Dear Reader,

With all three parliaments currently in recess the past weeks were dedicated to prepare the ground for the work of 2015 – “the year of delivery”. The revised project document has been finalized and signed, AWP for all three parliaments have been completed and are ready for signing. Micro Capacity Assessments of all three Parliaments have been completed and Letters of Agreements (LoA) to be separately signed with all three Parliaments are under preparation. Customized risk mitigation plans and targeted capacity development plans were prepared to reduce potential risks deriving from LoA implementation. A new UNDP reporting format for quarterly reports has been developed by UNDP CO which should provide stakeholders with improved information about project activities and impact.

With these governance arrangements in place the project is well prepared to deliver the activities outlined in the 2015 AWP.

Revised Project Document for the Parliamentary Support Project Signed

On 15 March the Chairman of the House of the People / National Federal Parliament, Hon. Mohammad Sh. Osman Jawari and UNDP Country Director George Conway in a small ceremony signed the revised project document for the Parliamentary Support Project.

During the past weeks the revised pro doc has been discussed in several Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) meetings with the leadership of the National Federal Parliament, the House of Representatives in Puntland, the House of Representatives in Somaliland as well as donor representatives. An UNDP internal PAC meeting gave UNDP experts the opportunity to provide additional input. All advices and recommendations were taken on board.

Key changes compared with the previous project document are the split of the old project into two separate projects, one for parliamentary support and one for support to the constitutional review process. This was necessary as the review process – to be implemented in 2015 – will involve different national counterparts than the three parliaments. A Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the support to the constitutional review process is under preparation.

The revision also included the insertion of new project activities, e.g. support to upgrading the security for the three parliaments and support to the assemblies of the emerging states. In this context the project document foresees assistance to facilitate a south – south knowledge transfer from existing parliaments to emerging ones.

The overall budget for the period 2013-2016 is USD 11.7 mill. Donors are DFID/UK, EU, Norway and SIDA/Sweden.

Schedule of Next Parliamentary Sessions

Currently all three Parliaments are in recess. Planned dates of the opening of the next session:
- House of Representatives Somaliland: 15th March - 14th May
- House of Representatives Puntland: 4th June - 4th July
Public hearings are a key approach for Somali Parliamentary Committees to access specialized information on legislation, policies and programmes. These hearings strengthen their work and build informed legislation. Committees routinely invite community members who are impacted by proposed legislation or government policies to testify at public hearings, which are typically open to public to observe. This month, UNDP supported a two day training with the National Federal Parliament to train 45 Committee Staff (including 10 women) on these types of public hearings. Committee Staff play a special role in the parliament system. Each Member of Parliament is assigned to a Committee on a specialized subject, and the Committee Staff support MPs as they are assigned to their respective Committees. Staff tasks include reporting, analysis of drafts bills, and, importantly, preparing public hearings. The staff assists the MPs in preparing and arranging public hearings, including drafting invitation letters to witnesses, preparing the agenda, research and analysis on the issues, and drafting the report on main findings and recommendations.

The UNDP Parliamentary Development expert, Mr. George Crawford, provided long-term advice to the HoR in Puntland with regard to amending the Rules of Procedure and enhancing its legislative capacities.

The training developed by George Crawford, UNDP Parliamentary Development expert, included a mock Public Hearing which examined Private Higher Education Institutions in Somalia. The Committee Staff took on the roles of Parliament Committee Members as well as typical witnesses that appear at public hearings, such as Ministry officials and representatives of professional associations. The staff researched the issue, prepared and delivered opening statements and testimonies and engaged in in-depth questioning.

As part of its support to national counterparts UNDP during the past months has recruited a number of experienced international consultants who assist and advise the three parliaments on an in/out basis. It is the project’s policy to link consultants to specific parliaments in order to be able to create continuity of advice over an extended period.

During the past months Ms. Soulef Guessoum (Algeria) and Mr. Amt Obaidullah (Bangladesh) advised the Somaliland House of Representatives. Towards the end of February, Mr. Austin Zvoma, the former clerk of the Zimbabwean parliament, joined the team working with the HoR in order to improve its organizational structures. Mr. David Payne (Canada), who currently works with the Interim Jubaland Authorities, provides long-term advice to the HoR in Puntland with regard to amending the Rules of Procedures and enhancing its legislative capacities.

Mr. George Crawford (USA) provides capacity building for the Committees of the National Federal Parliament in Mogadishu. Mr. Charles Otieno (Kenya) works closely with the NFP and various ministries primarily on the process of constitutional review. In April Mr. Hassan Ibrahim (South-Africa) will join the team. He will be attached to the senior leadership of the NFP and will provide high-level policy advice throughout 2015.

The Parliament and Constitutional Support Project team held its very first retreat from 9th - 10th March 2015. The aim of the retreat was to assess the progress made so far and develop a joint vision for the implementation of the 2015 AWP. The team discussed both the achievements and the failures of 2014, and explored a way forward that shall be based on a common understanding of how best to work as a team. Branding 2015 as the year of delivery, all members of the project team regardless of their duty stations, discussed their challenges in delivering their tasks and proposed ways to mitigate those challenges.

The project also welcomed a new temporary member of the team, Mr. Yosief Abraha, who recently joined the team from Afghanistan on 3 months detailed assignment. Mr. Abraha has been assigned to support the project in its operational activities.

The participants of the project retreat were welcomed by the head of the area office Mr. Stephen Kinloch Pichat who kindly availed himself to visit the retreat on 10th March. Mr. Pichat was pleased to meet the project team and expressed his support for the work being done by the project in Somaliland.
The Young Graduates Programme (YGP) of the Somali National Federal Parliament (NFP) is a programme supported and financed by UNDP since July 2013. This programme has proven to be a flagship program in developing and safeguarding human capacity in the Federal Parliament by supporting sustainable skills transfer, as a pilot for cost-sharing efforts and incentive schemes between UNDP and the Somali Government, which has since been applied to other institutions.

A verification exercise (third-party monitoring) conducted by IBTCI, at the request of DFID, one of the main donors supporting this Project, has highlighted this success. The results of the monitoring not only underline that the selection process of these graduates is felt to be fair and competitive, but also that they have been providing useful support to Parliament.

The Young Graduates have been working in several departments, units and committees of the NFP to build the core functions of the Parliamentary Administration, including servicing the 15 Parliamentary Committees, the ICT department, assisting with information management, supporting legal services and facilitating donor coordination. They have been the mainstay of the Parliamentary Secretariat.

Both Parliament Members and Graduates perceive the program as relevant. On the one hand, NFP senior management wants to continue and expand this programme as YG contribute to an effective organizational structure with skilled and motivated human resources focused on delivering timely services to the Speaker, MPs and committees. On the other hand, the Graduates feel motivated; they have a sense of achievement and reward from the work and experience in such an important Somali Institution.

However, there are still challenges and shortcomings that need to be addressed in order to ensure sustainable human resources capable of providing efficient and effective parliamentary services. UNDP acknowledges these gaps and challenges and will, amongst others, consult with Parliament on need and timing for refresher training/on job training for the young graduates, on how to manage work and the possibility of revising their job descriptions. This should improve the information of the graduates on what is expected of them, how they will be evaluated and how this particular job relates to others.

The positive results of this verification exercise and from the One Year Analysis of the YGP, a report jointly developed by UNDP and the Parliament in September 2014, with wide consultation of Parliament Leadership and the Young Graduates demonstrates the need to continue the support to this crucial programme.

The 5th session of the parliament started on September 20th, 2014 and ended on February 11th, 2015. Over the course of this session, the plenary gathered 37 times to review the reports and proposals for decisions prepared by the committees and the NFP standing committee met 13 times to provide necessary direction, input guidance for priority legislative agenda and other parliamentary matters. Similarly, a substantial part of the parliament business transacted by parliamentary committees whereby all met in this session almost 10 times to conduct parliament business.

Security still remains a major issue for many MPs who believe that they are at risk of targeted assassination. Last year, 12 lawmakers were killed in different instances and during the beginning of 2015, 3 more lawmakers also lost their lives; one in a targeted assassination and the other two by car bombs.

One of the core functions of the NFP is to enact legislation. Since its formation in 2012 the NFP adopted 15 different laws. In this ongoing 5th session alone, 8 laws have been adopted. Whilst all these passed laws were part of the NFP priority legislative agenda, two of these laws notably, Boundaries and Federation Commission law, and National Independent and Electoral Commission were crucial to achieve the 2016 vision road map. Both laws were difficult to pass due to their characteristics and complexity. In addition, NFP ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This convention outlines the rights and means to protect children and introduces a legal commitment for the federal government of Somalia to safeguard the rights of all Somali children. Apart from adopting these laws, NFP also approved the new cabinet and was engaged in oversight activities. The following is a list of all legislations passed in the last session:

1. Somali Fishery Law
2. Somali Military Treat with Italy
3. Closing of Account 2013
5. Boundary Federation Commission law (BFC)
6. Annual Budget 2015
7. General Audit Bill
8. National Independent and Electoral Commission law (NIEC)

The next parliament session is expected to last between 11th April and 11th August.
ABRIMO, a company contracted by UNDP, has completed the assessments of the administrative capacity of all three parliaments in Mogadishu, Garowe and Hargeisa. Capacity has been assessed against the UNDG Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) Framework.

Due to the prevailing security situation the project has only limited capacity for UNDP Direct Implementation. For this reason the implementation of the AWP 2015 for all three parliaments will necessarily be a mixture of UNDP Direct Implementation and implementation through a LoA by the national counterpart.

Taking into consideration the result of the ABRIMO assessment the following mitigation measures will be put in place for the part of the AWP which will be implemented through LoA. Where-ever possible and feasible UNDP direct implementation will be applied. Risk mitigation plans will be prepared for all LoAs which will include:

a. A risk-management plan re each subject area of the ABRIMO assessment
b. Reducing the amount of cash advances to the minimum and operate with UNDP direct payment to vendor after satisfactory delivery of goods and services
c. Disbursement of advances in several installments;
d. Procurement as far it is done by the IP will be closely monitored by project staff and direct payment of vendors will be only done based on a proper procurement process and after satisfactory delivery of goods and services

e. A package of templates to be used for maintaining accounting records and preparing the financial reports is to be prepared by UNDP and will be shared with the IP prior to the LoA signing process
f. A list of required supporting documents for each type of transactions will be available as guidance for the IP.
g. Guidelines on procurement process will be prepared and shared with the IP.

Draft capacity development plans are prepared which address capacity deficits high-lighted in the ABRIMO assessment. UNDP and/or the respective parliament will contract national or local consultants which will prepare proposals for organizational changes, draft regulations and procedures and will provide training with the goal to eliminate within the next nine months all issues marked as high or significant risk in the ABRIMO assessment.

Assurance activities will be put in place including monitoring of LoA implementation by project staff and third party monitoring. Donor partners are invited to conduct their own third party monitoring and to share their findings.

M&E: Baseline/indicators/goals related to the ABRIMO assessments have been included in the revised pro doc and 2015 AWPs and are part of the RBM framework.

CTA meets with the House of Representatives in Puntland and Somaliland

On 8 March UNDP CTA Oskar Lehner met with the Speaker of the House of Representative in Somaliland, Rt Hon Abdirahman M Abdillahi and Secretary General Abdirisaq Saed Ayanle to discuss the implementation of the AWP 2015 and the risk mitigation plan for a to-be-prepared Letter of Agreement. A similar meeting took place on 12 March with the two deputy Speakers of the House of Representatives in Puntland, Mr. Abdihamid Sh. Abdisalan Isse (Acting Speaker & First Deputy Speaker) and Mr. Husain Yasin Dirie (Second Deputy Speaker), as well as Secretary General Mr. Ali Ahmed Salah.

In both meetings full agreement was achieved about implementation modalities, risk mitigation plan and capacity development plans to strengthen the administration of both parliaments.

The project will meet with the leadership of the National Federal Parliament in the next days for the same purpose.
Support to strengthening Somaliland HoR Secretariat

Austin Zvoma, an expert on Parliamentary Development and former Clerk of the Zimbabwe Parliament arrived in Hargeisa on Sunday 15th February.

During the period 15th February to 4th March, Austin had working meetings with the Secretary General, Mr. Saed Ayanle, Director of Administration and Finance, Planning, Human Resources as well as other Secretariat staff.

In order to improve the Financial Management System, he drafted Procurement Procedures for the Administration and Finance Department which are now under consideration by the Secretariat. These procedures together with an to-be approved Accounting Manual will increase transparency and accountability of the Secretariat’s work.

Austin reviewed all departmental functions and will submit the draft for an improved organizational structure with departments appropriately aligned. He also conducted an assessment of the functions of four other departments in order to design a concept for capacity building and training of HoR secretariat staff during his next visit. He paid a courtesy call on the Speaker at Parliament Hon Abdirahman M Abdillahi during which the Speaker expressed his appreciation for Austin’s assistance and stated the HoR’s desire to establish relations with many Parliaments.

M&E Workshop conducted with Somaliland HoR Staff

As part of the overall capacity building activities for national counterparts, a training on monitoring and evaluation was organized on 21st-23rd February 2015 in Hargeisa by the project. 31 staff (incl. 8 females) of the Somaliland House of Representatives (HoR) including the heads of the departments and the secretary general participated.

The objectives of the training were to train key parliamentary staff on the main principles and methods of monitoring, evaluation and data collection. Participants are now better able to monitor and record progress and achievements. The training was also an opportunity to discuss the elaboration of a monitoring plan for the Somaliland HoR Strategic Plan (2013-15). The recommendations originating from the training are to increase capacity building for HoR staff and on-the-job trainings for the department of planning in preparation of the future monitoring plan.