Dear Reader,

Feb 2016 witnessed an important step forward in the development of parliamentarism in Somalia. For the first time a “Speaker's Forum” took place which convened the leadership of the National Federal Parliament and of the newly formed parliaments. A concrete outcome of the meeting was the signing of a MoU which shall form the basis for future cooperation.

The project contributed by covering the operational costs of this conference and stands ready to provide technical assistance and material support to further enhance the inter-parliamentary cooperation including know-how transfer from established to newly emerged parliaments.

The UNDP Parliamentary Support Project (PSP) provides support to the NFP, and the Parliaments of Puntland and Somaliland in order to capacitate them to operate as inclusive, transparent and effective law-making, oversight and representative bodies. The project provides technical assistance to

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2. establish effective institutions, with a functioning administration and infrastructure
3. empower MPs to represent and remain accountable to the people and to provide leadership

The Project is supported by the European Union, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and UNDP. The total budget for 2013-2016 is 11.7 million USD.

Camel Market in Hargeisa / Somaliland

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In 2015 six verification exercises were conducted by IBTCI, a third-party monitoring company, contracted by DFID, one of the main donors supporting the parliament support project. The results of the monitoring exercise indicated overall very successful activities. The verification not only underlined that the selection process of the 45 graduates is felt to be fair and competitive, but also that they have been providing useful support to the National Federal Parliament Secretariat. Since their placement, graduates became the backbone of the secretariat. Members of parliamentary committees that were interviewed reported being satisfied with the support provided.

The verification feedback also confirmed that the technical assistance provided by the project was both useful and helpful, especially the trainings carried out for the parliamentary staff. Interviewees’ responses indicated that they now better understand key parliamentary processes and have either gained new skills or improved their skills as a result of provided training. IBTCI also conducted a verification of a workshop for members of the Budget, Planning and Public Oversight Committee on the Procurement, Concessions and Disposals (PCD) Bill. The workshop itself was assessed to be relevant as its aim was to sensitize the committee members on the Bill and build their capacity to review and debate the Bill. Respondents were optimistic that there would be improved government tendering processes as well as increased transparency and accountability once the PCD Bill is adopted.

Furthermore, IBTCI’s verification included an assessment of the human rights seminar for MPs of the Puntland Parliament in order to enhance parliamentarians’ knowledge of human rights norms and standards applicable to their professions and mandate. Feedback from respondents indicated that the purpose of the training was clear and relevant to participants and the training itself was deemed useful. Participants gave examples of things they were or would be doing differently as a result of the seminar, including advocacy for the release of prisoners detained without evidence.

UNDP Parliamentary Support Project conducted a three day public outreach training workshop on 15-17 February at the parliamentary premises for 8 staff members (6M and 2F) of the NFP outreach department.

The main objective of the workshop was to train participants on key principles, strategies, mechanisms and tools for public outreach. The training was highly participatory and interactive. It was situation-centered and focused on the realities of public outreach in Somalia.

The participants lauded the training as it was the first specific and focused training conducted for the department staff since establishment in 2014. Ali Mohamed Elmi Director of NFP Outreach department said that the training was really interesting and informative. “I feel it has given me enough to explore and has also made me a lot more curious about experimenting with tools and approaches. Attendees made useful recommendation as the way forward.

These included follow up trainings for department staff, more collaboration of the various committees dealing with outreach issues in parliament and support in terms of more resources for the department.

With the use of knowledge and skills acquired, it will be easier for outreach staff to plan, routinely follow up activities and gather information on all aspects of outreach and public engagement.

As a result, they will be in a better position to support MPs and improve the image of the House of the People thus restoring public confidence and trust in parliament.
Somali Speaker’s Forum Met in Mogadishu 16 – 19 February 2016

In response to the National Federal Parliament’s invitation, the state assembly speakers of ISW, Galmudug and Jubaland State assemblies attended the presentation of the report of the Oversight Committee on the ten reviewed chapters of the provisional constitution in the House of the People on 15th February 2016.

Following that event NFP Speaker Jawari hosted a Speakers’ Forum with state assembly speakers to discuss the ongoing constitutional review process, modalities for regional consultations scheduled to take place on member state level, as well as information sharing and cooperation among the legislative bodies.

At the end of the meeting the NFP Speaker and the Speakers of the three new assemblies signed a Memorandum of Understanding on guiding principles of cooperation and collaboration between the legislative bodies, continuous information sharing on legal drafting, and the establishment of a Speakers’ Forum which should meet at least once a year. Speakers also agreed on close cooperation with regard to the constitutional review process.

The conduct of the meeting was financially support by the UNDP Parliamentary Support Project.

Handover of VTC equipment to National Federal Parliament

As part of the ongoing support to upgrade the IT and communications infrastructure of the National Federal Parliament, the UNDP Parliamentary Support Project procured video teleconference equipment for the Parliament. The provision of the VTC system is expected to improve communication between federal parliament leadership, counterparts and donor partners by enabling them to hold video conferences.

Considering the security environment the VTC equipment shall improve and ensure communication while decreasing exposure to hazardous travel. Such setups are useful for parliamentary business as they enable real and face-to-face communication over sophisticated digital platforms and established telecommunication networks.

VTC system is cost effective and helps to reducing travel time. The Parliament will also be able to share presentations and data whilst on a video conference call.
The 7th session of the National Federal Parliament which started on 25 October 2015 was closed on 5 March 2016. The session reached remarkable achievements in passing laws and regulations. The number of resolutions & bills approved during the session increased significantly compared to previous sessions.

As it has been reported in previous editions of the newsletter, the Parliamentary Support Project has assisted directly two committees, the Budget, Finance and Planning Committee (BFPC) on the Public Procurement/Concession/Disposal Bill and Anti-Money Laundering & Countering of Financing Terrorism (AML-CFT) draft-law and the Interior & Security Committee on the Counter Terrorism (CT) draft-law. Public Procurement Law & AML-CFT Law were endorsed by NFP in December 2015. The support from PSP has greatly contributed to the quality of those two laws.

The PSP has also supported the NFP to hold public outreach activities. On 22 November 2015 the NFP held a public outreach event at the NFP plenary building. Representatives from civil society organization, such as women, youth, people with disabilities, students and lecturers from more than 10 universities, the Bar Association, political associations, and religious leaders participated in the event. The main objective of the activity was to raise the awareness among the public on the legislative agenda of the NFP for the 7th Session.

During the 7th session the NFP/respective committees have organized public consultations for several bills in Mogadishu and the regions with various stakeholders including civil society organizations, financial entities, businesses community and governmental institutions on the AML-CFT bill, Public Procurement bill, Foreign Investment Bill, Media law and Human Rights Commission bill.

The highlights of the session include the approval of:

- The Foreign Investment bill on 23/11/2015;
- The Public Procurement, Concessions & Disposal bill on 12/12/2015;
- The Anti-Money Laundering & Counter Terrorism Financing Law on December 26/12/2015;
- The Media Law on 28/12/2015;
- The Closing of Accounts on 30/12/2015;
- The Budget for 2016 on 31/12/2015;
- The Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Law on 3/2/2016;
- The Establishment of Disaster Management Agency Law on 14/2/2016;
- The Resolution on Membership of Islamic Cooperation Agency;

In addition, the NFP has discussed in its sittings several bills, i.e. Veterinary Bill (first & second reading), Petroleum Bill (first reading), and Bill on the Retirement Benefits of Political Leadership (first & second reading).

Also, this legislative session was marked by the presentation of the Oversight Committee report on ten chapters of the revision of the Constitution on 15 February 2016.

The next and last session of this parliament is planned to commence on 6 April 2016.
Constituency offices are critical organs that link the Parliament to the communities it serves. These offices should at all times be ready to render quality services to the people. In 2014, Somaliland Parliament with UNDP support established five regional constituency offices, in Borama, Berbera, Burao, Laascaaano and Erigavo. Each regional office is operated by two staff members which makes a total number of 10 regional parliamentary staff.

UNDP Parliament Support Project staff in February 2016 conduct a visit to Borame district in Awdal region. The objective of the visit was to find out what services these offices are practically providing and to identify areas which could be improved in the future and the conditions required for such to happen.

The findings of the field visit included that the Borame office has managed to establish good working relations with Awdal regional administration and local district councilors. The office has established an outreach program with two out of the five universities and 11 secondary schools in the region. The office functions as a venue for discussions when parliamentary committees and MPs visit Awdal region. However, regional office staff indicated that they need more training in order to better serve as a link between MPs and population.

The visit clearly showed the need for the HoR to maintain regional parliamentary offices that are accessible to all constituents, regardless of party affiliation, since the offices are channels for the public to participate and to serve as two-way communication mechanism. Through them, people raise their concerns and get feedback from their Members of Parliament. The more committees and MPs engage with voters, listen to their grievances and raise their concerns to the executive the better develops the relationship between the institutions and the public.

Galmudug Parliament Three-day Training in Legislative Drafting

Galmudug Parliament had been provided with a three-day training workshop in legislative drafting which aimed at introducing MPs to the fundamentals and techniques of legislative drafting. The workshop was held on 5-7 of March 2016 at Adaado presidential building and it received an extensive media coverage. Addressing the media, the Speaker of Galmudug Parliament said, “This training workshop was a real godsend, especially considering the significant number of legislative drafting problems that individual committees and MPs will be able to overcome as a result of participating in this workshop. Over a span of just three days, this training workshop not only increased the capacity of MPs to draft quality legislation but also the way they think of legislation. Galmudug Parliament is grateful to UNDP for providing us this training and for sending us their experts; we were in need of UNDP support.” Finally, the Speaker urged participants to apply this new knowledge immediately on the bills that are currently under consideration of each of your respective committees.

Hon. Anab, while she was speaking to the media also said, “I believe that my understanding in legislative drafting has improved one thousand times. I also believe that all MPs who participated this training workshop not only agree with me but also feel the same level of improvements in themselves. We learnt how to perform regulatory impact assessment how to improve the quality of laws and to consider the social, economic, political and environmental impacts of a draft-law. We also understood what makes a well-drafted legislation.” In the same way, the Chairman of Constitution, Reconciliation and Internal Affairs Committee told Horn Cable TV that majority of those MPs who attended the three-day’s training workshop became very competent in legislative drafting, policymaking, implementing and monitoring laws.