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Somalia: Analysis of Legal Framework for the Media

The Centre for Law and Democracy, working with the African Union/United Nations Information Support Team (IST), and in partnership with UNESCO, recently released the *Somalia: Media Law and Policy Review*, analysing the legal framework for media regulation in Somalia. There has been important progress in Somalia in recent months, with the drafting of an interim constitution, and the election of a parliament and a president. The Review is designed to help the new government move forward to implement media reforms in line with the interim constitution.

"The situation in Somalia remains difficult," said CLD Executive Director Toby Mendel. *"But there is now an opportunity to move forward in terms of media law and policy reform, and we urge the government to take full advantage of this opportunity."*

A draft Communications Act being considered by the government of Somalia, which was the subject of a previous CLD analysis, should be finalised and adopted. This should be followed by a number of other actions, of which the more important are:

- Adopting detailed rules on broadcasting, in line with international standards, by establishing an independent regulator and providing for the licensing of commercial, public service and community broadcasters.
- Putting in place a more detailed legal regime for public service broadcasting.
- Abolishing onerous registration requirements and severe sanctions for the print media.
- Adopting right to information legislation.
- Bringing content restrictions into line with democratic standards, including by decriminalising defamation.

We believe this is a historic moment for Somalia and we call on the government to deliver on its democratic promises to the people. A key part of this should include anchoring respect for the right to freedom of expression through a legal framework which is in line with international standards.

The CLD analysis of the draft Communications Act is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/somalia-analysis-of-draft-telecommunication-law/>. The Review is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/somalia-analysis-of-legal-framework-for-the-media/>.

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