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Press Statement

5 July 2017

Capacity Building Workshop on Electoral Systems

The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) of the African Union Commission in collaboration with the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) of Somalia has concluded a three-day BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) training workshop on Electoral Systems. The BRIDGE workshop took place from 3-5 July 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. It consisted of twenty participants comprising senior NIEC officials as well as policy makers involved in the constitution-making process as well as the drafting of the electoral law. The key objective of the workshop was to expose NIEC and key election stakeholders to various electoral systems in Africa and beyond in order to facilitate informed decision-making on the choice of the most suitable electoral system for Somalia based on lessons and experiences from other contexts. Somali policy makers are currently engaged in a consultative process of drafting a permanent Constitution which will form the basis for the conduct of future general elections based on universal suffrage scheduled to take place in 2020.

The choice of an electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions of a democracy. The workshop which is part of the ongoing efforts by the African Union to contribute to democracy and good governance in Somalia covered topics electoral systems such as proportional representation, plurality/majority, mixed systems and their distinctive variations. Other cross-cutting issues tackled during the training entailed inclusion of various under-represented groups such as women and other societal groups. The implications of each electoral system on the immediate and long term aspects of political development of a country were also discussed during the workshop.

The BRIDGE capacity building initiative is part of the broader programme of the DPA on technical assistance to Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of the African Union Member States.

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