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**د افغانستان د آزاد او عادلانه ټولټاکنو موسسه**

**موسسه انتخابات آزاد و عادلانه افغانستان**

**Free & Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan**

## **FEFA's Press statement**

**For Immediate Release**

**Kabul, May 14, 2018**

### **FEFA Calls for Immediate and Temporarily Suspension of the Voter Registration Process**

FEFA believe that successful completion of the voter registration process and preparation of the voter list are prerequisites for the legitimacy and credibility of the election process. However, monitoring of the registration process revealed a series of challenges which require immediate address to end public concerns and guarantee preparation of accurate voter lists. FEFA seriously calls on IEC to retain its independence, and abide by the provisions of the laws and accepted electoral principles.

Low level public participation in the first month of the voter registration process indicates that there is a crisis of trust, and frustration with the electoral reform process has further decreased public confidence in the process. Preparation of the voter list is the only option which can validate the legitimacy of the electoral process and achieve a better election. Therefore, the Afghan government, IEC and all stakeholders must prioritize preparation of an accurate and legitimate voters list.

The government and IEC have recently developed a process of attaching stickers to the back of copies of voters' identity cards at the time of registration, but this decision has created some concerns among citizens. Some felt that attachment of a sticker to the back of their original identity cards posed serious security threats to them at the time of traveling to insecure areas. Therefore, the decision can prevent the threats but lack of IEC's preparation and practical mechanisms to prevent multiple registration (Through copies of identity cards) is a serious concern. This situation added to the distrust of citizens to the process and can further decrease the level of participation.

Considering the facts, FEFA calls on the government of Afghanistan and IEC to immediately suspend the voter registration process and undertake the following measures before resuming it in the districts and villages:

1. Development of a specialized information bank/database: The IEC in coordination with the Central Civil Registration Authority must develop a specialized information database to manage all data of registered voters based on their identity cards. The database must be able to identify, track and control the locations where forged identity cards are used. The system must enable the IEC to expedite its measures on dealing with use of fake identity cards.

2. Establishment information recording unites in provincial level: Establishment of information recording unites in proportional to the population of districts can speed up the process of entering voters data into a database which is connected to the central office of IEC. These unites can enable the IEC to regularly control and audit the data entering process and check the credibility of data. Additionally, the political parties and civil society organizations must have the privilege of monitoring the process in order to enhance public trust on the election process.
3. The Afghan government in cooperation with the international forces must devise a cohesive security plan for elections to provide full security for the process and make sure voters feel safe to take part in the process after resuming of the voter registration process.
4. Expediting the recruitment process of first grade and top echelons of secretariat of IEC and delegation of all executive and operational duties to secretariat is also recommended.

Considering the fact that officials may ask questions about this, it is worth mentioning that FEFA's technical assessment indicates that temporary suspension of the process will have no impact on the polling date. It will only impact on the electoral events like publication of voters list, candidates registration process, scrutiny of collected information about candidates registration, publication of candidates preliminary list, recording complaints on candidates preliminary list, handling the complaints on candidates preliminary list, the final date for withdrawal of candidates and publication of candidates final list which are projected to take place until August 14, 2018.

The voter registration process can be suspended for 20 days to one month, until the IEC and government in cooperation with the international community implement the above mentioned recommendations.

Once again, FEFA requests that the international community, particularly the United Nations, support expansion of the technical capability of the IEC to foster credible, legitimate and trustworthy elections.

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