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NEWS LETTER

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Building inclusive and accountable parliaments for a peaceful Somalia

UNDP Parliamentary Support Project supporting the capacity development of inclusive and effective parliamentary institutions in Somalia.

PSP - News Updates

Opening of the fifth Session of the House of People

On 27 March, Somali lawmakers held the fifth session of the House of People for 2019. The majority of the country's lawmakers were present at the ceremonial event, along with high-level government officials and other dignitaries. The Speakers of the Houses of Representatives of the State Assemblies (Jubaland, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, Puntland and Representatives from South-West Assembly) also attended the session.

The President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmaajo" delivered the keynote speech at the opening ceremony of session. He urged both Houses of the federal parliament to speed up the processing and adoption of these key laws such as the electoral law and political parties act, and highlighted the crucial nature of such laws to the country's democratic process.

President Farmaajo highlighted his government efforts in advancing and achieving inclusive politics in the country, in particular mentioning political agreements made on the electoral system as well as on resource sharing between federal government and federal member states. He emphasized progress made on groundwork for negotiations between the federal government and federal member states on the status of city of Mogadishu in the federal system, the structure of the

government, the powers of the government, the state system of the Federal Republic of Somalia, federal justice system, the formalization and graduation of the FMS, the electoral system and the political parties, and also the federal financial system.

The President thanked the joint Parliamentary Constitution Review Committee (OC) and the Independent Constitution Review and Implementation Commission (ICRIC) for the completion of the review of first ten chapters of the constitution. "I am pleased with the work done and the cooperation between the Ministry of Constitution and the two Committees" he said. He urged both committees (the OC and the ICRIC), and the executive, to accelerate work to complete review of the remaining five chapters of the constitution. In his concluding remarks, the President called upon the House of the People again to adopt the various laws before the House.

In their address, the member state Speakers commended the leadership of the Federal Government on the progress made and emphasized the importance of co-operation between the federal government and federal member states in promoting unity and development in the country.

The Speaker of House of People, Mohamed Mursal Abdirahman,

Highlights

- ◆ Opening of the fifth Session of the House of People
- ◆ Training for newly elected MPs on Parliamentary Governance and Law-making
- ◆ Strategic Planning for new Puntland House of Representatives
- ◆ Induction Workshop for Somaliland Parliamentarians on Parliament's Role in Realizing the 2030 Agenda
- ◆ Building Cooperation between Puntland Parliament and CSOs
- ◆ Project Board Meeting for Parliament Support Project

highlighted the progress made since the 4th session, such as the approval of key laws and the passing of the 2019 government budget. He mentioned that planned public consultations on the constitution will take place soon in federal member states. He urged the executive to accelerate political negotiations on the issues in the constitution that need political agreement. Finally the Speaker mentioned that the House will focus its legislative work on processing priority laws such as the electoral law, review of the political party law, and finalizing the constitution review process. He urged the executive to submit the laws that are key to moving forward on scheduled 2020 elections, to the House for processing.



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Training for newly elected MPs Puntland on Parliamentary Governance and Law-making

From 2-4 February 2019, an induction workshop for the newly elected members of Puntland's parliament was held in Garowe. The goal was to equip the new MPs with basic knowledge about Parliamentary processes, practices and procedures, so as to bring them up to speed in exercising their duties, and to provide MPs with information on available services and supports within Parliament.

Sixty-six members of parliament (MPs) were elected to the House of Representatives of Puntland in December 2018, with a term of five years, and forty-nine of those elected had not yet served in the parliament or received training on effective parliamentary legislation or administration.

The training was facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with funding from Norway and

Switzerland, as part of ongoing support to the Government of Somalia in building the administrative and legislative capacity of parliaments. The training was carried out following a formal request by the Speaker of Puntland House of

Development Goals.

Speaking at the opening of the training, Mr. Sayed Sahibzada, Head of UNDP's Puntland Area Office, said the induction training intended to enhance the capacity of the new MPs to understand the parliamentary oversight functions for effective law making, the role of parliamentary committees, as well as to understand the technicalities, the processes, and the procedures in parliament.

At the closing of the event, Hon Abdihakim Mohamed Ahmed, Speaker of the Puntland House of Representatives, thanked UNDP for its ongoing support and partnership. He added that a strategic planning process to draft a five-year Strategic Plan of the House would follow the training, upon establishment of a Strategic Planning Committee of the House.



Newly elected Member(s) of Parliament in induction workshop Garowe, 2-4 February 2019 (Photo: UNDP Somalia)

Representatives and covered effective lawmaking, the role of parliamentary committees, and the importance of human rights and gender equality in legislation and in parliamentary work. The training also covered the role of parliaments in achieving the Sustainable

Draft strategic plan developed for the new Puntland House of Representatives

In January 2019 Puntland held its sixth electoral process since it became a federal state. The election saw 66 members elected to parliament.

From 15 to 17 April 2019, the UNDP Parliamentary Support Project, in collaboration with Puntland House of Representatives (HoRs), organized working sessions with the new and returning MPs, to develop a five-year strategic plan for the new Puntland House of Representatives. The strategic plan aims to ensure the House of Representative can fulfil its mandate of strengthening federalism in Somalia, supporting and overseeing the implementation of state and National

Development Plans, and supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the state level. The planning exercise was led by the Deputy Speaker of the Puntland House of Representatives, Hon. Ismail Mohamed Warsame.

Attending the strategic sessions were members of parliament (MPs), the Secretary General and departmental heads of Puntland House of Representatives.

After the working sessions

with MPs, a draft strategy has been developed and is currently under review. It will be adopted by parliament in June after recess.



Members of the Puntland Parliament in strategic planning meeting 15 April 2019, Garowe (photo credit: Puntland Parliament)



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Induction Workshop for Somaliland Parliamentarians on Parliament's Role in Realizing the 2030 Agenda



Participants gathered at induction workshop on Parliament's Role in Realizing 2030 Agenda, Hargeisa, 9-10 April 2019 (Photo: UNDP Somalia)

From 9 to 10 April 2019, a two-day workshop on Parliament's Role in Realizing the 2030 Agenda and in holding the government to account on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was held in Hargeisa, Somaliland.

The event was attended by parliamentarians and Somaliland Local Government Institute (LGI) representatives, as well as by Somaliland Ministry of Planning officials, and aimed to increase coordination between parliament and

government ministries on the 2030 SDGs agenda.

The meeting was supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under a project that works with the Somaliland government to build the capacity of the parliament to enact legislation, and to ensure effective and inclusive implementation of the

SDGs. The project is part of a broader regional UNDP Arab States programme called 'Parliaments for Agenda 2030', which has been developed in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank.

In his opening speech, Hon. Abdirahman Mohamed Jama, the Deputy Chair of the Social Affairs Committee of Somaliland House of Representatives, highlighted the need for parliamentarians to deepen their awareness of

the SDGs and to play an active role in achieving the 2030 Goals. He said: "It is important that we align to the SDGs targets when we are enacting laws that will have an impact on the life of people."

In his remarks, Masoud Ali, UNDP Project Officer for Parliament Support Project, said parliaments were key to making sure the Goals were achieved in each country by 2030. He said, parliamentarians have legitimate power to ensure all government plans are in line with the global SDGs and they have the right to question government officials about progress made on SDG targets. "Parliamentarians have a role to play in ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Goals" he added.

The event will be followed by a self-assessment exercise on the capacity of the Somaliland parliament to achieve the Goals by 2030. It is aimed that the assessment exercise, together with the recommendations from the interactive meeting in Hargeisa, will then lead to the development of a draft Somaliland parliament strategy on the SDGs.

Building Cooperation between Puntland Parliament & Civil Society Organizations

On 11 April 2019, a Memorandum of Cooperation between Puntland Parliament and Puntland Non-state Actors Association (PUNSA) has been signed by the Speaker of the Puntland House of Representatives (HoR) and by the Chairman of PUNSA, giving birth to the first-ever "CSOs Advisory Board" to a parliament. The fundamental purpose of the CSO



Speaker Puntland HoR and Chairman of PUNSA in signing ceremony of CSOs Advisory Board, Garowe, 11 April 2019 (Photo: Puntland Parliament)

Advisory Board is to promote inclusive politics and representative democracy, by providing citizens with a platform to voice their aspirations, concerns and opinions to lawmakers and policy makers. The process thereby aims to affect more responsive and more accountable public institutions in the Puntland state.

The signed Memorandum of Understanding of Cooperation is an important and necessary step for democracy to thrive in the State. Constructive engagement between citizens and their lawmakers is an

essential ingredient of effective legislation, government oversight and representative democracy. For the best interests of the people of Puntland, the Parliament will ensure maximum civil society and communities' participation through the provision of:

1. **Access to information:** The Puntland Parliament shall provide instant accessibility to information regarding future or ongoing activities of House and of Parliamentary committees.
2. **Consultation:** The Puntland Parliament will involve civil society organizations in the legislative process by granting them the right of speech and attendance at committee hearings, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Puntland Parliament.
3. **Active engagement through dialogue and partnership:** The Puntland Parliament will encourage and pursue active participation by CSOs in legislative and budgetary discussions by the House and will take into consideration the position of CSOs regarding discussions of the House and House committees.

The formation of the first institutionalized partnership between Puntland HoR and CSOs is the result of a hard-won process that took two-years of discussions between UNDP and the Puntland Parliament. Supported by Switzerland and Norway, the Joint Parliamentary Support Project are piloting this Memorandum in Puntland and South West State. It is expected that CSOs Advisory Board will serve as a bridge between citizens and public authorities, and will give opinions of concerned citizens a chance to be heard at the parliament level.



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Project Board Meeting for Parliament Support Project



From the Federal Government, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, representatives from UNDP and UNSOM, and donor partners take part in project board meeting, Mogadishu, 20 March 2019 (Photo: UNDP Somalia)

On 20 March, the Project Board meeting of the Parliament Support Project was held in Mogadishu to discuss progress made and challenges experienced, as well as to provide inputs to improve the implementation of the project. The meeting was attended by the speaker of the House of the People, the Deputy Speaker, by representatives from UNDP, UNSOM, and by donor partners.

The Speaker of the House of the People, Mohamed Mursal Abdirahman, thanked the UNDP Parliament project for their ongoing support, and mentioned that Federal Government of Somalia has made notable achievements under an inclusive politics agenda, in deepening federalism, and in completing the technical review of the constitutional chapters. Such achievements are key milestones along an inclusive political roadmap agreed by the Government and its international partners in 2018. The political roadmap includes milestones for achieving universal elections in 2020.

Ms. Nahid Hussein, Chief Technical Advisor for UNDP's Inclusive Politics portfolio, shared the progress made from September 2018 to March 2019 which includes technical and legal advisory support delivered to parliamentary committees; and development of technical plan for the constitutional review process by the Oversight Committee (OC), which was approved by the federal parliament. She also listed provision of logistical, administrative, operational and transportation support to the Upper House,

the House of the People and OC; recruitment of 6 experts and 17 young graduates to assist the Upper House and the OC; and provision of ICT equipment to the OC.

Ms. Hussein also mentioned the following achievements;

- ◆ Support has been provided to the Upper House Women's Caucus to organize a consultative event on the reviewed first five chapters of Somali draft constitution;
- ◆ Training on State Formation from Constitutional Review Perspective has been organized for the OC;
- ◆ Induction workshop for Puntland MPs on parliamentary functions;
- ◆ Supported Study Tour of Puntland HoR to Nigeria;
- ◆ Somaliland HoRs held public consultation focusing on the Women's Quota in review of electoral law;
- ◆ Second Annual Somali Women Parliamentarians Conference held in Mogadishu to advocate for women's rights,
- ◆ Second Forum of Oversight Committees on Constitution Review and Implementation held in Garowe on consulting Federal Member State parliaments and civil society on the reviewed first five chapters of the constitution;
- ◆ Induction Workshop held for Somali Parliaments on Parliament's Role in Realizing 2030 Agenda.

Hon. Mowlid Hussein, Deputy Speaker of Upper House thanked the donors for their ongoing support and also praised the UNDP Parliament Support Project. He highlighted the importance of the establishment of a joint committee for both Houses of the Federal Parliament of Somalia and outlined the efforts of the government in resolving disputes between the House of the People and the Upper House.

Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) for United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, encouraged the continuation of the progress made so far and requested both Houses to present how differences were resolved between the Houses. He discussed the critical bills to be tabled to both Houses for debate and approval and asked for both Houses to outline their priorities for the year.

Siro Beltrametti, head of the Somalia Office of the Swiss Embassy commended the work done by the Federal Parliament of Somalia and Parliamentary Oversight Committee and by UNDP in support of Constitution and Parliament Support projects. Mr. Siro underlined the importance of the review constitution as priority and adoptions of legislations.

Speaker Mursal closed the meeting by thanking the participants and appreciating donor support in strengthening the Federal Parliament and Federal Member States Assemblies, so that they can effectively discharge their legislative and oversight mandates.



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