Paper Seven: Lessons from Somaliland 2nd Local Council Election: My Field Experience

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The Context

This election had two equally heavy objectives: a) Election of the Local Councilors b) Qualification of National Political Parties

There was a lapse of nine years and seven months between the first Local Council election which took place in December 7, 2002 and this last one held on 28 November 2012. During the major part of that period, especially in 2007-2010, both the society and its Governments were wrestling with the realization of the second Presidential election and have by choice turned their attention away from the Local Council one in an attempt to circumvent the myriad of issues to address before it is accomplished. Having successfully crossed that first critical milestone of electing a President on 26 June 2010, the eyes of the nation turned to the long overdue Local Councils Election and with it the highly charged issue of whether the existing three national political parties had a monopoly to compete for national seats or the political space has to be opened for new political parties.

A decision was taken to open the political space and with that second milestone of Somaliland development was crossed when as a result of that decision, fifteen new Political Associations and the three existing political parties registered themselves with the newly formed Registration and Approval Committee (RAC). A third milestone was also successfully crossed when subsequent to RAC's pre-selection screening process, however imperfect it was, qualified seven political associations and the existing three political parties to compete in the second Local Council Election. However, down the road UDUB - the first ever party formed in Somaliland- and two of the new Political Associations dropped out of the race, leaving only a total of seven contestants

in the local election: five political Associations – WADDANI, RAYS, XAQSOOR, UDHIS, DALSAN and the remaining two political parties – KULMIYE and UCID.

The fourth and most critical milestone was crossed when the election successfully took place on the 28th of November 2012 as a result of which a) The National Electoral Commission announced that three hundred and fifty three (353) councilors were elected   and b) the Registration and Approval Committee qualified three National Political Parties (KULMIYE, WADDANI and UCID) on 26 December 2012. The Somaliland population greeted the New Year 2013, with all these success stories in their record, but also heavily bruised from the struggle of the last two years to accomplish the herculean task of crossing all above milestone.

Every step of the above processes was to the infant Somaliland democratic process akin to moving mountains; and indeed with the unwavering will of the people, socio-political mountains were moved. In all the above crossed milestones, high stakes competitions were involved and as a result, some high profile political aspirants were not able to achieve their objectives and hence put up a stiff fight, but in the end got reconciled with the realities on the ground - the popular resolve not to be bogged down in the imperfections of the system and that reflected maturing of the Somaliland democratic system. Building a new state will always involve winners and losers in key junctures and especially when carving institutions and systems of elections.

To say few words on the level of resistance to change, first, the reigning three political parties put up a stiff fight against the opening of the political space in the public debate and ultimately at the Parliament floor, but eventually lost and accepted the outcome. Secondly, the Associations which were not qualified by the RAC in the pre-selection process also fought back through demonstrations and the use the legal channels, but eventually reconciled with its final decision. Thirdly, some of the Associations which did not make to become National Political Parties organized protest demonstrations which resulted in regrettable deaths. The hope though is that Somaliland's democratization process will go on and the society and government will sort out what went wrong in good time to achieve the requisite political reconciliation to move forward. In that backdrop, I would like further discuss some of the key challenges faced in the above

process.

II. Challenges of the Election Process

1. **Problems of Open list System**

The first Local Council election was held using the closed party list system and therefore the candidates won seats according to the sequence of the candidate list of their parties/associations' counting from the top. However, in this second cycle of local elections, the Electoral Law was changed to make it an open list system. In the first case, the voters were voting for the party, which had control of how to prioritize its candidate positions. In the second cycle, the voters were voting directly for the candidates and the party role was only secondary, almost only a legal formality.

The open list system posed logistical as well as social challenges to National Electoral Commission (NEC) and also to other key stakeholders. In the open list system, each candidate should have his/her own space to mark on the ballot paper, which required a unique sign for voters to identify him/her. Following the experience of the parliamentary election, candidates and their voters expected to have on the ballot paper a photo of the candidate, his/her name and a unique logo for each candidate. However, considering the number of competing Parties and Associations, seven in total, and the number of local council candidates totaling (2411), designing a suitable ballot paper became a serious bottleneck. The design finally adopted by NEC produced an unusually large ballot paper which contained names of seven parties/ associations and under each of these names were listed "numbers" assigned to each of their candidates. The ballot paper contained no candidate names, logos or personalized signs. Later on, public frustration with this system played a significant role in the post-election crisis and confusions.

The open list system has also facilitated the social and political fragmentation of the society. It in fact, contradicts the core objective and aims of Somaliland's limited multi-party system philosophy, which is to curtail further breeding of clan divisions through political fragmentation. That is why it is enshrined in the Somaliland Constitution that only three political parties may compete for any national-level election seats. In order to avoid a spiral of sub-clan competition, clan input in the institutional development of political process was allowed at grass root levels to form political associations, at the entry level of political party development process. Furthermore, the Local Council Election Law reinforced that philosophy by adopting the closed list system, where the political parties were in control of the choice and prioritization of the candidacy list. The first Local Council election in 2005 was run through party lists. However, that wisely crafted system was replaced with the open list system during the preparation for the second Local Council elections.

The main result of the application of the open list system is that the candidates are selected by the clans and not by the political parties or associations. This led to the unprecedented fragmentation of the society into sub-sub-clans. Each denomination of a sub-clan decided to have its own candidate in as many of the seven political parties/associations fielding candidates as it can. Furthermore, the parties and associations on their part competed for voters and hence for candidates to fill their candidate quotas in all 23 electoral districts of Somaliland; for instance 25 seats in Maroodijeex, 21 seats in each of all other five electoral regions etc. The cumulative effect of the open list system was a deepening fragmentation of the sub-clans and hence the of the society in general, as well as the elevation of the political influence of the clan system over that of the political parties and associations.

2. Lack of Voter Registry

The first voter registration in Somaliland has been corrupted by multiple registrations of individuals and other fraudulent entries, which unfortunately were aided and abetted by all actors of Somaliland political spectrum including the existing political parties of the time, the government and above all the clan system. After repeated trials to clean it by international technicians and institutions which supplied the sophisticated biometric system failed, the data

base was eventually discarded through a parliamentary ruling in 2011. Therefore, that set the stage for the Local Council elections to be held without a voter registration system in place. The choice was between further delays and uncertainty of the time span it will take to pursue the path of new voter registration or to get on with this Local Council Election without a voter registration. The latter choice was taken, by the Executive, the Legislature, the Political Parties, and the civil society and was also accepted by the public. The donor community was swayed by the solid ground support for the process.

It is, however, widely believed that the absence of voter registry facilitated the alleged irregularities of the Local Council Election. That may be the case, but most of earlier Somaliland elections were conducted without a Voter registry and still allegations of irregularities were not as widespread as this last one. The good news is though, by law, the next election should be held with a voter registry system in place. The challenge now is how to avoid the pitfalls of the last discredited voter registration, which is recognized to have been the underlying cause of most of Somaliland's election woes in the years 2006 through 2010.

3. The Sool and Eastern Sanaag Factor

In the first Local Council election, most of the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli inhabited territories of Sool and eastern Sanaag regions were exempted from voting mainly due to security reasons. This time round though, that was not the case. While the reality was that the security situation was as tenuous as before, still voting materials and personnel were allocated for the districts in these regions and dispatched to them. The only exceptions were the two major election districts of Badhan and Dhahar both Warsangeli inhabited regions , which were cancelled only few days before the voting date, when Puntland forces made incursions into it. On the contrary, the Dhulbahante territories in the Erigavo District, in Las Anod District and in Buhodle District were all treated as secure places for voting, although their security situation has not changed significantly to allow voting but rather worsened. It is an open secret that serious breaches to voting procedure were common in those areas and the critical question is: was the NEC in control of the polling material and personnel in those areas and what steps has it taken in situations where parties and associations complained and claimed that it was not?

4. The Anomaly of the Distribution of the Polling Stations

The way the polling stations are distributed throughout the country is not based in any serious population statistics or formal censuses taken during the Somaliland statehood period. How did they come about? The first NEC sent out members of its team to different parts of the country to identify polling station locations. It was a pilot process and should have been reviewed thoroughly later in the subsequent elections, but that did not happen. Later on, as a result of the corrupted and recently discarded Voter Registration most of the polling stations were made into a double stream to accommodate the convoluted number of 1.3 million voters, which also spawned an article in the Electoral Law which sets the number of voters for each box to be not more than 750.

Furthermore, during the preparations for the 2012 Local Council Election, the NEC attempted to change these arrangements again as a result of the further reduction of the number of ballot papers assigned to each box to 525. This arose from the need to accommodate the seven competing political entity names and to print designations of over 2400 candidates, which naturally complicated the size of the ballot paper. Since the ballot paper was going to be larger than previous elections, the NEC attempted to also change the number of boxes in each polling station by increasing some areas to triple stream and reducing some areas from double to single boxes basing their decision on the number of ballot papers cast in the different elections and to adjust to the new 525 ballots in each box. This created uproar from the communities of the reduced areas. As a compromise, the NEC had retreated from the reduction component but not from the increases. This definitely will result in further distortion of the polling stations' distribution to different communities and the number of ballot papers allocated to different

polling stations[1]–Therefore, there is a serious need to attend to the distribution of polling stations and especially in the rural areas.

5. Voter Fraud and Election Complaints

In this election the most widespread fraud method was multiple voting. The ink was said to be weak and people used bleaching chemicals to remove it easily. So it degenerated into a frenzy of repetitions especially for the youth, often constrained only by the shortage of ballot papers. The second method is where the polling station management and monitoring teams acquiesce to allow one party or distribution among present parties to stuff the remaining ballot papers and adjust the paper work accordingly. This method is difficult to uncover. The third and most dangerous form of election fraud is outright appropriation of the voting material by force or through naked corruption and without any voting population involved ballot papers are marked and stuffed in the boxes. This method has been very rare in earlier elections, but has increased in greater proportions in the 2012 and primarily was perpetrated openly by those responsible to ensure the integrity of the election, the Government. The difficult part in the voter fraud saga is who is mandated to follow up and take action against this looming menace.

The Somaliland Election Law provides a process of election complaints and their management. However, the courts of law in Somaliland which have the mandate to address these claims starting from the district level are not yet prepared to take that responsibility seriously and to handle the claims judiciously.

Although, individual parties and associations or coalitions of them filed serious complaints in Erigavo and in Zeila, no satisfactory due process has been followed by the concerned district

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[1] Why is the number of ballot papers so important? There is one good reason and one bad reason. Usually the number of ballot papers sent to polling stations is used up before the end of the polling day and by law, all those still in the queue by 6pm are allowed to vote. But in reality, outside major towns sending new consignment of ballot papers on time is difficult which often leaves many people in the queue not having the opportunity to cast their votes. On the other hand, the bad reason is that different constituencies fight for more ballot papers to have opportunity to stuff the remaining papers in the boxes when the queue ends, by corrupting or even by coercing the election management and monitoring teams. This s a common occurrence in remote rural polling stations and it has the effect of a continuous distortion of the election results and an disqualify any attempt to use these numbers for development planning purposes or for population growth forecast.

courts, which reinforces the widespread belief that the Judiciary is not independent from Government and hence will not rule against the ruling party.

Problems Encountered During the run-up Period to the Local Election

a) Deployment of polling Station management personnel

NEC started earlier on the recruitment process for four NEC officers to man each Polling Station, through its regional offices. They were selected from the universities' students and some of their teachers in each of six electoral regions. Local Election Candidates and their clan constituencies, therefore, were keen to identify how many of the recruited are from their clans and have campaigned for the inclusion of their members. Eventually a final list of boys, girls and teachers were prepared in each region. These lists were sent to Hargeisa and the national NEC office deployed them in regions and districts other than their own, obviously with no prior consultation with the local stakeholders, especially the candidates as a result of which suspicion fever of foul play gripped the latter.[2] Let us take Erigavo as an example of how uninformed communities can react:

In Erigavo, the deployment of NEC personnel was far from smooth; series of crisis marred the operation in the run-up to the voting day. The first crisis happened when the local candidates could not find their clan boys, girls and teachers in the final list of people to act as polling station chairpersons and vice chairpersons. The list was sent from Hargeisa few days before the voting day. Each one of the four major clans in Erigavo panicked and fed itself with its own rumours that the other clans outmaneuvered it to have their university students and teachers man the district polling stations, while weeding out theirs. The Political parties and Associations representatives were under fire for some days until finally they found out that NEC decided to swap regional lists. The former had to shoulder the role of convincing their candidates and by extension the clans, that all those students and teachers recruited to be chair persons and vice chairs from all Somaliland six Electoral Regions are going to be swapped between the regions;

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[2] NEC might have been in contact with the political parties and Associations' representatives, but has overlooked that this election is a unique one when it comes to the relationship between the parties/associations and their candidates. The latter operated their business as independents as a result of the open list system.

those recruited from Sanaag will go to Sahil and vice versa. This package of information to pacify the situation also included that the other two persons in each polling stations will not change and shall not be included in the swapping formula. This gave some solace to the candidates that they at least still have some of their kin members in the polling stations.

However, hell broke loose again, when on the eve of the deployment of polling materials and personnel, NEC sent the final consolidated list of personnel deployment which contained more swapping, this time affecting the two other NEC members. What happened this time was that the NEC swapped the non-management other two team members in each polling station, within the districts of each Electoral Region. Candidates and their clans could not recognize any of the personnel sent to their polling stations. While in theory this was good for the integrity of the election, in practical terms and considering the realities on the ground to issue such a list in the last moment was a disaster that almost derailed the election; a cloud of suspicion was already hanging over the actions of NEC and the Government[3]. In this case, when the list came to light in the evening of 26th of November, all clans and candidates were up in arms each thinking that NEC has sealed their fate; after an all night turmoil within each clan, in the morning things cleared especially for Kulmiye candidates and supporters. The other candidates, including the powerful Mayor of Erigavo used the occasion to express their dissatisfaction and concern about other aspects of election preparation and mobilized their supporters into the street, which eventually turned into a blockade of the NEC compound which housed the election materials to be transported that morning to outlying remote areas. The standoff lasted until 5:30 pm without a single vehicle leaving the compound to deliver the election material to some of the remote areas which would take a whole day and in some areas even the night to reach their destinations. Eventually just before sunset, the demonstrators disbursed due to the reluctant intervention of the Mayor and other city elders, though their fears were yet not allayed.

Many of the above stated problems could have been avoided if the NEC was more proactive in providing election information to all stakeholders, including the Political Parties and

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[3] There were rumours circulating in Erigavo that to manage the voting process in the Dhulbahante areas of southern Erigavo electoral district, only security or election personnel hailing from Dhulbahante will be allowed there.

Associations, the candidates and regional officials; similarly if the NEC heeded where there is credible community concerns before election takes place. NEC is usually very stingy when it comes to providing information on the election process. This was hailed as positive in the Presidential election, because their predecessors were notorious in using the media individually and to contradict each other. However, this time round the election was much more complex than the Presidential election and therefore required much more openness and information to bring all kinds of actors on board. This would have saved a lot of headaches later on.

b) Logistics issues: The transport of the election material and personnel and the Preparation of the Polling Station venues according to the law[4].

The Logistics was another area of the election process which posed serious challenges and which required more professional preparation and robust management capacity. While the NEC receives significant technical support from its partner organizational, its logistical functions, except the contracting aspect, are often weak in the regions. Much of the technical support it receives is concentrated at the headquarters office functions, while most of the problems are happening in the field and in the regional headquarters. It is not also helped by the state of the roads in Somaliland, which impact the integrity of the election. Fraud is commonplace in the remote rural areas, in single clan dominated polling stations, which is also away from the eyes of the media and challenges of diverse clan populations. Obvious challenges include: a) The prohibitive costs of transport component in the election budget b) Difficulty of delivering election materials and personnel on time to and from remote areas, and c) ensuring the security and integrity of the voting results, especially in the rural polling stations.

The delivery of the materials in the remote areas often depend on luck, i.e. against rains, flash floods, breakdowns of vehicles as well as adverse security situations which can all alter the smoothness of the election process. Furthermore, even when material and manpower are delivered in the destination, a good percentage of the election management teams are left on their

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[4] Article 6: Rights of the voter: (3). Voting shall be personal, free, direct, and secret, and all votes shall be given equal weighting (see somalilandlaw.com).

own. Often, there is no adequate security, no food and water supply and no adequate facilities to handle the election. By law, voting usually ends by 6pm on voting day with a provision to allow the number of people in the queue at the time to cast their votes. After the counting is completed, then the boxes start to be returned to the collection base at the regional HQ, and latest arrivals are expected by mid next day. However, it is common that after counting finishes in the rural areas, teams are held back when local stakeholders are negotiating on how to deal with the unused ballot papers. Any of three scenarios happen and is definitely no secret to anybody including the NEC: parties agree and divide the spoils among them; a dominant actor buys out the team and takes all; or in some occasions which by no means are the norm, the team sticks to its guns to apply the law and unused ballot papers are returned.

On the quality of the Polling Stations: In this election the application of the concept and practice of "secret ballot" principle was quite tenuous. The use of numbers rendered the non-literate population to rely on the election monitors to mark their ballot papers for them, which not only negated the secret ballot principle but also made open to manipulation of the vote. Anecdotes abound how widespread was that monitors marked their own choice instead of the voter's choice. The standard of the polling station venues is also problematic to qualify for criteria required for a free and fair election. This is a widespread problem, not only in the rural areas, but in major cities as well. Some of the problems include lack of tables and chairs for the election staff and the election material; no private space for the voters to mark their ballots; no light in the night for counting- it will be quite interesting to survey what percentage of the polling stations used mobile telephone lights to count and record results, even in major cities. Some flashlights came with the package but how many have worked needs to be followed up. There is no doubt that many polling stations were only under the shade of a tree with minimum of the above materials available. So the question is what is the impact of these shortcomings to the integrity of the election and are the election requirements in Article 6 of Law No 20 dispensable or even waved, especially in regards to the rural areas? How could the impact of logistics challenges be minimized in the election results?

II. The Election Management and its shortcomings

i. NEC Performance in Preparing and Conducting the Election Process:

It is recognized that this was an unusually complex election with multiple objectives, chief among them the election of 353 local councilors and the qualification of three national political parties from seven contestants. This was further complicated by serious flows in NEC's management capacity and judgment especially at the regional level: 1.The ultimate vehicle to realize the above objectives was through the marking of the ballot paper, and therefore, it is of at most importance that it should be as simple as possible for the voter to access it. As was explained above the voters had to choose among numbers when marking the ballot paper. This clearly disregarded the fact that the bulk of the Somaliland population is not literate and do not work with numbers. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of the population lives in the rural areas and access to TV is quite limited to have the opportunity to get acquainted with the candidates' numbers and visualize them as signs.

Furthermore, in the management of the election, NEC performance was barely satisfactory. Many of the regional NEC officers are generally considered to be incompetent and are often influenced by local clan politics. In fairness though, for them to be free from clan influence is easier said than done, since they were mostly selected through clan representation. However, while accommodating the clan components, the competence and qualification aspect should have been emphasized, because at the end of the day, they are frontline staff whose integrity has the greatest influence on the election process and its results. The national Commissioners have only a monitoring and verification role. The actual contact of managing the polling stations and subsequent tallying of the results are the responsibility of local NEC officers.[5] The electoral law puts the emphasis of safeguarding the integrity of the election results primarily on the regional/ district election officers and also in collaboration with the regional courts when it comes to dealing with complaints.

ii. The Role of the Government for peaceful and a Credible Election

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[5] Somali saying "wadaanta isha ka qalloocata fayga ayey la tagtaa" – the water drawing vessel from deep wells not properly positioned to fill from the sources comes empty to the top.

The Government is ultimately accountable and responsible for the people to conduct elections on schedule and efficiently and to ensure them to be free and fair. How did the current government fair in fulfilling those responsibilities? There is a lot to be desired in this regard. On the primary issue of creating a secure atmosphere for election to take place, the Government encountered serious problems, when armed groups from Puntland made incursions into the eastern Sanaag regions of Dhahar and Badhan. The Government failed to prepare against such a situation and when it happened was powerless to do anything about it. In that situation, the NEC could do nothing else but cancel and hence, disenfranchise any voting citizens in those districts.

The Government has been accused of throwing its weight behind the ruling Kulmiye and has aided and abetted the ballot stuffing described above in Sanaag and reportedly also in Awdal. The armed forces were used to take over election material and its management in eastern Sanaag and in the Las Anod and Buhodle districts of Sool. Similar incidents were also said to have taken place in Awdal. Furthermore, the Government Ministers and employees were openly campaigning for the ruling party. The National Election Monitoring Committee have identified many cases of such infractions and have even addressed the President in the media to reign on his employees not to meddle in the election process but to no avail, clearly in disregard of an issued presidential decree to that effect. In Erigavo, four Government Ministers were stationed there to influence in favour of Kulmiye. These Ministers were there for three weeks on tax payer's costs and using public time, vehicles and perks – they were led by the powerful Minister of Aviation, accompanied by the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Rural Development and Environment, the State Minister of Finance, and an array of other civil servants hailing from the region.

Post-election Violence

The way that the Government handled the Hargeisa post-election crisis drew widespread criticism from the public and from the Somaliland diaspora in all corners of the world. The President and his administration lacked a leadership strategy and the creativity to handle the situation except to hide behind the NEC mandate to deal with it. The government was also criticized on the disastrous way it handled the demonstrations, the lack of professionalism of its

security forces that were anything but trigger happy to disperse unarmed youths who were at most throwing stones. While technical mistakes from the NEC in Hargeisa might have been the trigger of violent rioting, the main reason behind them was general frustration of the public to the widespread allegations of rigging from in outlying regions. An even more serious post-election crisis resulted from the elections of the mayors of different cities of Somaliland, which again led to widespread riots and also deaths –examples being what happened in Zeila, Eil Afwein, Erigavo, and above all in Berbera.

III. Way Forward and Recommendations

1. Improving NEC capacity and accountability: It is unfortunate that the NEC capacity in the and its independence have been seriously questioned in this last election. It is no wonder, that there have been calls from the public, the national stakeholders, and the diaspora that it failed and has to resign. While it has the prerogative to resign, it is more important that it needs to review what happened in this election and not bury its head in the sand. The NEC has to come clean, to identify all the shortcomings of this election and come up with a clear strategy to restore the integrity of the electoral process in Somaliland to regain public confidence.

2. Focus on free and fair election principles – accountability of the Government

There is a need for a National Commission (non-partisan) to hold a national debate and to address the election fraud issues in an open and transparent manner: During the period 2006-2010, the Somaliland society in collaboration with its international partners succeeded to put in place a regime of regulations, laws, and codes of conduct all designed to ensure that Somaliland elections will be free and fair. The public, media, the Political parties, the Legislature, and ultimately the Government should all work together to nurture a culture of accountable stakeholders in advancing Somaliland democratization and state-building processes.

3. Post-election national reconciliation and healing: The society is fractured now and not because of the campaign, because that happened in an exemplary manner so much so that experts from the neighbouring countries were on the record stating their desire to learn from Somaliland. The society is fractured because of feelings of injustice in the elections and the Government's

inability to take responsibility. If the Government is not initiating such a process, it is going to be the responsibility of the opposition parties to start a process of reconciliation and social healing.

4. Focus on negative impact of Sool and eastern Sanaag situation to Somaliland elections: the conflict situation in Sool and eastern Sanaag is already draining Somaliland energy for development and stability. The population of these areas are victims of this conflict. It is a callous and unscrupulous act from any political force in Somaliland to exploit the plight of these regions and its populations for elections gains. That act has already destabilized Somaliland and its ramifications were felt in the heart of the capital city. That act has also discredited the most priced achievements of the Somaliland people and state, their democratic election process. There is an urgent need from the side of the legislature and opposition political parties to study what happened and to come up with solutions for this not to happen again.

6. Voter registration and review of polling stations locations: It is a legal requirement that any subsequent elections should be conducted with a voter registration system in place. However, the issue to address is how to make a credible "voter Registration" which reflects the actual voter population in Somaliland. How to avoid the pitfall of last Voter Registration is in the mind of every stakeholder. The Voter Registration should not be used again to delay elections and to make the Somaliland democratization process hostage to it. All stakeholders especially the opposition parties should focus on crossing that milestone for elections to take place. The technology has improved and need to be explored: finger, facial, and iris scanning are now established systems widely used in the Voter Registrations and by immigration departments.

7. The Claim system – The Somaliland judiciary needs to grow from being the weakest link of the Somaliland state building and democratization process. If the Judiciary and law and order institutions and ministries were taking their responsibility seriously and independently, a lot of Somaliland's woes would have been overcome. Somaliland needs to explore the possibility of establishing a special court for election claims to learn from countries that practice it such as South Africa. The jurisdictional mandate, which the Electoral Law gives the local courts, needs to be reviewed and options to transfer the claims to the national level courts need to also be explored.

8. To revisit the choice of the open list system: many of the election problems and public confusion arose from that system as was detailed earlier in this report. The national government bodies, the political parties, and the civil society need to commission studies and to start a debate on the merits and demerits of the open list system before the Parliamentary elections in 2015.