



# **Addendum to Policy Directive FP/01/2012 on Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance**

20 November 2018

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## **United Nations Support to Election Situation Rooms**

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Review date: *As necessary*

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## **POLICY ON United Nations Support to Election Situation Rooms**

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### **A. PURPOSE**

1. This addendum to the United Nations Policy on the Principles and Types of Electoral Assistance (Ref. No. FP/01/2012) offers guidance on UN support to election situation rooms. It should be read in conjunction with that policy.

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### **B. SCOPE**

2. The policy applies to all entities of the United Nations (UN) system and UN personnel with respect to activities that touch on electoral processes. United Nations is understood to refer to the entire UN system that is all UN departments, funds, programmes, entities, trust funds, commissions, peacekeeping missions, special political missions, peacebuilding missions, country offices and other bodies. Activities that touch on electoral processes include all activities as detailed in the Policy Directive on "Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance" (Ref. No. FP/01/2012).

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### **C. RATIONALE**

4. United Nations electoral assistance is provided under a framework established by the General Assembly. The Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs is the system lead in the development, issuance and dissemination of UN electoral policy. This policy has been developed to provide structure and guidance to how the UN should engage with election situations rooms to ensure mitigation of potential risks that may be associated with the entity's engagement.

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### **D. POLICY**

#### **D1. Background**

5. For purposes of this policy, election situation rooms (ESRs), including women's situation rooms (collectively referred to here as ESRs, even if the terminology may differ country to country) are described as initiatives of civil society (sometimes in collaboration with other stakeholders (governments, private sector, etc.) to promote the peaceful conduct of elections – including promoting women's electoral participation and addressing violence against women.

6. While their activities and approaches vary from country to country, they typically involve the monitoring of some aspects of an electoral process. Normally ESR functions differ from traditional domestic electoral observation although they sometimes opt to seek accreditation as election observer groups and at times have engaged in parallel vote tabulation. ESRs often engage in mobilizing, training and deploying monitors or formally accredited election observers. They also often involve a physical space, or room, where news, reports and information are gathered, analysed and shared with different stakeholders. This can include notifying responsible authorities of reports of irregularities or allegations and/or referring complaints to them. Many ESRs put an emphasis on coordinating public messages among their participants, as well as on coordinating civil society efforts to respond to (or give early warnings about) crises. Prominent civil society leaders are often affiliated with ESRs, lending their voice and authority to coordinated civil society messages and responses.

7. An ESR is one of a number of initiatives and mechanisms that may be part of a broader effort to contribute to objectives that are also pursued by the UN, such as the promotion of women's political participation, and the prevention of electoral violence -including violence against women. At the same time, support to such initiatives may carry a risk of being perceived as UN election observation, which requires a mandate from the Security Council or General Assembly.

## **D2. Approach to UN Engagement with Election Situation Rooms**

8. UN technical and material assistance aimed at strengthening the capacity of ESRs to promote inclusive electoral processes, or to promote peaceful electoral processes through initiatives focused on conflict prevention and management, transparency and accountability of the electoral process, constitutes a form of assistance within the meaning of the UN Policy on the Principles and Types of Electoral Assistance (FP/01/2012, p. 7).

9. Requests for UN technical and material assistance to such ESRs should therefore be considered within the context of the UN electoral framework. That includes a decision by the UN focal point for electoral assistance after assessing relevant needs. (UN advocacy, or support to civil society advocacy, for youth and women's rights and political participation, as well as broader UN efforts to support the creation of a conducive environment for an election, do not require the approval of the UN focal point if no electoral assistance is involved).

10. In cases where UN technical support to ESRs is being contemplated, the nature of the support will be articulated in the needs assessment report. If approved, it must be designed and provided transparently, in an impartial and as much as possible equitable manner, and in a way which is, and is perceived to be, politically neutral. In the case of possible support to a women situation room, the assessment would consider the extent to which such a room addresses the gender dimensions of the elections.

11. When the Focal Point recommends the provision of support to ESRs, UN personnel should avoid the impression that the UN is observing an election if no such observation mandate exists. They should not engage in activities that may lead to such misperception, in particular involvement in the actual deployment of the observation mission, assisting with drafting reports or participating in the implementation of domestic observation or entering an electoral site in and around election day. The UN should also not be associated with parallel vote tabulation activities and should generally maintain a low profile in provision of support to initiatives engaged in domestic observation activities. Further guidance is articulated in the Policy Directive on Conduct of UN personnel in and around electoral sites (Ref. FP/01/2015).

12. The UN logo or name should not be used in any statements or other materials published by an ESR that are related to traditional electoral observation activities, for example if they involve comments on the quality of an election or its outcome. This is to avoid any impression that the UN endorses those comments. Publications of an ESR supported by the UN should make clear that they do not necessarily represent the views of the UN, and that the ESR is operating independently of the UN.

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## **E. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

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## **F. REFERENCES**

### **Related guidance**

Policy Directive on Conduct of UN personnel in and around electoral sites (Ref.No. FP/01/2015)

Policy Directive on Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance (Ref. No. FP/01/2012)

Guideline on United Nations Electoral Needs Assessments (Ref. No. FP/02/2012).

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## **G. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE**

The Focal Point is tasked with ensuring coordination within the United Nations system with regard to electoral assistance and will therefore help to ensure that the principles outlined in this policy are adhered to.

Managers of UN electoral assistance programs and projects will also be responsible to ensure compliance with this policy by all UN electoral staff under their supervision.

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#### **H. DATES**

This policy became effective on 20 November 2018. It shall remain in effect until reviewed.

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#### **I. CONTACT**

Policy and Institutional Memory Team, Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs

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#### **J. HISTORY**

Drafted by the Policy and Institutional Memory Team, Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs on 20 November 2018.

Consulted with members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance prior to adoption.

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**SIGNED:** 

**DATE:** 20 November 2018