

Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership

Election Observation of the June 29, 2008 Parliamentary Elections, Mongolia

Preliminary Statement

Background

At the invitation of the Government of Mongolia and the Mongolian General Election Commission (GEC), a 16-member delegation, comprised of election and government officials, civil society representatives, and one parliamentarian from Australia, Canada, Timor-Leste (East Timor), Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States carried out a short term observation of the June 29, 2008 parliamentary elections in Mongolia under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP).

In preparation for their observation work, the APDP Delegates participated in numerous briefings and meetings with Mongolian political party representatives, election officials, and civil society representatives in the days immediately preceding the election. On Election Day, June 29, the Delegation's nine teams observed various stages of the voting process at more than 110 individual voting centers. They encountered more than 1,500 election workers, and thousands of Mongolian voters.

Preliminary Statement of Findings

Because ballot counting and reporting remains incomplete at the time of this statement, *findings to this point are partial and preliminary.*

Based upon their observations in locations where they observed voting and ballot counting, the Delegation wishes to congratulate the Mongolian people, the Mongolian Government and the General Election Commission for their hard work and energetic participation in this election process. APDP observers expressed reasonable confidence that the election would provide a result consistent with the will of the Mongolian people. They also noted, however, that ballot counting and reporting has not been completed in all areas of the country or even in all of the locations where they were present on Election Day. Important work remains to be done before the election can be declared an accurate reflection of the will of the Mongolian people.

The delegates regret the significant incidents of violence on July 1 in downtown Ulaanbaatar, and in response call on all political party leaders to publicly renounce the violence and urge their supporters to restore calm.

Preliminary Findings

Political campaigning appears to have been vigorous and peaceful in all parts of the country where APDP observers were present. Reports indicated that access to print and

electronic media appeared to have been generally available on an equitable basis. Mongolian citizens were offered clear and varied political choices.

APDP observers were positively impressed by the dedication and preparedness of election officials at all levels in the locations where they observed. Several APDP observers also expressed appreciation for the substantial number of women participants in the process. The General Election Commission, the District Election Committees and the Sub-District Election Committees in the various Districts to which observers were assigned, appear to have substantially met all critical deadlines established in the election law for the preparation and delivery of voter registration lists, ballots and other materials to individual polling stations. In all parts of Ulaanbaatar, as well as in the four outlying Aimags where APDP observers were present, voting stations opened and closed on time, and though turnout was consistently high throughout the day, the voting stations were generally well organized, orderly and efficiently managed. Voters appeared to be confident and disciplined throughout the Election Day, and seemed to have little difficulty understanding the ballot or the requirements of the new, multi-mandate voting system.

Observers were sensitive to concerns expressed regarding the accuracy of the voter registration lists, and believe that the voter registration and identification process should be reviewed and improved prior to the next election. However, they did not find evidence to suggest that problems associated with the lists had either been exploited in a systematic manner, or that they had resulted in the disenfranchisement of a significant number of voters.

The high voter turnout, the relatively large number of voters assigned to each voting station, and the large number of candidates on the individual ballots all contributed to an extremely lengthy vote counting and reporting process. Though several observers did suggest that the election process would benefit if fewer voters were assigned to individual voting stations, all observers were nonetheless impressed with the orderliness with which the process unfolded. They did not report evidence of disagreement among polling station workers, or objections by party poll watchers, pertaining to the counting process. It should be noted, however, that only a small number of observers actually remained at voting stations through the conclusion of the vote counting and reporting process in their locations.

APDP observers also expressed admiration for the work of the nearly 1,000 Mongolian poll watchers that they encountered on Election Day. They were uniformly present at voting stations in all areas, they appeared to have been well trained and knowledgeable, and they comported themselves professionally. Observers believe that they played an important role in promoting the integrity of the process, but suggested that public confidence in the electoral process might benefit if non-partisan civic organizations were also allowed to have poll watchers present in voting stations.

In conclusion, the 16 members of the APDP Delegation wish to express thanks and gratitude to their Mongolian hosts for the warm welcome that they have extended, and to congratulate the Mongolian people for this exercise in democratic self-government. It is the Delegations' sincerest hope that the process will conclude peacefully and with a result that accurately reflects the will of the Mongolian people.