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## Communiqué of the Bulsho Trust Conference 2025

### **Somalia: Building Electoral Consensus for Political Stability**

Hilton Columbus at Easton, Columbus, Ohio, USA

**September 7, 2025**

From September 6–7, 2025, Somali leaders, parliamentarians, academics, civil society representatives, diaspora voices, and international partners convened at the Hilton Columbus at Easton under the auspices of **Bulsho Trust** to deliberate on the theme “*Somalia: Building Electoral Consensus for Political Stability.*”

#### **Proceedings:**

The Conference reviewed Somalia’s electoral history from the trusteeship period (1956–1959), through independence elections (1960, 1964, 1969), to the Third Republic (2000–present). Participants assessed challenges of constitutional ambiguity, federal–state relations, insecurity, and the search for a viable model for the 2026 elections. 15 Respected Somali academics and political leaders presented academic papers on building electoral consensus for political stability. Five panel discussions were held focusing on the urgent need to reconcile the 2012 provisional constitution with subsequent amendments, options for electoral power sharing between the federal government and member states, and pathways to consensus on a more legitimate indirect election model. Across sessions, guiding questions emerged: How can Somalia avoid contested legitimacy? Which constitutional framework will apply in 2026? What models balance feasibility, inclusivity, and credibility?

#### **Consensus Points:**

The Conference reached several consensus points:

1. **On One-Person-One-Vote Elections:** The Conference underscored that one person, one vote elections in Somalia are impossible in 2026 given the prevailing political disagreements, deteriorating security conditions, prohibitive costs, and the very limited time remaining in the current government’s mandate which expires in May 2026.



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2. On Constitutional Change: The 2012 Provisional Constitution remains the most widely accepted foundation and should guide dialogue until a permanent negotiated constitutional settlement is reached.
3. On Federal Member State Relations: Genuine political agreement between the federal government and member states is indispensable. Electoral commissions must include both levels.
4. On Election Models: A reformed indirect election is the most viable option for 2026. Models considered include clan-based sub-constituencies under the 2020 law and broader electoral colleges.
5. On Dialogue: A sustained National Electoral Dialogue should be launched both inside Somalia and in the diaspora to agitate for the need to build electoral consensus in order to avert illegal term extensions and contested legitimacy of state institutions.

## **Conclusion**

The Conference reaffirmed that Somalia's stability depends not on imposed models but on **negotiated consensus**. Participants called on Somali leaders to put dialogue above unilateralism and to prioritize unity, inclusivity, and practical feasibility in designing the 2026 electoral process.

The Conference closed with keynote remarks by **H.E. Amb. Dahir Hassan Abdi** and recognition of key contributors. The spirit of responsibility and urgency marked the farewell messages.

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