

International observers of Somaliland's presidential election on 13 November 2017 ready to deploy to Somaliland's six regions

Ahead of Somaliland's third presidential election on 13 November 2017, a 60-member team drawing on members from 27 countries has fully assembled in Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital, and will soon start deploying around Somaliland.

The international election observation mission (EOM) has been invited by Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) and is funded by the British government. The EOM will conduct its observation activities in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, emphasising the impartiality and independence of that observation.

As the third presidential election (following the polls in 2003 and 2010), it is the first poll to use a new voter registration system, which itself marks the first use of iris-scan biometric technology in an African election. The EOM is led by the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London (UCL), and Somaliland Focus UK. This EOM marks the fourth election in Somaliland observed and reported on by DPU and Somaliland Focus since 2005.

Arrival of the full team of observers on 8 November was preceded by examination of the pre-election campaign by team co-ordinators, who arrived ahead of the start of political campaigning on 21 October. Since then, the EOM has organised and held successful and well-attended events including public discussions on election observation, female political participation and the media landscape, met stakeholders and organised the many aspects of deploying such a large team. The wider team has undergone several days of intensive pre-deployment training is now well-prepared for the intensity of polling day and the aftermath. The majority will depart Somaliland on 16 November. A small team will remain to observe the post-election period, including the declaration of results. The EOM will publish its final report in the first half of 2018.

Says Dr Michael Walls of DPU, chief observer on the EOM:

"Preparations for this mission have been intense, and we are very appreciative of the invaluable assistance we have had from so many stakeholders in Somaliland, and from the British government in funding this mission. Now that we are seeing the hard work bear fruit, we are hoping we will see a spirited and peaceful polling day marking another step in Somaliland's democratic development."

Notes to Editors

1. For further information or to arrange an interview with a member of the coordination team, please contact Conrad Heine (EOM media coordinator) on +252 (0)63 486 5255 or iosomalilandmedia@gmail.com. Photographs are also available.
2. Somaliland declared unilateral independence from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of Somalia's government. It remains internationally unrecognised.
3. The mission is online at www.somalilandfocus.org.uk, @SomalilandFocus and facebook.com/EOMSomaliland2017.

