

14 March 2018

International observation mission to Somaliland's 2017 presidential election launches final report and looks forward to parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2019

The international election observation mission (IEOM) to the poll on 13 November 2017 assembled 60 observers from 27 countries at the invitation of Somaliland's National Electoral Commission. The IEOM observed 355 polling stations (22% of the total), across all six regions of Somaliland and 17 of the 21 districts. The IEOM reported a largely peaceful and well-organised polling day in areas observed, albeit with some irregularities, but not of sufficient scale to have impacted the final result. Thus, the violence following polling day—which saw some deaths amid allegations of electoral malpractice—was deeply disappointing.

Says Dr Michael Walls, chief observer of the IEOM:

“Once again, Somaliland called on its admirable tradition of conflict resolution to defuse a potentially dangerous post-election situation. But Somaliland is at a crucial stage: over-reliant on a customary system to solve problems, with the chosen electoral system not yet fully accepted as a means of determining political leadership. Set against a background in which major international deals are pushing the stakes higher, we note the need for renewed commitment to an inclusive politics. We hope Somaliland's democratic journey will continue peacefully, and move on to the next stage, namely holding its much-delayed parliamentary poll in 2019 as scheduled.”

The IEOM makes a number of recommendations, including: strengthening legal bodies supervising campaigns and elections (especially formal dispute procedures); timely updating of the voter register; improvements to civic education and training for polling staff, political parties and voters; better transparency around the electoral process; that political parties use formal dispute resolution structures, improve female representation and refrain from inflammatory campaigning; legislation to ensure freedom of expression; more state funding for elections; and campaign spending limits for political parties.

The election, Somaliland's third presidential poll and sixth election overall, saw Muse Bihi Abdi of the Kulmiye party defeat rival candidates from the Waddani and UCID parties. With 55% of the vote, Muse succeeded the retiring incumbent, Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud 'Silanyo', also of Kulmiye. The election saw the first use of Somaliland's innovative biometric voter register and the first participation in a Somaliland election of some in the easternmost regions. The IEOM, which was funded by the British government, was led by the Development Planning Unit at University College London, and Somaliland Focus (UK), and project managed by UCL Consultants.

Notes to Editors

1. The IEOM will launch the report with a public event at the Africa Research Institute, 55 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3QL, 15 March 2018, 6pm, along with “Somaliland Decides”, a photographic exhibition by Kate Stanworth in conjunction with Saferworld. A Somaliland launch will be held later in 2018.

2. For media information, please contact Conrad Heine (IEOM Media Coordinator) on +44 (0)7870 642 852 or ieomsomalilandmedia@gmail.com. The mission and report are online at www.somalilandfocus.org.uk, [@SomalilandFocus](https://www.facebook.com/EOMSomaliland2017) and [facebook.com/EOMSomaliland2017](https://www.facebook.com/EOMSomaliland2017).

3. Somaliland declared unilateral independence from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of Somalia's government. It remains internationally unrecognised.

