

Indicators of Democratic Elections

**Asian Electoral Stakeholder Forum
II Dili, Timor:Leste
18 & 19 March 2015**

Preamble

Recognizing that the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret ballots and universal suffrage is the true expression of the sovereignty of the people;

Adhering to the principles enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration on Free and Fair Elections and to the rights and principles proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration on Democracy;

Recognizing that the adoption of common indicators respecting democratic elections can help measure democratic progress and show the strengths and areas of needed improvement of each nation's electoral processes;

Now, therefore, we, Asian electoral stakeholders from both government and civil society gathered together at the 2nd Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum on 18 & 19 March 2015 in Dili, TimorQLeste, commit and agree to utilize the following Indicators of Democratic Elections:

Indicators of Democratic Elections

I. Legal Framework

- a. The overall legal framework provides for universal suffrage and guarantees basic freedoms.
- b. The legal framework is consistent with international human rights instruments such as the UDHR and the ICCPR.
- c. The legal framework provides for the regularity of elections, with intervals clearly defined and set out in law.
- d. The legal framework provides for an inclusive process that is fair to all people of the nation without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- e. The laws governing the conduct of elections are applied impartially and without discrimination.
- f. There is respect for the rule of law by all election stakeholders.

II. Level Playing Field

a. **Fair Constituency Delimitation**

1. Electoral constituency boundaries are drawn on the basis of the size of the population and geographic area.

b. **Participation of Political Parties and Candidates**

1. Requirements for political party and candidate registration are reasonable and clear.
2. Regulations for political party and candidate registration are non-discriminatory.
3. There are no legal candidate registration requirements which discriminate against persons as candidates on the basis of gender, sex, race, religion, or political views.
4. Independent candidates are allowed to compete in elections.

c. **Free and Fair Campaigning**

1. All political parties and candidates can campaign freely without fear of intimidation or threats of violence.
2. A code of conduct is signed by political parties and other stakeholders to commit to the prevention of election conflict and violence.
3. There is no abuse of government resources in order to advantage or disadvantage any political party or candidate.
4. Political parties and candidates are required to make detailed, timely disclosures of their campaign contributions and expenditures.
5. Appropriate sanctions are in place for violations by political parties and candidates.

d. **Fair Coverage of Media**

1. The media are able to freely cover campaigns and other election activities.
2. The media, both public and private, are impartial in their programming, reporting on and covering all phases of the electoral process.

III. Professional Electoral Management Body (EMB)

a. **EMB as a Democratic Institution that is Independent and Impartial**

1. Appointment of EMB officials is based on a just, impartial and transparent process.
2. All EMB officials and staff are professional, independent and impartial.
3. The EMB maintains transparency in the entire electoral process.
4. EMB staff is equipped with sufficient training and adequate resources to discharge their duties effectively and impartially without favoring or disfavoring any particular political party or candidate.

b. **Efficient, Transparent Pre-Election Preparations**

1. The voter registration list is prepared in a manner free from fraud.
2. The voter registration list is available for inspection by interested groups.
3. Mechanisms to correct errors on the voter registration list are available in advance of election day.
4. Polling places are conveniently located for voters.
5. Representatives of political parties, candidates, and the public are permitted to reasonably observe the various aspects of election preparation and conduct of polls.

c. **Well-Organized Election Day, Free from Fraud**

1. All voters are allowed to cast their votes without undue difficulty.
2. The process of balloting is implemented efficiently, transparently, without discrimination and in accordance with applicable laws.
3. The secrecy of each voter's choices is assured.

d. **There is Timely Reporting of Election Results**

1. Election results are reported promptly without undue delay.

IV. Inclusive and Meaningful Participation of Citizens

- a. The legal framework clearly spells out the criteria of citizens eligible to vote.
- b. Any disqualifications (e.g., felony conviction, severely impaired mental faculties) for registering should be reasonable, fair and implemented without discrimination.
- c. The actual process of voter registration is accessible to all eligible persons without discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, wealth, etc.
- d. Voter education is sufficient to enable voters to make informed decisions about candidates and political parties.
- e. Women are encouraged to participate in elections as voters and as candidates.
- f. All vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and other minorities are encouraged to participate in the electoral process.
- g. Local absentee voting mechanisms are provided for voters who cannot cast ballots in their assigned polling station on election day.

v. Effective, Efficient, and Impartial Electoral Justice & Electoral Dispute Resolution

- a. The applicable laws provide a process for resolving disputes respecting all aspects of the electoral process.
- b. The process of resolving disputes is done in an impartial, transparent, independent and timely manner consistent with respect for the rule of law.