



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Statement
by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
about the election

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) is pleased to share its comments on the outcomes of the 29th July election.

1. The first observation that deserves to be made is the peaceful and upbeat atmosphere in which the electoral campaign and the election day took place. For 20 days, 20 political parties had the opportunity to conduct their electoral campaign, unimpeded in their activities, and free to promote their policy platforms and express their views, some of them very harsh criticism against the Government. On the last day of the campaign, we have witnessed long procession of cars and motorcycles, wielding flags and banners from different political parties, crisscrossing peacefully throughout the capital without any incident. On the election day, long queues of enthusiastic voters can be observed, even before the opening of the polling stations. International observers were surprised by the normal and orderly behaviors of voters. Delegations of observers recognize that the process of vote counting was conducted carefully with polling service officials keen to re-verify when there was any doubt. The MFAIC is proud of the image of professionalism, honesty and seriousness given by the staff assigned to the electoral process and the image of mature citizenship given by the voters.
2. From the published statements of national and international observers, the National Election Committee (NEC) is to be given credit for its remarkable professional works, which has enabled the smooth conduct of a democratic, free and fair election.
3. By generally accepted standards, the first criterion for the legitimacy of an election is the participation rate of registered voters. For this election, the turnout of 82.89% has exceeded those of the elections in 2013 (69.61%) and in 2008 (75.21%). This exceptional high turnout rate is truly a reflection of a strong confidence of the citizens in the electoral process and in the NEC, the institution that manages it. The Ministry would like to point out that this voter participation rate exceeds, sometimes by far, those in several Western democracies, including some of which that are strongly critical of the Cambodian election now. From the perspectives of some political analysts, this participation rate is a complete repudiation of the call for a boycott by some opposition politicians and the foreign governments that support them.
4. The second criterion for legitimacy is the pluralism of political offer or to put it differently, does the voting citizenry have a choice between different, and even opposing, options? Observers on the ground can attest to that effect, with genuine opposition by



some party leaders to the policies of the ruling party. Public political debates between opposing candidates have taken place and are well covered by news media and in numerous television channels. Unlike in the past, these debates were civilized exchanges and not tainted by hate speech, incitement to racism, populism and ultra-nationalism rhetoric. For the first time, the Cambodian citizenry was exposed to true democratic and sensible debates about the economic development, political, institutional and social issues that affect their lives, a far cry from the past hysterical speeches about Vietnam and the Vietnamese.

5. Nearly 7 million Cambodians voters have made their choice and this choice must be respected by all, be they Cambodians or foreigners, ordinary people, journalists, activists or diplomats. The choice of the Khmer nation, a sovereign nation, must be respected.

6. It is worth to note that there were 220 international observers from over 52 countries, some of which are from international institutions such as the International Conference of Asian Political Parties, the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, the ASEAN Inter-Parliament Assembly, the European Council on International Relations, among others, who came to witness this historical moment of Cambodia's peaceful democracy, not to mention the nearly 90,000 local observers from political parties and about 80,000 others from national associations and organizations.

7. The Ministry regrets the politically motivated assessments of some foreign governments who refused to send observers and instead declared from the beginning until the end that the election was not free and fair. Disingenuously ignoring the technical quality of the electoral process is tantamount to displaying the utmost contempt for the will of the Cambodian people expressed through the 6,946,164 ballots. Such manner undermined the spirit of friendship and cooperation that have been enhanced thus far and casted doubt on the genuine sincerity to witness Cambodia further progressing in its irreversible democratization while enjoying the "longest peace in modern history" and consistent sustainable development.

Phnom Penh, 31 July 2018

