paramount importance to the mission's leaders). Nonetheless, the mission's coordinators are hopeful that no major disruption will take place on polling day or in the immediate aftermath.

The team are looking forward to a free and fair voting process and the smooth collation of the results in the coming days. Michael Walls, joint coordinator of the observation team, said: "We are heartened at the good spirit in which campaigning has taken place and are optimistic that the vigilance of Somalilanders and their evident commitment to a peaceful election will ensure that the small minority who wish to disrupt the process will be prevented from doing so."

Dr Steve Kibble, also of the observation team, said: "We look forward to a peaceful election process that will express the will of the Somaliland people clearly and decisively. We are greatly encouraged by the willingness of the three party candidates to respect the result of the election."

A post-poll press release will be issued by the election observation coordinators on 28 June 2010, with a press conference at 11am at the Hotel Mansoor, Hargeisa. All interested media are invited to attend.

Somaliland elections: Peaceful expression of popular will

28 June 2010

Progressio, the Development Planning Unit of University College London and Somaliland Focus (UK) congratulate the people of Somaliland and the National Electoral Commission on a peaceful expression of the popular will at the conclusion of their mission to observe Somaliland's presidential election on 26 June 2010.

The three organisations were invited in January 2009 by Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) to act as coordinators of the international observation mission for the election in the internationally-unrecognised republic. In the event, 59 international observers visited polling stations in all six Somaliland regions, working alongside a group of 19 observers from the US-based International Republican Institute.

The mission is pleased to note many positives around the conduct of the poll, an especially noteworthy achievement given significant past difficulties. Polling day saw massive enthusiasm from the great majority of Somaliland's electorate, particularly from female voters. There was a high turnout in many areas despite threats from Islamist militant groups to disrupt the process, which thankfully came to nothing.

Overall, the election seems to have met conditions for a free and fair expression of the popular will of the people of Somaliland.

Particular congratulations are due to the Electoral Commission. The general competence of its staff, especially those at the polling station frontlines, was impressive, especially given its short time in office and the huge challenges it faced.

There are indeed many positives. However, the mission has some concerns, which we suggest require the NEC's attention. These include reported misuse of public resources, including vehicles, active campaigning by civil servants, and national public media by the incumbent party during the campaign. There were also reported instances of bias in the private media, although it should be stressed that reporting by most media remained balanced.

Of particular concern are issues alleged to have taken place in Sool and eastern Sanaag. In those areas, some portions of the electorate were unwilling to participate in the poll. Turnouts were low, instances of ballot box confiscation were reported and, tragically, violence in Sool resulted in the death of an NEC official. Nevertheless, Commission staff seemed to do a good job where voting did take place in these and other regions.

Other areas of concern requiring the NEC's attention centre on the Borama district. There, observers witnessed underage voting and open distribution of voter ID cards by unauthorised agents. International observers also noted that NEC officials in certain polling stations did take effective action against these irregularities, suggesting that they may not have influenced the result of the poll. Nonetheless, these are concerns that require attention.

The mission now looks forward to a speedy and clear result in the election that is accepted by all parties. Notwithstanding the concerns outlined above, we express our confidence that the election process to date is likely to result in a free and fair expression of the popular will.

Somaliland elections: President Riyale defeated, provisional results show

1 July 2010

Somaliland elections: Provisional results indicate win for Ahmed Silanyo of the Kulmiye party – President Riyale defeated, the country's National Electoral Commission says

International development organisation Progressio, the Development Planning Unit at University College London and Somaliland Focus (UK) have welcomed the announcement of provisional results of Somaliland's presidential election, held on 26 June 2010.

The Somaliland National Electoral Commission's (NEC) findings – which are not yet final – indicate that Mr Ahmed Silanyo of the Kulmiye party has won the election, defeating the incumbent, President Dahir Riyale Kahin of the UDUB party, and Mr Faisal Ali Waarabe of the UCID party.

The three UK-based organisations were invited by the NEC in January 2009 to act as coordinators of the international observation mission for the election in the internationally-unrecognised republic.

The mission congratulates Mr Ahmed Silanyo and the Kulmiye party and extends its best wishes to President Riyale for his many years of service to Somaliland, and for the dignity and leadership he has shown during his years in office. In particular, the mission commends his statesmanship over the past 24 hours. Congratulations are also due to Mr Faisal, and indeed to all the candidates, for their adherence to the democratic process in Somaliland.

Despite the many delays in the run-up to the election, the mission would like to point out that the days prior to polling day – and polling day itself – were notable for their spirit of peacefulness and goodwill. The election observation mission hopes that the same spirit will prevail in the days leading up to the confirmation of the final result and beyond. It is hoped, too, that Somaliland’s political leaders, and their supporters, accept the final results, as they have pledged to do.

The observation mission believes any other course of action would be detrimental to the welfare of Somaliland’s people and the nation’s democratic future. The mission looks forward to being able to pass its final judgement on the Somaliland 2010 presidential election in its final election report.

A new president for Somaliland

27 July 2010

Somaliland’s new president inaugurated in Hargeisa following final confirmation of June election results

Progressio, the Development Planning Unit at University College London and Somaliland Focus (UK) congratulate Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo on his inauguration as Somaliland’s new president in Hargeisa, Somaliland’s capital, on 27 July 2010, a month and a day after Somaliland’s presidential election was held on 26 June.

The three UK-based organisations were invited in January 2009 by Somaliland’s National Electoral Commission to act as coordinators of the international observation mission for the election in the internationally-unrecognised republic. Immediately after polling day, the mission felt able to judge the voting as a “peaceful expression of the popular will”, despite concerns about voting irregularities in some of Somaliland’s regions.

The immediate acceptance of the provisional results by the incumbent, Mr Dahir Riyale Kahin of the UDUB party, five days after the vote – and the final and undisputed confirmation of the results (a decisive victory for Mr Silanyo, the candidate for the Kulmiye party) by Somaliland’s Supreme Court ten days after the provisional announcement – were invaluable in ensuring a smooth and peaceful transition of executive power.

The election observation mission extends its congratulations to all parties, not least Somaliland’s National Electoral Commission, for organising such a successful and peaceful poll and applauds the people of Somaliland for their enthusiastic participation.

Dr Adan Abokor, Progressio’s Country Representative in Somaliland, said: “After significant delays, which finally resulted in June’s poll, we are happy to see Somaliland’s democratic process back on track and we look forward to this continuing for many years to come. We wish President Silanyo and his new administration well as they face the many challenges ahead.”

Notes

- 1 Al-Shabaab was the militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts and remains active in southern and central Somalia.
- 2 In Somaliland domestic observers were frequently called 'local observers'. The two terms are entirely synonymous.
- 3 The role of IEOs should also be seen as distinct from election observation activities that embrace peace-building initiatives and/or form part of more general mission-based interventions undertaken by single countries or organisations in tandem with ongoing development work.
- 4 Special Protection Units (SPUs) are operated by the Somaliland Police Force and are fully funded by the United Nations Development Programme under its Rule of Law and Security Programme. The SPUs are charged with the protection of United Nations' personnel and agents of international and non-governmental organisations.
- 5 Local media coverage of the elections is discussed later in this report. An edited version of the media monitoring report prepared by a local Somaliland journalist is also given in Appendix 2.
- 6 <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2010/06/2010623101847890172.html> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 7 <http://www.economist.com/node/16488840> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 8 http://audiovideo.economist.com/?fr_story=990780bd6f03c6736a3d28bbab729d3eb50114ea&f=bm (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 9 <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/east/Somaliland-Prepares-for-Presidential-Polls--97084134.html> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 10 <http://www.radiolive.co.nz/Elections-in-Somaliland---two-kiwis-are-election-observers/tabid/506/articleID/15769/Default.aspx> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 11 <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2010/07/somaliland-expects-election/> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 12 www.progressio.org.uk
- 13 www.somalilandfocus.org.uk
- 14 <http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/ground/somaliland-observations-election-observer> (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 15 NSP is an initiative of the Somalia NGO Consortium. It provides support, information and analysis on security issues affecting NGOs operating in greater Somalia. See www.somaliangoconsortium.org
- 16 Summaries and further information on the electoral laws and codes of conduct can be found at http://www.somalilandlaw.com/electoral_laws.html (accessed 8 April 2011)
- 17 See Abokor, A, et al (2006) Further steps to democracy: The Somaliland parliamentary elections, September 2005, Progressio, London.
- 18 Interpeace is an international peacebuilding organisation that helps divided and conflicted societies build sustainable peace. See www.interpeace.org for more information.
- 19 The initials refer to the areas of Sool, Sanaag and Cayn, portions of which are claimed by clans opposed to Somaliland.
- 20 *Waaheen* belongs to Ahmed Hussein Essa, a long-time politician with good insider knowledge but with a combative past inside Kulmiye.

