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DEMOCRATIZATION IN SOMALILAND

2022 – 2023 REPORT

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Executive Summary

Democratization in Somaliland has been a gradual process that has taken place over time. This process began in the early 1990s, when Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia, and has continued over the past two decades as more and more democratic reforms have been implemented. As of 2018, Somaliland has a multi-party-political system and a constitution that is based on democratic principles. Somaliland has held multiple elections, in 2003, 2005, and 2017, and has experienced relative political stability since the early 2000s.

However, despite these positive developments, the democratization process in Somaliland has faced many challenges. The country still lacks strong institutions and the rule of law is not well-established. Additionally, many of the reforms implemented in recent years have not been fully realized. In terms of foreign relations, Somaliland is still not recognized as an independent state, which limits its access to international support and resources.

Overall, Somaliland has made considerable progress in democratization in recent decades, but there is still much work to be done if the country is to realize its full democratic potential.

Somaliland is an autonomous region of Somalia located in the Horn of Africa. Since its declaration of independence in 1991, it has been recognized by no other country, but is considered a de facto state. Despite the region's successful efforts to create a democracy, its political situation has recently been unstable due to the delayed presidential election.

In the lead up to the election, President Muse Bihi Abdi was running against four opponents. However, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) delayed the election, citing a wide range of issues. These included financial and logistical problems, as well as allegations of corruption. In response to the NEC's delay, citizens of Somaliland took to the streets in protest.

Since the delay, numerous international organizations have been involved in trying to stabilize Somaliland's political situation, in order to allow for the elections to take place. Some of the steps taken have included increasing budget support, providing technical assistance and advocating for a peaceful electoral process.

It is too soon to tell what the outcome of the delayed elections would eventually be, but the situation has highlighted the fragility of Somaliland's political system. It is essential that the international community continues to support the NEC to ensure that the elections are carried out in a timely and peaceful manner.

1. Background

Somaliland is an autonomous, de facto state located in the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by Somaliland to the south and east, Djibouti to the northwest, and Ethiopia to the southwest. It declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 but is not formally recognized as an independent state.

Somaliland inherited a weak central government from its former colonial power, Britain. After the fall of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia in 1991, Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia. The Somaliland government is a clan-based system with a president and a bicameral Parliament.

The Republic of Somaliland is a multi-party democracy that has held several elections since its independence. The most recent election was held in 2017 and was won by Muse Bihi Abdi of the Kulmiye Party. The current President of Somaliland is Muse Bihi Abdi.

The Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland guarantees the independence of the judiciary. The Judiciary is composed of a Supreme Court, regional courts and various courts at the district level. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land and acts as the final court of appeal.

The government of the Republic of Somaliland has also made strides in curbing corruption. It has signed several international agreements and protocols to combat corruption and has established an Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate and prosecute corrupt officials.

Somaliland is a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN). Despite its lack of recognition, Somaliland has maintained a strong relationship with its neighbors and international organizations.

2. Situation Analysis

The political and economic situation in Somaliland is complex and ever-changing. The region declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 and is not internationally recognized. Despite this, Somaliland has achieved considerable progress in the area of economic and political development.

The economy of Somaliland is largely dependent on its primary production and agriculture sector. Livestock is the main export of the region, and it is estimated that Somaliland has a GDP of US\$7.2 billion as of 2022. The

COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the economy of Somaliland, with decreased demand in the agriculture sector and restrictions on trade flows. Despite this, the country's GDP per capita is still one of the lowest in the world, estimated at US\$1530.

The political situation in Somaliland is less stable than its economic situation. Freedom of expression is generally respected, although there are some restrictions in the form of criminalization of defamation and other press offenses. There is freedom of assembly in Somaliland, although authorities have sometimes used violence to disperse protests. The judiciary is not independent and is often selected on the basis of clan or political affiliation.

The international community has not recognized Somaliland as an independent state, yet the region has seen consistent progress in the area of political and economic development. Despite the challenges and restrictions, Somaliland is taking strides towards becoming a developed, independent nation. In order to achieve this, it is essential for the international community to recognize Somaliland's sovereignty and take necessary steps to promote its growth and development.

3. Delayed Elections in 2022

Election delays are a common occurrence in Somaliland, a self-declared republic located in the Horn of Africa. Since 2005, political elections in Somaliland have been regularly postponed, with the most recent one being delayed for nearly two years. The main issue causing the delays is the lack of a unified framework for election law. Somaliland has its own constitution, but it does not clearly stipulate the regulations and procedures for organizing, conducting, and concluding elections. This has delayed the process of establishing a legal framework, leading to a prolonged period of uncertainty.

The political situation in Somaliland has been further complicated by attempts to reduce the number of political parties. The Constitution of Somaliland allows for the formation of political parties, but it also requires them to meet rigorous criteria, such as obtaining a certain number of voter signatures. The political turmoil has also hindered the country's economic development. Lack of political stability has caused investors to stay away, making it difficult to attract foreign investment. This has further worsened the country's economic woes, exacerbating the situation and leading to prolonged election delays.

Furthermore, the political instability has caused a decline in the number of registered voters. This has caused an imbalance in the political system and has caused confusion amongst the general public. The prolonged election delays have caused a great deal of frustration amongst the people of Somaliland. In order to resolve the issue, the government needs to address the legal framework for elections, as well as create an environment that is conducive to economic growth and investment. Only then will the political situation in Somaliland improve and the election process resume as normal. The delayed elections in Somaliland have caused much unrest among the citizens in the region. The international community, including the African Union, has voiced their concern over the delayed process. This article aims to provide a comprehensive study of the reasons and consequences of the delayed elections in Somaliland.

The delayed elections in Somaliland can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, there is a lack of political stability in the region. This has caused the political parties to fight over power and control instead of focusing on the upcoming elections. Secondly, the regional government has been unable to secure enough resources and funds to conduct the elections. This has resulted in a lack of necessary funds needed to hold the elections.

The consequences of the delayed elections in Somaliland have been devastating. The prolonged period of political unrest has caused economic stagnation in the region, leading to a decrease in the standard of living for the citizens. Secondly, the political instability has led to an increase in violent conflicts, further destabilizing the region. Finally, the failure to hold elections has caused a lack of trust in the government and a decrease in the legitimacy of the government.

The delayed elections in Somaliland have had a significant impact on the region and the citizens. It is essential for the international community to take action to ensure that the elections are held in a timely manner.

October 2022 - In a close session, the Somaliland Guurti led by Chairman Suleiman Mohamoud Adan has voted to extend President Muse Bihi Abdi's presidential term by two years and has given itself a five-year mandate extension. Very little detail has emerged on today's session and if there was any deliberation on the two extensions approved by the Senate.

The Guurti's action to extend President Bihi's term follows the announcement from the National Election Commission that the constitutionally mandated presidential elections will not be held on November 13th due to technical issues and that they will need nine months to prepare for presidential elections. It is unclear why the Guurti has ignored the recommendation of the Election Commission and extended the President's term by two full years. This is the sixth time Somaliland Guurti has extended presidential term.

December 2022 - President Muse Bihi Abdi's message regarding the upcoming elections and registration to the political parties, political organizations and the people of Somaliland, and he calls on them to prepare diligently and responsibly for the registration of voters and the elections of the organizations. The first of which will be held in the country next year in 2023.

President Bihi said, *"The coming year of 2023, God willing, will be an Election year, two elections and registration are coming together. Registration will begin on the 28th Of This Month, and the Nation as a whole is calling on those who have lost their cards or are changing places. Or who have reached the age of registration that they have been given a precious opportunity that is of great value to the nation, and especially in the regions that have not registered before, I call on them to register and participate in the leadership of the Country Today."*

"When the registration is over, the 13 competing organizations and parties are required to show the people that their words, plans and actions are mature people who are mature for the leadership of this country and nothing but joy." it is a shame that we do not see anything from

their limbs or from their mouths, so that we can get out of the previous situations of equality between the democratic party, the campaign and the parties, which we have taken the hardest,” said President Muse Bihi Abdi.

There is still a dispute in Somaliland about which will come first in the two elections, and the opposition parties believe that it will come first the presidential election, while Muse Bihi insists that it will come first in the Political Organizations Election. The Electoral Commission, which is responsible for the election, has not yet clarified which one will come first.

4. Democratic Protests

Somaliland’s hard-earned and self-attained stability is at risk. November and December 2022 were supposed to bring two important elections; one to select the president, and the other to licence the three parties that will be allowed to participate in formal politics. But the first has been delayed, and both are hindered in schedule-related controversy. The ruling party and opposition both see the evolving electoral calendar as central to their political fortunes, and both are trying to control it. Tensions already boiled over into violence in August 2022, when government forces and opposition protesters frustrated with the electoral process clashed, resulting in five deaths. The opposition threatens to no longer recognise the government led by President Muse Bihi after 13 November 2022, which was the scheduled date for the presidential election until the parliament’s upper house, the Guurti, agreed to extend Bihi’s mandate by two years. To defuse the risk of unrest, Somaliland’s international partners should push its political elites to chart a consensus path forward, offer to mediate if they fail and volunteer to serve as guarantors for whatever resolution emerges. Somaliland has developed many frameworks and bodies of a state. It has pursued political, economic and social reconstruction that has helped it establish a largely stable and functional administration. Very few countries recognise Somaliland’s independence, and many international partners have encouraged the development of its democratic institutions.

Now, however, a dispute over two delayed elections is threatening Somaliland’s stability. The government and political opposition in the capital Hargeisa are locked in a bitter disagreement over the timing for both a forthcoming presidential poll and a vote to licence the three parties that will be allowed to participate in Somaliland’s politics for the next ten years.

Tensions between the two sides have been simmering since late 2021. The core of the dispute relates to timing. President Bihi and his Kulmiye party insisted that the political parties’ election occur prior to the presidential vote. By contrast, the opposition Waddani and UCID parties wanted the presidential vote to be held first. Both sides invoked legal arguments, but political calculations likely explain their preferences regarding the electoral calendar. Bihi appeared to believe that holding the presidential contest after the selection of new and potentially less experienced political parties augments his chances of staying in office. For the same reason, the opposition worried that the parties vote, if it comes first, could compromise its own bid

for the presidency. Waddani bested Kulmiye in the May 2021 elections for parliament's lower house before forging an alliance with UCID, the third party, to form a majority in the chamber. This result boosted Waddani's confidence that it can win a presidential race.

Normally, the two votes would follow a set calendar, with some space between them, and the question of sequencing would not present itself. But a cascade of postponements and ad hoc scheduling decisions has led to the present situation. The presidential election, which takes place every five years, was slated for the present month because the last one slipped from June 2015 to November 2017. As for the party licencing vote, it is on schedule in one sense (it is supposed to occur every ten years and the last one was in 2012) but out of sync in another. Conventionally, it occurs with local council elections, but that coupling was severed because the latter, thanks to yet another set of delays, were held off cycle in May 2021.

Somaliland's system does not account for a scenario in which the political parties vote is organised separately from local council elections. Rather than wait for the legislative process to complete enactment of a law that could overcome this conundrum, the government pushed the process forward, opening the registration for new associations bidding for licences in June 2022. The government's actions, coupled with the sense that its move tilts the system in favour of the ruling Kulmiye party, angered the opposition and served as a catalyst for the August 2022 protests.

Given the logistical challenges and political sensitivities, the prospect of having these two votes in such close proximity should have alarmed Somaliland's elites long ago. Yet they failed to arrive at a consensus solution on timing and sequencing, even as the deadlines approached. In late September 2022, the National Election Commission said it needed nine months to organise the presidential poll, which would cause it to slip into 2023. Rather than follow the commission's guidance, the Guurti extended the government's mandate by two years, pushing the presidential vote to November 2024. (The government has since said it nonetheless will strive to abide by the commission's timeline, but it remains uncertain if this commitment is sincere.) The upper house also added five years to its own tenure, though its original six-year constitutional mandate expired in 2003. But it was quiet about the schedule for the political parties' vote, which still was not set. There is no obvious legal mechanism for extending the soon-to-expire party licences beyond ten years.

The status quo is thus marked by uncertainty and lack of consensus. In October 2022, the opposition rejected the Guurti's extension on grounds that the body did not adhere to proper protocol and argued that the conditions under which the constitution permits it to extend the executive's term in office, namely insecurity, are not present. But they stopped short of lodging a legal challenge. Instead, they say they will not recognise the government after 13 November 2022. To resolve the dispute, Somaliland business leaders stepped in with a proposal back in August 2022 to hold the presidential and party licencing votes at the same time. Parliament's lower house endorsed the idea, but the Guurti said no on ostensibly legal grounds. Bihi has also voiced his opposition to it.

The politicians showed little enthusiasm for the consensus-based problem solving that has helped Somaliland navigate prior crises. Leaders on both sides have a winner-take-all mentality. The presidency appeared less inclined to seek consensus, instead argued that its positions are formally and legally correct, and that others should fall in line. Among the opposition, many felt that they have benefited too little from backing down previously, as they did after initially disputing the 2017 presidential election result. In parallel, Somaliland's state institutions, like the Guurti, appeared weaker and more deferential to the government than in the past, partly due to the individuals heading them and government efforts to bring them in line. They seemed unwilling to put forth compromise solutions lest they antagonise the president and his circle. Clan elders, influential businesspeople, religious leaders and civil society representatives attempted to bridge the gap, with little success.

Furthermore, sub-clan rivalries are on the rise. Each political party corresponds to an Isaaq sub-clan or collection of sub-clans. The Garhajis, whose two main branches form the base of opposition parties Waddani and UCID, respectively, argue that it is their turn to govern because the previous four Somaliland presidents have hailed from either the Isaaq sub-clans Haber Awal and Haber Jeclo (whose *jeegan*, or “rainbow”, alliance secured the presidency in 2010 and 2017) or the Dir sub-clan Samaroon. The Garhajis appear to see Bihi's determination to forge ahead with the political parties vote as part of a ploy by other Isaaq sub-clans to prevent the Garhajis from obtaining the presidency. As a manifestation of their discontent, Garhajis elders have vowed to obstruct elections in their areas unless the three political parties find consensus regarding the electoral schedule.

Also, an influx of foreign investment into Somaliland has upped the stakes for political control, and dampened appetites for compromise. The Emirati firm DP World backed a multi-million-dollar expansion of the port at Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden. Others including the UK have supported development of the Berbera corridor road connecting Somaliland to Ethiopia, bolstering the economy. A range of other external partners are interested in courting Somaliland, due to its strategic location along shipping lanes linking the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Some are also drawn to the anti-China stance it has developed after forging relations with its unrecognised counterpart, Taiwan, in recent years. (The latter has grown closer to Somaliland and now maintains a liaison office in Hargeisa.) Somaliland's heightened international standing has swelled the government's confidence that it can chart its own course both abroad and at home, including by pursuing unilateral solutions in domestic affairs that override traditions of consensus.

A great deal of uncertainty now hangs over Somaliland politics, and social unrest may grow if the dispute drags on. The clashes and heavy-handed government response to opposition protests in August were worrying signs. While elites in Hargeisa generally have an interest in avoiding a spiral into violence, communal tensions are rising, and clan elders may take matters into their own hands if they are not convinced that national politicians are sufficiently defending their interests.

5. Political Mediations

5.1. External Politics

Despite the challenges of the break-off from Somalia, Somaliland's commitment to peaceful negotiations has remained intact. In the period since 2017, a number of mediations have taken place in an effort to resolve the tension and conflicts. In early 2020, a peace summit was held in the capital of Somaliland, where representatives from the government of Somalia, Somaliland, and the United Nations discussed the situation. This resulted in a de-escalation of hostilities, as well as the formation of a peacekeeping force to help maintain stability in the region.

Since then, the United Nations has been actively involved in various attempts to bring the parties to the negotiating table. In late 2021, a joint commission was established between the two sides to discuss the final resolution of the conflict. This was followed by a series of negotiations in 2022, which resulted in a number of agreements on issues such as border demarcation, security, and economic development.

5.2. Internal Politics

Somaliland's political landscape has been largely dominated by three major political parties: the Somaliland National Political Party (SNM now Kulmiye), the Somaliland Solidarity Movement (UCID), and the United Peoples' Democratic Party (WADDANI). The Kulmiye is a conservative party that was initially formed to maintain Somaliland's independence from Somalia and to promote the protection of minority groups. It maintains an authoritarian stance and advocates for a highly centralized government. The UCID is a center-left party that seeks to maintain economic solidarity between the various regions of the country and to promote social justice. The WADDANI is a moderate party that seeks to foster peace and security in Somaliland, as well as to promote economic and social development.

The extension of President Musa Bihi's term has caused much controversy among the different political parties. Kulmiye argued that the extension is necessary to ensure the stability of the country and to protect Somaliland's fragile democracy. The other 2 parties, on the other hand, has argued that the extension is an attempt to maintain power by the ruling party and to suppress the political opposition. As a result, the issue has become a major source of political discord in the country.

Overall, political parties in Somaliland are heavily divided on the issue of the extension of President Musa Bihi's term. While some parties argue that the extension is necessary to protect the country's fragile democracy, others contend that it is an autocratic move by the ruling party to maintain power. It remains to be seen how the debate will be resolved in the near future.

6. Political Actors and Interests

Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 and has since been functioning as a de facto autonomous region. This region has a vibrant and influential political landscape, with a number of actors and interests vying for influence and power. The primary political actors in Somaliland are the Somali National Movement (SNM), the United Somali Congress (USC), and the Somaliland National Alliance (SNA). The SNM is a Somali separatist movement that seeks to establish an independent Somaliland. It is largely composed of Isaaq clans, the dominant population in Somaliland. The USC is a political party that seeks to establish a unified Somalia and is largely composed of Hawiye clans, the dominant population in Somalia. The SNA is a political alliance between the SNM and USC that advocates for a unified Somalia but with a federal system of governance.

The other political interests in Somaliland include the clans, business interests, and the international community. Clan loyalty remains the primary factor in Somaliland's politics, with clan loyalties often determining who will hold power in the government. Business interests are also a major factor in Somaliland's politics, with many businesses having close ties to the government. Finally, the international community has a significant impact on Somaliland's politics, with countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy providing financial and diplomatic support to Somaliland.

Overall, Somaliland has a complex political landscape with a variety of actors and interests vying for influence and power. The clans, business interests, and the international community all have a major role to play in the politics of Somaliland. Understanding these different actors and interests is essential to understanding the politics of Somaliland.

7. Nomination and Approval of RAC

The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a body created by the ministry of regional administration and state formation in Somaliland, which is responsible for the selection of regional and district council officials. This is an important process that ensures that only qualified individuals are put into positions of government and local administration, and it is an essential part of the democratic process.

Nomination for the RAC in Somaliland involves a variety of stakeholders, including members of parliament, the National Electoral Commission, local government bodies, and civil society representatives. All potential candidates must first be nominated by the Speaker of Parliament, and then the nomination must be approved by the National Electoral Commission. After the approval process is complete, a list of nominees is sent to the Ministry of Regional Administration and State Formation.

The Ministry of Regional Administration and State Formation then has the task of vetting all nominated candidates and assessing their suitability for the role. The Ministry reviews the

qualifications, character and experience of all nominees, and also takes into consideration any criminal background checks and other relevant aspects.

Once the review process is complete, the Ministry of Regional Administration and State Formation then submits its report to Parliament, and the Speaker of Parliament is then responsible for officially announcing the approved candidates. This process is essential in ensuring that the most suitable candidates are selected for the RAC in Somaliland, ensuring that the highest level of competence is present in local government.

It is of utmost importance that the nomination and approval process for the RAC in Somaliland is conducted in a transparent and fair manner. This ensured that only those candidates that are truly qualified and capable of fulfilling their duties are appointed to the RAC and help to improve local government and strengthen the democratic process in Somaliland.

8. Nomination and approval of NEC

Jun 2022 - The House of Representatives of the Republic of Somaliland received nominations for the new seven-member National Electoral Commission (NEC) from the President's office. By law, the president and his ruling party nominate three members, the Upper House (Guurti) of the Somaliland parliament picks two while each of the two opposition parties nominates one. As submitted, the line-up fielded for parliamentary approval or rejection stood as below:

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- i. *Musa Hassan Yusuf – Presidential nominee*
- ii. *Ahmed Osman Hassan – Presidential nominee*
- iii. *Hussein Abdi Ali – Presidential nominee.*
- iv. *Ahmed Yussuf Mohamed – Guurti (Upper House) nominee*
- v. *Fadumo Ismail Abdi – Guurti (Upper House) nominee*
- vi. *Abdiasiiis Hirsi Warsame -WADDANI nominee*
- vii. *Ibrahim Adan Ali – UCID nominee*

The opposition parties pointed fingers at the president and *Guurti* nominations, saying at least four of the five they picked between themselves belonged to the ruling party and were government officers until a week or so before except for one who left government employ in 2021.

It took opposition parties almost two years to accept the full headcount of the outgoing commissioners. The new nominations followed differences and a fair amount of jostling for top positions that emerged among the former commissioners resulting in the resignation of the majority. Somaliland opposition parties drew the conclusion that the government engineered the events that led to the default dissolution of the electoral commission. It remained to be seen how the parliament and the parties will react to the new nominees.

September 2022 - The Somaliland House of Representatives (HoR), let go of three electoral commissioners the MPs rejected in June 2022. The House, this time around, did not demur. The MPs gave each of the three commissioners 70 votes out of 70 MPs present for the session - a unanimous approval.

9. Screening of Political organizations

Somaliland is a self-declared nation in the Horn of Africa, located on the Gulf of Aden. Despite its unrecognized status, the nation has held elections since 2003 and currently has three approved political parties. These parties are Kulmiye, Wadani, and UCID.

Kulmiye Kulmiye is the ruling party of Somaliland and has held power since 2017. The party is led by President Muse Bihi Abdi and the party's primary focus is promoting economic development, ensuring the security of Somaliland's borders, and maintaining the nation's democratic stability.

Wadani Wadani is Somaliland's opposition party. It is led by Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi and its primary goals are to fight corruption, improve healthcare, and promote education among the nation's youth. The party is considered to be the most progressive among the three and it has been gaining popularity among the younger generations.

UCID UCID is Somaliland's third political party. It is led by Faisal Ali Warabe and its primary focus is promoting the nation's political and economic stability, as well as preserving its culture. The party is considered to be more conservative than the other two, but it still has a moderate stance when it comes to its policies.

Somaliland's three political parties have unique ideologies that are distinct from one another. However, they all share the common goal of ensuring the nation's long-term security and prosperity. Each of the three parties has a devoted following and is likely to play a major role in the nation's politics in the immediate future.

August 2022 - After the Committee ensured the political associations that have met the requirements set by Law No. 14/2011, they announced the final list of the political associations that were ready to participate in the elections, and submitted to the National Electoral Commission, which conducted a direct election of the newly registered political associations and the current national three political parties.

According to the decision of the Supreme Court, the public would directly vote for the new political associations and the current national political parties. As the article 6th of Law No. 14/2011 stating, the three political associations/parties that receive 20% of the votes in each region, or the parties with the highest percentage of votes, in the regions of the country, will be certified as the new nation political parties for the coming 10 years. if two parties/associations have the same percentage in the regions, they will be ranked according to the number of votes they received nationwide.

Somaliland's general election law (Law No. 91/2020), allow of holding two or more elections at once. If the three political parties agreed to hold the presidential election and the direct election of the new political associations at one time. Technically, the voters would vote both the presidential candidates, and the registered political associations/parties at one time, in a two separate voting papers with different colors, as the article 102 (3) of the Law No. 91/2020 requires.

The NEC would then count the result of votes separately. As the article 83 of the constitution requires, the presidential candidates who receives the highest number of votes in the country will be announces as the winner. For the direct election of the new political associations/parties, the three political associations/parties that receives 20% of the votes in each region, or the parties/associations with the highest percentage of votes, in the regions of the country, will be certified as the new nation political parties for the coming 10 years. if two parties/associations have the same percentage in the regions, they will be ranked according to the number of votes they received nationwide, as the article 6th of Law No. 14/2011 is stating.

Since the public are voting one time in to two separate voting papers, both the presidential candidates and the contesting political associations/parties, it is possible that the voters elect a president that his party loses the direct election of the political associations/parties. Article 24(3) of the Law No. 14/2011 is clearly mentioning that the elected president has to choose either to complete his term without joining a party, or he has the right to join one of the three national parties.

November 2022 - The Commission for the Registration of Political Associations and Approval of National Parties announced the completion of voter tallying across the country. Speaking to reporters in Las'anod town the chairman of the committee Mr. Sa'eed Mohamed Elmi stated that they would reveal political organizations which fulfilled the requirements set up by the committee. Fourteen political organizations were competing to be selected to become national political parties.

He said *"We have finished our national tallying exercise for supporters of political organizations in all regions of Somaliland, today 31st October 2022. Our task started a fortnight ago which has seen us crisscross the country to inspect and tally the 1,000-supporter threshold needed by all political organizations to become national political parties."*

Chairman Saeed confirmed that his committee would make announcements about the three national political parties that will represent the country in the upcoming presidential elections. He added that only political organizations that have garnered the support of all regions will be selected from the list of aspirants. The registrar of political organizations thanked Almighty Allah for a peaceful registration exercise. He applauded his team for showing maturity in their work. He also praised the 14 political organizations vying for the three national slots for campaigning tirelessly to woe voters in a civilized way.

November 2022 - Ten political organization successfully passed the initial hurdle in seeking to become an official national political party. They were eligible to join the existing three political parties and compete in an election.

KULMIYE, WADDANI, and UCID were the existing official political parties, hence are not subjected to the process. The top three to emerge would thus be the only official national parties with the mandate to operate for the next 10 years. The phase entailed a rigorous electioneering process of establishing itself as an organization, going through inspections on adherence to the constitution, and ultimately, canvassing for one thousand persons' endorsements in the six major administrative regions of the country.

The ten political organizations were KAAH, the People's Party, WAABARI, HILAAC, REJO, BARWAAQO, MIDEEYE, TALOWADAAG, OGAAL and HORSEED. Other organizations in the fray such as IFTIN, UBAX, DALJIR and MIISAAN, failed to get the desired number of endorsements from the six main electoral regions as per the constitution. A statement issued by the Committee for the Registration of Political Organizations and the Approval of National parties pointed out the said the 9 were entitled to participate in the elections of the National parties.

December 2022 - Somaliland National electoral commission held a meeting with the three national political parties over the voter registration process which started December 2022. The newly registered political associations were not invited to the meeting. By then it was unclear if the National Electoral Commission insisted on holding the Presidential election as it announced on September 24. Khadar Hussein Abdi, the Secretary General of WADDANI party declined to answer if they had discussed the election sequencing with the electoral commission and said in a short statement that they would end their poll dispute.

December 2022 - President Muse Bihi announced that the voter registration process would officially commence on 28 December. However, the election sequencing remained unsolved as the opposition parties desired the Presidential election to be held first while President Bihi favors for the political parties and associations' election to lead all other ballots.

10.Voter Registration Process

December 2022 - The Somaliland National Elections Commission (NEC) kicked off the registration process for the 1-person-1-vote election that was scheduled to take place in 2023 and appointed on last week the ethics and dispute resolution committee for the electioneering processes, starting from registration of voters to the political campaigns up to the elections itself.

The Chairman of the NEC Mr. Musa Hassan Yusuf said that the nomination of the committee is based on the General Laws on Registration and Elections, Act No. 91/2020 Article 139, which states that the Election Board will issue the rules of conduct for elections and registration and the Code of Conduct. It also covers the media's adherence to non-partisan and unprovocative conduct all through the electioneering processes. The appointment of the election ethics and

dispute resolution committee according to the said law is supposed to be after consulting with the various stakeholders. The NEC chief pointed out that by implementing this article, they appoint and activate the ethics and dispute resolution committee at the national level of people of integrity.

On the other hand, the chairman of the ethics committee of the National Elections Commission of Somaliland, Adan Hussein Muhammed, promised that as a committee they would guard against anything that goes against the law or the general morals and good behavior expected of Islam, regarding the upcoming activities of the National Elections Committee. He added that they would resolve any disputes that arise during the activities, and he also appealed for concerted efforts from all quarters and stakeholders for the duties to be a success.

11. Delay of Lasanod Voter registration process

Since its independence in 1991, Somaliland has experienced incredible progress in security, health, and economic development. However, the region is not officially recognized by the international community, which has led to regional instability, including a conflict in the city of Lasanod, the capital of the Sool province.

The conflict in Lasanod began in the early 2000s when the Somaliland government declared its intention to extend its control over the Sool region. This resulted in a violent confrontation between the Somaliland and the local militias, led by forces loyal to the Puntland government. In 2018, the conflict escalated when Somaliland declared they were going to extend their control over the entire region. This resulted in a prolonged conflict that has caused a significant amount of destruction and displacement of residents.

The conflict in Lasanod has resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, and the destruction of infrastructure. As a result, the economy of the region has suffered heavily, with many businesses and farms destroyed. In addition, the conflict has resulted in a breakdown in law and order, leading to increased crime and violence.

The international community has been largely silent on the conflict in Lasanod, although some humanitarian organizations have provided aid to the victims of the conflict. In order to bring an end to the conflict and restore peace and stability in the region, the international community should actively take part in peace negotiations between the two sides. In addition, further investments in the region should be made in order to rebuild the economy.

December 2022 - A group of Somaliland lawmakers who talked about the tension in Lasanod urged the residents to calm down and not allow “the enemy” of Somaliland get a room for destroying their security by taking advantage of the current situation. Some of the lawmakers believed that Somalia’s Puntland state officials were politicizing and using all means to influence the residents to maintain protests. They said, protestors should stop the demonstrations and, also, the government must launch urgent investigations towards the

growing assassinations in the region. However, the lawmakers firmly believed the existence of foreign intervention is aimed at distracting the community from the ongoing voter registrations as two political associations spearheaded by leaders who hail from the region are among the recently registered political organizations to contest for the upcoming elections. The unrest in Lasanod follows the rising killings against Somaliland government officials, opposition parties, business community and electoral commission members in the last few years.

12. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations should be considered: -

- The immediate priority is for Somaliland’s government and opposition parties to chart a consensus way forward on the scheduling and sequencing of the two elections. In the process, they should consult the approved political associations waiting for the opportunity to seek licencing in the political parties’ vote, though these associations should not be placed on an equal footing with the three existing parties.
- Somaliland has also cultivated supporters in places like the U.S. Congress and UK parliament, in addition to influential advocates outside government. These interlocutors should make clear that they will be hard-pressed to continue their efforts to promote increased government contact with Somaliland if its stability is at risk.
- Even if the three parties reach an agreement without foreign mediation, international partners should be prepared to serve as guarantors of any electoral roadmap – monitoring implementation and applying political pressure if tasks slip. This step may be unusual, but it is probably the most reliable way to help ensure that the government and opposition will stick to their commitments, given the high levels of mutual distrust and the declining independence of Somaliland’s institutions.
- The current political and ongoing unrest also illustrates the need to revive Somaliland’s political system through reforms that close gaps in electoral legislation, shore up its institutions and begin to address structural problems such as increasing clan dominance at the expense of broader inclusivity in politics. The political dispute in Somaliland is turning close to the point of spinning out of control, but there is still time to avert a worst-case scenario. Urgent action by Somaliland’s international partners is necessary to convince domestic actors to uphold the tradition of consensus-based politics, rather than rely on unilateral solutions. Somaliland’s precious stability, bolstered by the real but fragile political and economic progress the country has made over the past 30 years, may well be at stake.

Finally, the international community should work towards recognizing Somaliland as an independent state, as it would help bring an end to the conflict in Lasanod and other parts of the region. This would provide the Somaliland government with the legitimacy it needs to address the conflict and bring long-term stability to the region.

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