Good Governance Africa (GGA) - Horn of Africa and Institute of Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University

Concept Note | Policy Dialogue Session on "Somalia April 2027 Elections" |

26 November 2026 | 02:00 – 5:00 PM EAT | IPSS Conference Hall

1. Background and Rationale

Good Governance Africa (GGA) is an independent, non-partisan research and advocacy institution dedicated to advancing democratic governance, institutional integrity, and accountable leadership across the continent. The GGA Horn of Africa Regional Office (GGA-HoRA) provides evidence-based analysis on governance challenges in one of Africa's most complex regions. Its core focus areas include conflict transformation, political transitions, state reform and state-building, youth empowerment, and climate change. Its partner, the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University is a premiere institute for research, policy dialogues, and professional development on peace and security in Africa. IPSS' Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP) is a joint programme of the African Union (AU) and the Institute, mandated by the African Union Executive Council. Under this program, IPSS promotes the values of a democratic and peaceful society through various policy dialogue platforms and its evidence-based research outputs. GGA-HoRA and IPSS have partnered to host a policy dialogue on the the 2027 elections in Somalia which initially fell within the wave of elections in several Horn of Africa countries in 2026, but was later postponed to 2027 following the constitutional amendment that changed the presidential term limit to five years.

This joint initiative is informed by the belief that the African Union's normative frameworks, particularly the commitments to democracy and good governance, remain central reference points for measuring political progress. Yet, in the Horn of Africa, the role of elections in deepening democratic governance and improving state–society relations has been inconsistent. Despite their shortcomings, elections still remain vital mechanisms through which citizens can express preferences, provide feedback to governing elites, and engage in peaceful political contestation.

Against this backdrop, the 2027 elections in Somalia represent a critical moment. Beyond their immediate political implications, these elections provide an entry point for examining governance trajectories and the prospects for strengthening democratic resilience amid complex structural and security challenges.

2. Purpose of the Webinar

Somalia's planned transition from the consociational 4.5 clan power-sharing model to universal suffrage marks a significant reconfiguration of its political order. While this shift is intended to enhance legitimacy and reduce elite capture, it unfolds amid mounting tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and several Federal Member States (FMS), including Puntland, Jubaland, and Southwest. Disputes over unilateral constitutional amendments have undermined federal cooperation, raising concerns over authority, resource control, and security jurisdiction. Simultaneously, Al-Shabaab continues to pose a severe

threat to electoral processes. Without addressing these dual pressures, the transition to universal suffrage risks deepening fragmentation rather than consolidating democratic governance.

While the federal presidential election was originally anticipated for 2026, the president's mandate has been extended, with federal elections now projected for 2027 to allow for the transition from the 4.5 system to a direct-vote model. However, the 2026 electoral roadmap remains active at the sub-national level. Federal Member States (FMS) held elections separately. Accordingly, the Southwest State held elections on May 10, Galmudug on July 30 and Hirshabelle on September 30, 2026.

The delay in the national presidential election on the one hand and the move by regional states to hold separate elections on the other hand, have led to intensified political friction. This can be attested, among others, by Puntland's rejection of the postponement of the national presidential election as "unconstitutional term extension". In spite of this, however, the national elections per the amended constitution is now set for April 15, 2027.

Given this contestation, the feasibility of peaceful, credible, and inclusive elections remains uncertain, raising questions about alternative sequencing, political dialogue, and the roles of regional and international partners. The webinar therefore aims to convene scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society actors to critically assess the evolving electoral landscape in Somalia.

Discussion Questions

- Electoral Transition and State-Building: What opportunities and risks do the 2027 elections present for Somalia's political future and state-building?
- Governance and Political Dynamics: What political, economic, and governance factors are most likely to shape the success or failure of the electoral process?
- Federalism, Security, and Stability: How might federal government-state relations, security challenges, and regional dynamics affect the credibility and implementation of the elections?
- Civil Society and International Actors: What roles should civil society, the media, neighboring countries, IGAD, Gulf States, the AU, the EU, and other partners play in supporting a credible and inclusive electoral process?
- Looking Beyond 2027: What would a successful electoral outcome look like, and what is the most important step needed to achieve it?

3. Format of the Session

The three-hour hybrid event will follow a standardised, interactive format designed to balance expert analysis with audience engagement:

- Moderated Panel Discussion: A moderator will guide a discussion among panelists, drawing out comparative insights and contextual analysis based on the session's key questions.
- Interactive Q&A Session: Participants will engage with panelists through a moderated Q&A chat, enabling practical and policy-focused dialogue.
- Opening and Closing Remarks: The moderator will summarize key takeaways and outline next steps.

4. Target Audience

- Regional policymakers and governance practitioners
- Civil society organisations and democracy networks
- African Union and IGAD officials
- Academic researchers and think tanks
- Development partners and bilateral donors
- Youth and community leaders
- Media and public affairs professionals

5. Expected Deliverables

- Outcomes Report including key takeaway
- Photos and media content for GGA and IPSS websites and social media

6. Venue and Date

The policy dialogue will be hosted at IPSS Conference Hall in a hybrid format on 26 November 2026 from 02:00 – 05:00 pm EAT.