



**STATEMENT OF ICAPP ON
THE COMMUNE/SANGKAT COUNCIL ELECTION IN CAMBODIA
4 JUNE 2017**

At the invitation of the National Election Committee (NEC) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the election observation delegation of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), led by Honorable Vijay Jolly, member of ICAPP Standing Committee and BJP Leader Advisor for Global Political Affairs, accompanied by delegates from India, the Philippines, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Thailand, Russia and Mongolia to observe the commune/sangkat council election.

In Cambodia ICAPP delegation met Prime Minister Hun Sen and leaders of three major political parties including the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), and the National United Front for an Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC). The ICAPP delegation also met with representatives from the NEC and civil society organizations.

The ICAPP delegation was briefed on political situation in Cambodia and importantly the election process that the country genuinely practices since the early 1990s. We witnessed progress in Cambodia's democracy, good governance and freedom. The most notable example is the reform to the NEC, the adoption of new Election Law and amendments of Political Party Law, which aim to strengthen the rule of law and to build public trust and confidence in the country.

According to the NEC, 7,873,194 people aged 18 and above or 81.47 percent registered for the 4th mandate of the commune/sangkat council election. The ICAPP delegation also learned that with the support from Japan and the European Union, the registration process was done by biometric technology. The use of such technology in election process is extremely useful and it helps address the issues of missing and duplicate names, among others. This is definitely another major milestone in Cambodia's commitment and determination in hosting a free, fair and credible election.

On Election Day, the ICAPP delegation visited random polling stations in different locations. We were impressed by a large turnout at those polling stations. People were seen to cast their votes in a free, fair and confidential manner. There were no signs of intimidation and coercion. In addition, the NEC staff did their job in a professional, transparent and independent manner. Local and international election observers were also allowed to effectively perform their task.

The ICAPP delegation also witnessed the vote counting process, which was transparent and open. Representatives from political parties and local and international observers were present during the vote counting process. In some polling stations, local and international media were also invited to provide unimpeded coverage of the vote counting process and broadcast it throughout the country.

The Cambodian government did a great job in ensuring the safety and security of voters, members of political parties, local and international observers, members of the media and civil society organizations. This year, the situation is generally calm, stable and peaceful. Political parties are more mature and they give priority to dialogue and nonviolent confrontation as a means to resolve their differences.

We also received a complaint from the opposition party regarding unfair use of resource pertaining to broadcast media. However, in our opinion, the problem is not serious enough to undermine the quality and outcome of the commune/sangkat council election as state television provides equal time slot for all political parties while private televisions would sell time slot to everyone. Use of social media is also fair for all parties. Most importantly, the ICAPP delegation was assured by the NEC and all the relevant agencies that problems were effectively addressed through proper process in accordance with the election law and other related laws.

The biggest lesson that the ICAPP delegation could offer is that Cambodia is on the right path to strong and genuine democracy, which is also the aspiration of millions of people, especially youth who account for nearly 70 percent of the entire population. The fact that Cambodia absolutely committed to multiparty election as a means to compete for public office is a true testimony to the Cambodian government's strong belief in democracy.

The ICAPP delegation considers this year commune/sangkat council election as free, fair, credible and transparent. Therefore, we strongly urge all the political parties and their supporters to respect the decision of the Cambodian people. Moreover, we are confident that all the political parties would be able to resolve their conflicts through peaceful, amicable and win-win manner. All the political parties must put national interest ahead of themselves and their parties.

ICAPP is one of the biggest political groupings in the world, representing over 350 political parties from 52 countries in Asia. Our member states are committed to democracy, peace, inclusive development and democratization process in Cambodia. Finally, the ICAPP delegation would like to congratulate the Cambodian government, voters, the NEC and other relevant agencies on the successful and credible commune/sangkat council election.