

International observers of Somaliland's presidential election congratulate the Somaliland people on a peaceful poll and look forward to a positive conclusion to the electoral process

Following Somaliland's third presidential election on 13 November 2017, the International Election Observation Mission anticipates a moment of change in Somaliland, as President Ahmed Silanyo, in office since 2010, steps down after his successor has been declared elected. Most members of the 60-person observation mission, funded by the British government and drawing on members from 27 countries, are now preparing to leave Somaliland, leaving a small team to observe the declaration of results and the reaction to that announcement.

Chief observer, Dr Michael Walls of the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London (UCL) and Somaliland Focus UK, notes:

"We are pleased to have observed an election which has seen Somaliland show its democratic spirit, and we congratulate the National Electoral Commission on a well-run poll. We look forward to the announcement of a credible result. Furthermore we call on all parties to urge their supporters to accept the result, for the sake of Somaliland, and we encourage any who are dissatisfied with that result to pursue complaints through legal channels."

The mission, which has had members in Somaliland since just before the start of the campaign on 21 October 2017, has been pleased to witness an enthusiastic campaign. The election has featured a number of firsts, including a unique use of innovative iris-scan technology as the biometric base for a voter register; the first-ever televised presidential debate in Somaliland's history; and the first participation in a Somaliland election of some in the easternmost regions. On polling day, observers witnessed election processes in approximately 350 polling stations across Somaliland's six regions, as well as post-voting processes, and noted that polling was generally conducted peacefully and efficiently.

We have noted areas of concern, including observation of what appeared to be underage voting, the blocking of social media sites and some inconsistencies in polling station procedure. However, we did not observe irregularities at a scale that would undermine the integrity of the electoral process. Now that voting is complete and the result is being calculated, we call on voters, candidates and parties to exhibit patience and to support the National Electoral Commission as it completes its important work.

As the mission departs, the co-ordinators thank the National Electoral Commission, those in Somaliland who have assisted, and especially the observers themselves. Still, the work goes on: for the mission, which will issue its final report in the first half of 2018, and will retain a small team to observe post-poll events, and for Somaliland. The mission looks forward to future elections as Somaliland continues its democratic journey under new executive leadership.

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 ieosomalilandmedia@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.

