

UPF Melbourne, Australia: Are Political Parties Ready for the 2020-2021 Elections

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Melbourne, Australia -- Australian Ambassador for Peace Dr. Chris Sotiropoulos presented via Zoom at a high-level political symposium the Centre for Research and Human Development hosted on the topic, "Are the Political Parties Ready for the 2020-2021 Elections?", on August 8, 2020 in Mogadishu, Somalia.

The event brought together leaders of political parties and parliamentarians to identify roadblocks and devise strategies to ensure safe and lawful conduct.

Dr. Sotiropoulos spoke about the Australian political system, reflecting on the vision which led to the meeting of the representatives of the six British colonies in the country in the late 1890s to relinquish specific legislative power to create a federal government in 1901. He highlighted the level of faith and trust as well as the peacebuilding activities which led to the relinquishing of legislative power in return for nationhood.

The interplay between state and federal governments during times of state or national emergencies was also examined. Although there is often tension between the two political hierarchies, mutual values and respect result in cooperation to devise, adopt and even reconfigure solutions. This conduct was practiced during recent state-declared emergencies, arising from natural disasters (bushfires, floods and drought) and the pandemic. The range of support is proportional to the impact, as observed this year when COVID-19 emerged, and includes ongoing assistance for mental health, education, employees, businesses and high-risk aged care facilities.

A second major theme that was discussed was the role Australian political parties play, together with the Australian Electoral Commission, to ensure fair and safe elections. Learnings from such institutions are immediately available for use "and alteration to adapt to the Somali cultural context." These models and assistance from political parties will help foster community trust, enable security and promote integrity in the forthcoming electoral process to ensure the benefit for the country and enable Somalians to develop their country in a self-directed manner.