

Statement by international partners to Somaliland on the postponement of the Presidential and Local elections

26 January, 2017

International partners to Somaliland express their strongest sympathies with the Somaliland people affected by the drought experienced at the moment across Somaliland. Donors have made and will continue to make significant contributions to address the humanitarian consequences of the drought and are following the situation closely and with great concern.

The severe humanitarian impact of the drought for the individual communities are undeniable and disturbing. The response to the drought needs urgent and vigorous leadership by the Government in cooperation with partners.

As international partners made clear this week in Hargeisa, the drought should not be used as an excuse for putting the democratic process in Somaliland on hold. International partners are seriously disappointed by the decision by the President, the political parties and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to postpone the presidential elections from 28 March to 10 October 2017. The announcement to combine the local elections with the parliamentary elections on 10 October 2018 delaying the local elections by almost a year, only adds to the concern that Somalilanders have a lower house which has been sitting for 12 years.

Postponing the presidential and parliamentary elections clearly contradicts the Supreme Court decision of 18 August 2015 and delaying the local elections without rationale will inevitably harm public and international confidence in Somaliland's democratisation process. These delays are the latest in a series that call in to question Somaliland's democratic credentials. It should be recalled that the Somaliland presidential elections were initially scheduled for 2015.

While the commitment of international partners to support a positive development trajectory for the Somaliland people stands intact, this most recent announcement of further delays forces international partners to consider the implications for our engagement and the way we work with the Somaliland government. The international partners have provided substantial support to the electoral processes on the basis of Somaliland's commitments to timely Presidential, Parliamentary and Local elections. The investments of our taxpayers' money is now gravely at risk of being lost. International partners will not cover any additional costs that a delay of elections will incur.

Somaliland's reputation and credibility will suffer another severe blow from this decision. Somaliland stands at risk of losing the international attention it has enjoyed until now from committed international partners by virtue of its status as a budding democracy.

International partners urge the Somaliland government, political parties and the NEC to reconsider the recent announcement and prepare for the presidential elections to take place in the first half of 2017 and conduct the local elections on time in 2017; and it calls on the Constitutional Court and the Guurti to reconsider the decision. The international partners also call on the government to prepare and conduct parliamentary elections without further delay this year, including the development and implementation of a realistic plan for a revised seat allocation in the parliament.

A derailed political transition will inevitably compromise the international community's ability and willingness to engage with Somaliland's authorities. We appeal to all stakeholders to make every effort to protect Somaliland's democratic credentials.

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