

Yemen's Saleh plans political reforms

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Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is under international pressure to introduce reforms, told opposition leaders he wants to cut the presidential term by two years to promote democracy, officials said on Tuesday.

Government officials told Reuters Saleh plans to cut the presidential term to five years from seven, reduce the parliamentary term to four years from six and reserve 15 percent of the parliament's 301 seats for women.

Saleh is also keen to abolish the post of prime minister and run the cabinet himself, they added.

Saleh, who was re-elected last year, appointed the current prime minister Ali Mohammed Megawar, who was seen to have strong economic credentials, in March. Analysts in Yemen said then that Saleh took this step to show donors, such as the World Bank, that he was serious about political and economic reforms.

The reforms must be approved by parliament to become effective.

Yemen — which receives grants and long-term loans from donor countries — produces 400,000 barrels per day of crude oil and is estimated to have exported 333,000 bpd in 2005.