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Building Political Consensus for Somalia's Federal Elections: Key Issues, Political Positions and a Path Forward

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments III

Executive Summary 1

1. Overview: Where Are We? 3

2. Core Issues at Stake 6

3. The Parties to be Reconciled and their Core Positions 12

4. Building Political Consensus on the Electoral Model and Process 15

5. Options for Consensus 18

6. References 21

Executive Summary

Somalia faces a deepening political impasse over the forthcoming federal elections. Disagreements between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and opposition groupings centre on the electoral model, the role of political parties, election management, and the legitimacy of the broader political process. Despite several rounds of negotiations and international facilitation, these differences remain unresolved, contributing to political instability, weakening confidence in electoral institutions and increasing the risk of further political violence. This paper examines the positions of the four principal negotiating actors: the FGS, the Somali Future Council, Nabad iyo Nolol, and the Somali Unity Council, and identifies opportunities for building consensus around a credible and feasible electoral framework.

The paper identifies three interconnected areas requiring compromise:

- On electoral design, it proposes three potential options: an open-list proportional representation model with smaller constituencies; a first-past-the-post model allowing both independent and party-affiliated candidates to compete; or a closed-list proportional representation model based on a single national constituency, subject to inclusive participation and credible election management.

- On political parties, it recommends retaining their role in the electoral process while addressing concerns about incumbent advantage through reforms to the political associations and parties framework, reopening registration and introducing a 7% parliamentary seat threshold for recognition as national parties. A political party fund could also help address disparities in electoral resources.

- Election management is likely to be the most challenging area of negotiation. The paper proposes retaining the existing 18-member National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission structure while revisiting its mandate and composition to ensure representation of the FGS, Federal Member States and opposition groupings. Reassessment of voter registration arrangements, transparent procurement and independent international scrutiny of voter registration could help rebuild confidence in the commission and the electoral process.

To advance political negotiations, the paper recommends establishing a transition task force with a clear mandate to negotiate contentious electoral issues, develop recommendations for political leaders and address emerging political tensions. Somali civil society should contribute through civic and voter education, electoral observation, public dialogue and monitoring of commitments, while international partners should provide facilitation, technical assistance and compliance support. Ultimately, the

credibility and sustainability of Somalia's federal elections will depend on an inclusive, Somali-owned political settlement that commands broad stakeholder acceptance and translates political consensus into an implementable electoral framework.

1. Overview: Where Are We?

Somalia is facing another protracted electoral transition. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has been implementing an electoral process since late 2025 in which several important political stakeholders, including former presidents and prime ministers and two Federal Member States (FMS) are not participating. Unless greater consensus is reached, Somalia will continue to see substantial political instability, as well as continued incidents of political violence.

The disagreement is rooted in developments that began after Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was re-elected president in 2022. President Hassan Sheikh initiated regular meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC) – a forum consisting of the FGS, FMS leaders, and the Governor of Banadir – held at least once every two months between June and December 2022, to discuss contentious political issues related to the constitutional review, elections, and other key governance issues. After several rounds of meetings, the NCC reached two political agreements in December 2022 on the allocation of powers between different levels of government and the justice model.

Yet, these agreements triggered the start of a new round of political divisions in the country that have continued to escalate. Puntland President Said Abdullahi Deni, despite attending NCC meetings up until this point, did not sign either agreement. Instead, he announced that Puntland was withdrawing from the NCC, arguing that these agreements centralised powers at the federal level. A position paper issued by Puntland in January 2023 outlined preconditions for its return to the NCC, but there has been no resolution to this stand-off between Puntland and the FGS since. Instead, the FGS continued NCC meetings without Puntland's participation.

The NCC election agreement reached in Mogadishu on 27 May 2023 triggered further political backlash, this time led by opposition leaders in the capital. The agreement encompassed substantial changes to Somalia's governance structure and election framework – a new election management body, limits on the number of political parties, a presidential system, changes to the presidential terms, and elimination of the position of prime minister (Somali Public Agenda (SPA), 2023). In response, a range of different opposition figures began to advocate more robustly against these changes.

The FGS continued to push ahead with translating these agreements into a revised constitution and election framework, while also conceding several compromises. In March 2024, parliament approved amendments to the first four chapters of the constitution, including chapter four, which codified proposed changes to the elections process agreed at the NCC. The parliamentary amendment process made some changes to the earlier political agreements, including increasing the number of political parties from two to three and retaining the position of prime minister. Yet it was denounced as illegal and illegitimate by opposition leaders and Puntland. Between

April and November 2024, three electoral laws were drafted and approved, including the Establishment Act of the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC), the Political Associations and Parties Act, and the National Electoral Act. Parliament also approved the appointment of 18 election commissioners.

Since then, election implementation has added to divisions. In November 2024, tensions between the FGS and Jubaland escalated due to disagreements over elections in the state, with incumbent President Ahmed Mohamed Islam Madobe breaking with the FGS to organise state elections, which he subsequently won comfortably. In December 2025, the FGS implemented elections in Banadir, which were boycotted by most major opposition figures. Concerns over how the process was run only added to opposition criticism over the wider electoral framework. Local and state elections in South West State (SWS) in May 2026, following the FGS ousting of the state's former president, led to further criticism over the FGS's approach to elections. Recent elections in Galmudug and Hirshabelle have faced similar backlash from some political groups.

In parallel, the remaining chapters of the Constitution were revised, and the constitutional review process was finalised in March 2026, including through another amendment to chapter four. The latter removed ambiguities in the language relating to the term of the parliament and the presidency, which Hassan Sheikh used to claim that his term in office concludes in May 2027, though this was not accepted by opposition players and added to growing tensions.

Repeated rounds of negotiations to address this growing political instability have failed to resolve the crisis. In June 2025, while the electoral commission began biometric voter registration, dialogue between the FGS and the Somali Salvation Forum, a platform of opposition politicians, began in Mogadishu. Yet, this ultimately led only to a small splinter faction of opposition leaders reaching an agreement with the FGS in August 2025, which included several further changes to the electoral process. Subsequent talks took place in February 2026 between the FGS and the Somali Future Council – a new umbrella inclusive of opposition leaders and the leaders of Puntland and Jubaland, which was established in Kismayo in December 2025. However, negotiations failed to bridge key divisions on the legitimacy of constitutional amendments, the term of the FGS, and fundamental aspects of the federal model. As 15 May 2026 approached, international efforts to resolve differences increased, but despite multiple attempts by the United States, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom, no breakthrough has been reached.

Instead, Somalia continues to face substantial political uncertainty and a worrying trend towards the use of political violence, as different actors seek to shape the process. This has included several clashes in Mogadishu itself, culminating in early June this year in major confrontations between FGS-aligned forces and those aligned with former President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed and former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire. There were also significant clashes between FGS-aligned and Jubaland-aligned forces as tensions escalated in 2024 over the Jubaland elections, while conflict continues in

SWS between FGS-aligned forces and the forces of the previously ousted president.

In order to support greater agreement on the federal elections and contribute to the de-escalation of these tensions, this policy paper outlines potential pathways to rebuilding consensus around the process. It does so by assessing the key issues at stake, the positions of different parties, and options to resolve these differences. In doing so, it draws from discussions at the inaugural SPA Annual Governance Conference held in August this year as well as feedback received at a roundtable of individuals knowledgeable of the process.

2. Core Issues at Stake

Areas of disagreement over the process can be sub-divided into four main thematic areas, namely: election design; election management; the role of political parties; and the design of the political process going forward. Negotiations therefore require a holistic approach in which the parties address these principal issues together rather than attempting to resolve them in isolation. A sustainable agreement will need to provide sufficient political guarantees to the parties while establishing an electoral framework that is legally coherent, administratively feasible, competitive and broadly acceptable to Somalia's principal political stakeholders.

While the FGS and opposition players have disagreed substantially on the overall legality and legitimacy of the wider constitutional framework, especially the term limit of the current administration, which the Supreme Court more recently ruled had expired earlier this year (Muia, 2026), these issues have increasingly become moot. At this stage, any type of federal elections will likely take at least until May 2027 to implement, making discussions over the term limit of the government less consequential. Likewise, previous disagreement over the conduct and sequencing of state elections has increasingly been superseded by the completion of their implementation in Galmudug and Hirshebelle. While significant constituencies contest the validity of state and local election results, negotiations have increasingly come to be focused on differences over the federal elections.

Election Design

The design of the elections shapes who has better chances of winning and the constraints they may face from constituencies in how they rule. Differences between players are focused on the model of election, the definition of constituencies, and the role of clan power-sharing in the model.

The FGS-supported Electoral Act has codified a proportional representation model, based on an open list, in which voters can influence the selection of candidates as well as parties. This would be based on a single national constituency for the House of the People, and FMS-level constituencies for the Upper House. The Electoral Act also makes reference to maintaining the current 4.5 clan power-sharing, which would be achieved, according to the current election law, by ensuring party lists are allocated according to clan quotas. The party that wins the most votes would be allocated a number of seats based on its vote share, and the candidates with the most personal votes would be given a seat. For the other parties, they would also be allocated seats based on vote-share, but candidates from the same sub-clans as those already allocated a seat would be excluded. This means even in the federal government-led process, direct elections will not change the clan representation (at sub-sub clan levels) in Somalia's federal parliament.

The proportional representation election model has long been considered suitable in post-conflict countries, as it can transcend issues such as the absence of well-defined constituency boundaries or the lack of a census. Yet, the combination of open list and single national constituency risks creating complex and confusing ballot papers, voting processes, and subjective ranking to maintain clan power sharing.

Moreover, the Somali Future Council (SFC) remains wary of a model that it perceives as giving an outsized role to political parties, which it argues favours the incumbent Justice and Solidarity (JSP) political association. Instead, the SFC has put forward a first-past-the-post direct election model with each seat allocated to a sub-clan, as well as an electoral constituency made up of four districts in each Federal Member State. This model eliminates the need for political parties and would maintain the clan representation in the House of the People. More recently, other opposition groupings have proposed additional variants, outlined below, that sit between these positions. Reaching a compromise on these alternatives will underpin any election agreement.

Election Management

The second major issue complicating agreement is the management of elections. This is central to defining which actors have influence over the actual conduct of the process and is arguably the most contentious as a result. The FGS oversaw the establishment of the NIEBC, with an expanded 18-member commission, and appointments made by both the FGS and FMS (though Puntland did not participate). The NIEBC has since been responsible for implementing local and state elections, and the FGS continues to support its role in election implementation, given its legal and constitutional grounding.

Puntland initially objected to this new structure on the grounds that it centralised election management. The previous official body, the National Independent Election Commission (NIEC) was a federal level entity but did not administer local and state level elections. Moreover, previous federal indirect elections in Somalia have been run by a combination of federal and state-level committees, handing substantially more power to FMSs in shaping the outcome of the process. Jubaland and Puntland have therefore sought to keep this model.

More widely, opposition leaders have also raised issues with the specific appointments of commissioners, claiming they are acting in the interests of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. This perspective has only heightened after the Justice and Solidarity (JSP) political association swept to comfortable majorities in all state and local elections implemented so far. The NIEBC's willingness to hold elections in South West State (SWS) immediately after the controversial military overthrow of SWS President Abdiaziz Laftagareen in particular raised concerns about its politicisation. Opposition leaders have regularly alleged that the NIEBC has been responsible for a number of irregularities that have enabled the JSP's victories, from a lack of transparency in procuring biometric voter registration systems to forcing voters to register. The lack of published district-level

breakdowns for elections in Galmudug and Hirshabelle has only added to concerns around the transparency and credibility of the process. Addressing these differences towards an election management approach that has buy-in from all stakeholders is therefore critical to building consensus around the election process.

The Role of Political Parties

The third major issue is the role of political associations or parties in the upcoming federal elections. The Political Associations and Parties Act of 2024 established a new framework for the role they would play in elections. Under this law, political associations would compete for the local and state level elections, and based on these results, the three most popular parties would contest federal elections. This cap on political parties was controversial and was lifted after the FGS cut a deal in August 2025 with a splinter of the opposition led by former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmake. The new agreement, which is yet to be reflected in an amendment to the Political Associations and Parties Act, eliminates the three national parties and allows all registered political associations to compete for the federal parliamentary elections. Any political association that garners 10% or more of the vote would qualify as a national political party.

The FGS views the development of political parties as part of a transition toward a more institutionalised party-based political system. Although the emerging electoral system continues to incorporate clan-based representation, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has repeatedly stated that the government wants to organise Somali politics around political parties. During the SPA's Somali Governance Forum held in late August 2026 in Mogadishu, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Omar stated in a panel discussion that political parties are among the core principles guiding the government's approach to the electoral process.

Yet the role of political parties has remained contentious. The NIEBC has registered more than 60 political associations, but the JSP has emerged as the dominant entity in electoral politics, simultaneously encompassing most FMS leaders, as well as the leadership of the FGS. This has led to the perception, among some opposition players, that a transition to a system based on political parties in the upcoming federal elections will favour an incumbent that is able to amass greater resources and maintain an unassailable coalition. At a one-on-one conversation at the SPA's Somali Governance Forum, Hon. Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame, member of Somali Future Council (SFC), challenged this characterisation and contended that political parties could not constitute a principle and is rather an electoral mechanism. Few prominent opposition figures have registered their own political associations, further adding to the dominance of the JSP within the emerging party landscape.

Any dialogue must therefore address these differences over whether and how political parties should play a role in federal elections. Negotiations must also distinguish between the long-term objective of developing a competitive multiparty system and

the specific role parties should play in the next federal parliamentary election.

The Political Process Going Forward

The political process to agree the federal election framework has itself been a source of contention and is the immediate obstacle to advancing agreement on federal elections. The FGS previously leveraged the NCC as a vehicle to agree major changes to the constitution and elections, but this has only ever included FGS and FMS leaders, as well as the Governor of Benadir. This excluded most opposition leaders, usually former government leaders themselves, from these discussions. Dialogue between the FGS and such figures has therefore occurred on an ad hoc basis, with challenges emerging due to the existence of different opposition groupings and the difficulties in identifying who has a right to participate in such discussions as members of the opposition. Moreover, as relations deteriorated between the FGS and Puntland and Jubaland, these two FMSs stopped attending NCC meetings, further eroding its value as forum for discussion on contentious political issues.

Since May 2026, renewed momentum towards talks has stumbled on these issues of process. A technical committee was initially established between the FGS and SFC, but this format has since been superseded as, from July onwards, the Somali Unity Council and Nabad iyo Nolol joined the discussions. Each of these opposition groupings, discussed in further detail below, has held separate talks with the FGS. More recently, the different parties have considered establishing a Joint Democratic Transition Task Force, composed of individuals representing each group, as well as civil society, that could work towards agreement across the areas above. However, this initial understanding has not yet been formalised, and a range of questions remain on composition and mandate. A lack of trust continues to hinder the viability of such mechanisms, with momentum petering out over this idea, following accusations that the FGS conducted airstrikes on an ally of Laftagareen in Gedo at the end of August 2026.

A key issue in the design of the political process is the potential role, if any, of Somalia's international partners. Following clashes in Mogadishu in early June 2026 over demonstrations and the contested tenure of the federal government leadership, Türkiye played an important role in de-escalating the situation and persuading opposition figures to return to their residences near the airport. Yet this mediation did not translate to more substantive discussion on contentious areas, with opposition figures raising questions over the role of Türkiye, claiming it was biased towards Hassan Sheikh.

The Turkish role has overlapped with and at times complemented the role of Somalia's "western" international partners. The United States and United Kingdom initiated a meeting in mid-May 2026 that brought together President Hassan Sheikh and Deputy Prime Minister Salah Jama with Sheikh Sharif and Said Deni at Mogadishu airport. The meeting did not result in an agreement on the federal elections, reflecting the declining

influence of Western partners, symbolised in the impending closure of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), which has traditionally played a central role in coordinating international efforts to convene dialogue and encourage Somali political actors to reach agreement on electoral transitions.

Türkiye, together with the quartet—the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom—subsequently began facilitating dialogue between the FGS and three opposition camps at the airport. Through shuttle diplomacy and several rounds of talks, international actors attempted to bridge the gap between FGS and opposition groups and support agreement on the upcoming federal parliamentary elections.

As well as differences over which external players should be involved in the process, political actors differ over what role they should play. The FGS views international actors primarily as facilitators of dialogue, while some opposition actors view them as mediators and potential "guarantors" of any agreement reached. This distinction matters because facilitation focuses primarily on bringing parties together and supporting communication, whereas mediation may involve a more active role in convening discussion, helping parties bridge substantive differences, and developing draft agreements. A guarantor role, in turn, would imply a commitment to monitor or support compliance with an agreement, and potentially provide security guarantees.

Finally, discussions are ongoing over the role civil society should play in the process. Civil society has not played a significant role in narrowing the differences between the principal political actors in the current electoral impasse. Limited funding, institutional capacity, and perceptions regarding the neutrality of some civil society organisations (CSOs) have constrained their ability to bring political actors together and encourage them to engage in sustained dialogue.

That said, individual civic institutions continue to play important roles in informing and shaping debates on elections and democratisation. Research institutions regularly produce analytical and policy papers aimed at informing policymakers and the wider public. They also convene dialogue platforms that bring together government representatives, opposition politicians, civil society actors, researchers and other stakeholders to exchange views and better understand competing perspectives. In recent political negotiations, there were also discussions over a potential civil society participant in the federal elections' task force.

In November 2025, research institutions and civil society umbrella organisations established the Alliance for National Dialogue and Reconciliation. The alliance was intended to strengthen coordination among CSOs, create greater coherence in their engagement, and contribute to discussions on the design and implementation of elections.

Civil society organisations are also well-placed to play an important role once an electoral agreement is reached and the election enters the implementation phase.

Through independent observation, civic and voter education, public communication, and monitoring of electoral commitments, CSOs can contribute to the transparency and credibility of the process. Their engagement can also provide an important channel for communicating citizens' concerns and experiences to electoral institutions and political actors. The role of civil society should therefore be understood as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, political negotiations.

3. The Parties to be Reconciled and their Core Positions

The principal actors currently involved in negotiations have evolved over time. Until May 2026, before the expiration of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)'s original four-year mandate, negotiations primarily involved the FGS and the Somali Future Council (SFC), or its predecessor the Somali Salvation Forum. As outlined above, however, these players have since been joined by Nabad iyo Nolol and the Somali Unity Council. This section offers a more detailed analysis of their various positions.

Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)

The FGS's position is largely reflected in the amended Constitution, electoral legislation, and the electoral process that it has been implementing. Its position on the principal issues can be summarised as follows:

- **Election design**: The FGS supports open list proportional representation (PR) for the federal parliamentary elections for both the Upper and Lower House elections, while maintaining 4.5 clan power-sharing at its current sub-sub-clan level. The Lower House elections would take place in one single national constituency, while Upper House elections would take place in each Federal Member State (FMS). However, there are indication that the FGS may now prefer a closed list PR model that has been used, to its advantage, in local and state elections.

- **Election management**: The FGS supports the current National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC) as the single body responsible for managing local, state and federal elections.

- **Political parties**: The FGS supports a system in which citizens vote for political parties (or candidates, under an open list system, submitted by a political party). Members of the respective parliaments would then elect the federal president.

Somali Future Council (SFC)

The SFC has been the principal opposition platform negotiating with the FGS on elections for an extended period. It has also expressed reservations about the participation and positions of other opposition groupings in the negotiations on federal elections. For example, at the SPA's Somali Governance Forum in late August 2026, Hon. Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame argued that the Somali Unity Council had accepted the constitutional amendments, while Nabad iyo Nolol supports an electoral model based on PR, which is also the model supported by the FGS.

The SFC's core positions are as follows:

- **Election design**: The SFC supports First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) as the electoral model for the upcoming federal parliamentary elections, as this would lessen the need for political parties in the model, which SFC leaders perceive to advantage the incumbent.
- **Election management**: The SFC supports a decentralised election-management structure in which federal parliamentary elections would be managed by federal and state-level bodies. This position draws on the arrangements used for the 2016 and 2021–2022 federal parliamentary elections. Moreover, the SFC wants to address perceived bias in the current orientation of election management.
- **Political parties**: The SFC does not want political parties to play a role in the upcoming federal parliamentary elections.

Nabad iyo Nolol (N&N)

Nabad iyo Nolol is a political group led by former President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo. Farmajo and his political camp do not accept the constitutional amendments adopted during the current constitutional review process. However, the N&N leader did not join the Somali Future Council and has maintained a separate political platform. Its positions on the principal electoral questions are as follows:

- **Election design**: Closed list PR, single national constituency, an electoral model broadly aligned with the FGS position.
- **Election management**: A single national election management body responsible for managing the federal election.
- **Political parties**: A significant role for political parties in the upcoming federal parliamentary elections. This position is linked to its support for a PR-based electoral model, in which political parties and party lists constitute an important component of the electoral process.

Somali Unity Council (SUC)

The Somali Unity Council is a recently established political platform led by former Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid, who is also its principal presidential candidate. The SUC accepts the constitutional amendments but disagrees with the FGS over the electoral framework.

Its core positions are as follows:

- **Election design**: The SUC supports FPTP as the electoral model, as they want to ensure candidates for parliamentary seats are rewarded for the votes they

receive, potentially providing an advantage to smaller political parties compared with the PR model.

- **Election management**: The SUC supports a single national election management body to manage the federal elections.
- **Political parties**: The SUC supports a role for political parties in the upcoming federal election as well as allowing a role for independent candidates.

4. Building Political Consensus on the Electoral Model and Process

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has completed the state-level elections in Galmudug and Hirshabelle. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud announced on 26 October a dialogue between FGS, Somali Future Council (SFC), Nabad iyo Nolol (N&N), Somali Unity Council (SUC), and Somali non-state actors to discuss federal elections between 14–18 November 2026. Based on the current momentum and discussions, we propose the following process for building political consensus.

Establish a Viable Negotiating Structure

The FGS and opposition actors have reportedly agreed in principle to establish a Joint Democratic Transition Task Force that would serve as a decision-making body for the electoral transition. This is an important development and a positive indication that the parties may be able to establish a mechanism through which they can address their differences and work toward a competitive and credible election.

Yet several areas of the body will need to be better detailed if it is to serve as a component of a viable political process. First, the mandate of the body should be clarified, as previous versions of texts calling for its establishment are vague. This could include establishing the body as a ministerial-level or equivalent body which has the mandate to negotiate all contentious aspects of the election process, and provide final recommendations to principals of the four groups for agreement. Its mandate should also include problem-solving in response to political issues that arise during the implementation period. Such a format could also be used to negotiate details relating to the holding of principal level meetings such as location, timing, and security to avoid repeating the moments of tension such meetings have seen in the last year. It can also serve as first point-of-call for de-escalating any other moments of political violence in Mogadishu and beyond.

The composition of the task force will be critical to its effectiveness. It could be staffed by trusted representatives of the principals, allowing it to maintain political buy-in while acting as a more sustained and effective forum for problem-solving than ad hoc principals-level meetings. An independent chair from civil society could strengthen confidence in the process, facilitate dialogue among the political actors, and provide an additional layer of credibility to the task force's decisions. It may also be valuable to codify agreements in constitutional amendments and legislative changes to support institutionalisation and dispute resolution around the process.

Any negotiation structure would benefit for being supported by a technical team with individuals from each side with relevant expertise in electoral systems, election

administration, constitutional and electoral law, political parties, representation, gender inclusion and election logistics. Its role should be to develop a set of technically feasible and legally coherent options on issue areas identified by the task force; the latter can then make decisions on what to recommend to principals. The technical team can also be responsible for consulting a broader range of stakeholders outside of those directly involved in the negotiation, such as civil society, private sector, security officials, and the international community.

In terms of agenda, this negotiation structure would need to begin by focusing on three contentious areas outlined above: the election model, election management, and political parties, including issues of gender inclusion (see options on these three outlined below). If progress is made on these areas, it can also act as a political problem-solving platform for issues relating to implementation that any new election management body would lead on, such as voter registration, constituency or boundary demarcation, candidate or party registration, and vote counting and results management procedures.

Prioritise De-escalation of Immediate Tensions

As an urgent priority, the transition task force will need to address the growing use of political violence in the country, before engaging on issues of substance, including through a range of confidence-building measures. This could involve FGS leadership travelling to each FMS capital to engage leadership and provide assurances around security. Prioritising mediation and accommodation between the FGS and Laftagareen would also be essential to reducing tensions – the transition task force could consider liaising with a range of traditional elders to support this. Initial meetings could take place outside of Mogadishu, or in rotating locations, to gradually build confidence that dialogue sessions will not be the site of security confrontations.

Start Implementing the Agreement

Once an election framework has been agreed, the implementation phase should then begin in accordance with an agreed timetable.

The election could potentially be conducted within six months, but the final timeline should be determined by several factors, including the electoral model, the scope of voter registration, the efficiency and preparedness of the election management body, security conditions, funding and procurement requirements, and the capacity to conduct civic and voter education. Six months may therefore serve as a tentative political target rather than a fixed implementation deadline.

Implementation should begin with the establishment or reconstitution of the election management body in accordance with the political agreement. The commission should then develop a detailed and realistic electoral calendar covering all stages of the election, from voter registration and candidate or party registration to voting, counting, results management and dispute resolution.

The electoral calendar should also identify activities that can be conducted simultaneously in order to make the best use of the available time without compromising the integrity of the process.

Revamp the Role of Civil Society

Once the election management arrangements are established, Somali civil society should play complementary monitoring and observation roles throughout the electoral process. Their involvement can strengthen transparency, accountability and public confidence in the implementation of the agreement. Civil society organisations can monitor the day-to-day implementation of the electoral process, conduct civic and voter education, observe electoral activities, engage citizens and communicate citizens' concerns to electoral institutions and political actors. CSOs can also amplify citizens' voices by creating spaces for dialogue among election officials, politicians and citizens. This would allow emerging concerns to be identified and addressed before they develop into broader political disputes.

Clarify a Role for International Engagement

The international community should focus on monitoring the implementation of the political commitments agreed by the parties and providing technical and, where appropriate, security support. This role is especially important because the parties may require reassurance that the commitments made during negotiations will be respected during implementation. At the same time, an international role cannot substitute for a Somali political settlement. The sustainability and legitimacy of any electoral agreement will ultimately depend on whether Somalia's principal political actors regard the agreement as their own and are willing to implement it. The international community can therefore play an important supporting role, but the political ownership of the electoral settlement must remain with Somali stakeholders.

5. Options for Consensus

The transition task force should consider the different electoral models already proposed by the negotiating actors. Somali Public Agenda proposed a compromise electoral framework based on the electoral models put forward by the four negotiating actors (Somali Public Agenda (SPA), 2026).

Rather than treating the competing models as mutually exclusive political positions, the technical process could examine whether elements of the different proposals can be combined into a transitional framework that addresses the principal concerns of the negotiating parties.

The assessment should consider the practical implications of each option, including its feasibility within the available timeframe, representation, political-party participation, administrative requirements, cost, inclusivity, and the confidence it is likely to generate among the principal stakeholders.

Potential areas of compromise in the three contentious areas could involve:

Explore the Different Electoral Models for the Election Design

Election design is not the most contentious issue on the table and therefore provides a useful starting point for substantive negotiations.

Option 1: One potential option for compromise is to maintain the proportional representation (PR) model and an open list, but conduct House of the People elections based on Federal Member State (FMS)-level or smaller constituencies. This could allow for more competition among competing candidates from the same sub-clans, while maintaining a role for political parties, and a less complicated ballot paper. This strikes a balance between Federal Government of Somalia (FGS)-proposed models which prioritise the role of political parties, and a Somali Future Council model, which is based on first-past-the-post. By making the constituency smaller, the role of individual candidates matters more to voting behaviour than wider party politics and lists, when compared with a single national constituency model.

Option 2: An alternative could be fist-part-the-post electoral model competed by independent candidates as well as candidates with political parties' affiliation and based on constituencies of a few districts or a region. Seats will be allocated to the sub-clans as its current 4.5 structure, but citizens will be free to register and vote for any seat in their constituency. This would maintain a role for political parties, without requiring them.

Option 3: The third alternative is conducting an election based on closed list PR and a single national constituency. This is an electoral model already tested and implemented

by the federal government in Benadir and three FMSs. It addresses the challenges of not conducting the election in Somaliland and areas controlled by al-Shabaab. However, it is seen as one that would favour the president's Justice and Security Party, and a number of mechanisms would need to be put in place to manage this. First, as discussed below, the political associations and parties framework would need to be re-set and other associations allowed to register. Second, concerns around election management would need to be robustly addressed as suggested below, including addressing issues around its membership and structure. Finally, civil society monitoring and observation could increase trust in the process. For the opposition to agree on this model, the FGS will need to build trust and confidence among the opposition.

Strike a Compromise Enabling a Role of Political Parties, while Managing Incumbency Bias

In tandem, a compromise is also possible on the role of political parties. Given their centrality to democratic elections, it is valuable to reach an agreement for them to play a role, while addressing valid concerns around incumbency bias. This would likely require resetting the framework for political parties, starting with amendments of the political associations and parties' law and re-opening registration for associations wishing to compete for national elections. This could include a 7% vote-share threshold for seats in the federal parliament to avoid a proliferation of political parties – the August 2025 agreement makes the threshold 10%, which is high by international standards.

Several mechanisms could be put in place to manage concerns around incumbency bias. Foremost among these could be a political party fund that provides resources, including those gained from registration and candidate fees, to support political party activities.

Consider a Compromise on Election Management that Maintains Structure but Revisits Composition

This will be the most challenging area of discussion as the opposition oppose the scope of the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC), which has the mandate to conduct all levels of elections; most opposition groups prefer an election management body responsible for federal elections only. One possibility may be to maintain the current NIEBC structure, but consider re-setting its core mandate and composition. The composition could keep an 18-member commission, but agree new appointees from FGS, FMS, as well as the various opposition groupings, ensuring that all stakeholders have influence over election management. A diverse commission can ensure balance, but may also be deadlocked on contentious aspects of implementation, and the task force should be mandated to step in to problem-solve issues if the NIEBC is unable to address them, and escalate to principals if necessary.

In tandem, the new commissioners should have the mandate to re-assess the most contentious aspects of election management so far. Ideally, this would involve a technical assessment of the most viable voter registration option and a re-running of the procurement around the process that maximises transparency and adherence to relevant legislation. Additionally, enabling an international observer team to review and audit the voter registration process would be immensely valuable to rebuilding trust in this part of the process. The commission should then develop a detailed and realistic electoral calendar covering all stages of the election, from voter registration and candidate or party registration to voting, counting, results management and dispute resolution.

6. References

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