



The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan to Timor-Leste

The Second Round of the Presidential Elections of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on May 9 Preliminary Assessment by the Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan

Dili, May 11, 2007

1. The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan was deployed to the electoral districts of Dili, Manatuto and Baucau from 7 to 10 May to observe the implementation of the election, including preparations for the polling day, the polling itself, and the counting and tabulating procedures. Our Mission submitted its suggestions (see attached document), based on its observations from the first round of elections in April, to the National Election Commission (CNE), Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), and the UNMIT. On the polling day (May 9), our 8 observers visited a total of 105 times to polling and counting stations in 54 polling centers. In addition, H.E. Mr. Kenji Shimizu, the Japanese Ambassador to Timor-Leste, visited Viqueque on the polling day to observe the situation on the ground. Through these efforts the Mission endeavored to grasp the internal situation in Timor-Leste regarding the elections, in close cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Dili.
2. The activities of the Mission to observe and acknowledge the fairness of the elections has the aim of assisting the people of Timor-Leste who wish to utilize the results of the elections as a basis for a new step forward. Although the Mission's activities were geographically limited and shortly timed, the Mission has gathered much information and exchanged views comprehensively with other international observation teams, UN officials and political leaders in Timor-Leste. The Mission found that although there were some minor technical problems, the preparation of the polling stations, polling and counting had been conducted in compliance with the election rules.
3. In this second round of elections, the Mission commends the fact that the voting was carried out in a peaceful manner with, indeed, improved electoral procedures. The procedures have become more standardized and more clear. Improvements were observed in practice for 1) checking the number of ballot papers received before the opening of the polling stations, 2) checking voters' fingers for ink marks before voting, 3) picture display of the correct way of marking/ punching the ballot paper, and 4) Mission believes that it was important to finalize the detailed procedures for polling and counting much earlier compared to the first round (Note: In the first round, the procedures were finalized 4 days prior to the polling day, but in the second round they were finalized 15 days prior to the polling day.) The Mission also notes that the incidents of lack of ballot papers in the polling stations decreased considerably, learning from the experience of the first round.
4. The Mission commends the tremendous efforts made by STAE and CNE to conduct successful elections with ownership, and expresses its appreciation of the monitoring activities conducted by the private sector such as KOMEG. It should not be forgotten that the international community strongly supported the process, rallying behind UNMIT. The fact that UNPOL, PNTL, and ISF made major efforts to maintain security should not be forgotten. It is through the accumulation of such efforts that the people of Timor-Leste are able to express their will for new nation-building by going to the ballot-box.
5. The presidential elections, together with the upcoming election for the national parliament, are the first national elections conducted by the Timorese government on the basis of electoral laws enacted by the Timorese people. The Mission believes that it is most important for the Timorese people and government to show real ownership of this process, so that successful elections lead to future nation building.
6. On the polling day, the Mission's observers witnessed that many voters waited silently in the queue before the opening of the polling stations, as was the case for the first round election in April. Also, it was observed that all parties concerned in the election, including the staff of the polling stations and STAE, representatives of the candidates, and national election observers, showed strong commitment to their work. The Mission is of the view that these are indications of growing ownership in Timor-Leste and that democracy is beginning to take roots. The policy of Japan is to respond to such ownership demonstrated by the Timorese people with "partnership."



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7. If there are claims of irregularity during the elections, they should be appealed and processed through the complaint procedures in accordance with the rule of law. The Mission strongly hopes that the will of the people expressed through elections will be accepted by everyone. The Mission expects that the national parliament elections to be held on June 30th will also be implemented in a free, fair and peaceful manner by the Timorese people and their government. The Mission expresses its strong wish that through the political process of presidential elections and elections of the national parliament, the people of Timor-Leste unite to move on to a new stage of nation building.

(END)



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Evaluation and Suggestions from the Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan to Timor-Leste based upon the 1st Round Vote of the Presidential Election

May 8, 2007

The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan was deployed to Dili, Liquica, Manatuto and Baucau from 4 to 10 April to observe the First Round of the Presidential Election, including the campaigning, preparation for the polling day, polling, counting and tabulation procedures. On the polling day (April 9), 14 observers visited polling and counting stations in 59 polling centers for a total of 127 times.

The Mission announced its "Preliminary assessment" on April 11, based upon the reports from each observer. The Mission has now compiled its evaluation and suggestions as follows:

1. Commendable Points

- (1) In general, the voting was carried out peacefully without major confusion in each polling station observed.
- (2) The staff at the polling stations, PNTL, National Observers and others on the ground were committed to performing their duties with enthusiasm to contribute to the success of the election. Also, voters took a cooperative attitude to contribute to the success of the election.
 - *Voters waited their turn patiently in the queues, following the instructions of the staff, etc.*
- (3) The training of the staff of the polling stations conducted by STAE before the polling day had good effects.
 - *The setting-up and operation of many polling stations were effective.*

2. Suggestions for future elections

- (1) The following points are related to the training and guidance given to the staff. The training and guidance were neither uniform nor complete, and can be improved in the future.
 - (a) The set-up of the polling station
 - *Some polling stations were set up outside the building upon the request of some voters.*
 - (b) The standing position of the police officers
 - *In some polling stations, police officers were seen inside the 25 meter- area from the polling station. This is prohibited by the election law. .*
 - (c) Lack of unity in making and checking ink marks
 - *Inconsistency was seen on which finger to make the ink marks. Checking the ink marks on fingers before the voting was not always conducted thoroughly.*
 - (d) Confirming the total number of the ballot paper at the opening of the polling station
 - *Many polling stations counted the number of stacks of 50 ballot papers. It is recommended to count each, one by one, considering the possibilities of misprints.*
 - (e) The procedure of reissuing ballot papers
 - *Staff at some polling stations were unaware of the procedure of reissuing ballot papers when a voter makes a mistake in writing or punching.*



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(2) The following points are for future consideration.

(a) Once the counting begins, procedures should be more strict and efficient.

- The counting operation should be conducted as strictly as possible in order not to provide an excuse for the losing parties to argue for an invalid election. At the same time, the counting operation should seek simplification and efficiency.

(An example of a procedure observed in a polling station)

i) Empty ballot box, ii) Classify vote as valid, invalid, or white, iii) Count the vote of each candidate.

(Some suggestions from our observers)

i) The counting operation should be conducted inside a building. Counting outdoors can be vulnerable to external disturbances. Some voters insisted on outdoor counting operation arguing the need for transparency; however, transparency can be secured inside the building with the presence of observers and representatives of parties.

ii) The total number of ballot papers should be counted first. This process will enable the confirmation of the number of ballot papers cast, the number of voters who voted (as registered names on the list) and the number of used ballot papers (The number of delivered papers minus the number of unused ballot papers and spoiled ballot papers).

iii) The verification of a vote as valid or invalid should be conducted simultaneously with the counting of the votes for each candidate. This will improve the efficiency of the counting operation.

iv) A “manual (guidebook)” describing samples of valid or invalid votes should be prepared and distributed to staff.

(b) Unifying the procedure for closing the polling station

- At the closing time, the ballot box should be closed and sealed. If staff close the polling station and begin counting while the box is still open, it may become possible to add or withdraw ballots illegally.

(c) Arrangement with the Media

- Arrangements should be made with the media regarding their position at the polling station so that they do not interfere with staff's work.

(d) Prohibit smoking inside polling stations

- To avoid fire in the polling stations. Some ballot papers were marked by cigarette fire.

(e) Introducing stricter procedures to avoid double voting

- Ink should be used just before handing the ballot paper to the voter. If the voter refuses, staff should refuse to give the ballot paper. The procedure of ink-marking after the vote can cause problems when the voter refuses being ink-marked (thus making it possible for double voting.)

(END)