Report by Mr. Chung Eui-yong, Co-Chairman of the Standing Committee and Secretary General of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties on the Outcome of the 2012 Mexican Presidential Election

July 10, 2012

At the invitation of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico and the Permanent Conference of Political Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPPAL), the ICAPP delegation visited Mexico from June 28 to July 2, 2012 as a part of the international monitoring group of the Mexican Presidential Election which took place on July 1. There were a total of 696 foreign visitors from 66 countries to monitor the electoral process.

During the visit, the ICAPP delegation, together with the COPPPAL delegation, had meetings with leaders of the Mexican government and political parties and also other international observers. The delegation also visited five different polling stations at random sites in Mexico City on the election day. There were 143,132 polling stations throughout the country. The delegation saw no irregularities in the polling stations they visited and witnessed that the election was being conducted in a peaceful, orderly and democratic manner.

Enrique Pena Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had been the projected winner of Mexico's Presidential election over a year. He had been the front runner in all public opinion polls, leading all the other presidential contenders by comfortable margins. Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) ranked in second place, with Josefina Vazquez Mota of the ruling National Action Party (PAN) in third place, in numerous polls leading up to the election. In fact, no one, including the media and political analysts, had doubted Pena Nieto's victory, except maybe some of the supporters of the other candidates.

The initial result of the exit poll, which was announced immediately after the conclusion of the election, also showed that Pena Nieto was leading the runner–up candidate by around 11%. The exit poll was conducted outside the polling stations on the voters who had just cast their ballots.

By late night of the election day when most of the counts were in, Pena Nieto of the PRI was leading with around 38% of the votes, while Lopez Obrador of the PRD trailing with 31% of votes and Vazquez Mota of the ruling PAN with much less votes. Vazquez Mota conceded immediately after the announcement on the results of the exit poll in the evening of the election day. Soon after, President Felipe Calderon also congratulated Pena Nieto on his victory. Even Gabriel Quadri of the New Alliance, who lagged far behind in polls before and after the election, praised the IFE by saying that "we have very solid, democratic institutions." Lopez Obrador, however, refused to concede and claimed irregularities in the election process. In fact, he had complained about various types of unfair practices throughout the election campaign. The final official results were 38.2% for the PDI, 31.6% for the PRD and 25.4% for the PAN.

No democracy is perfect. Mexico is no exception. But it certainly continues to improve its democratic institution, including the reforms of its electoral system. The international monitors were assured by the IFE that the electoral process was managed by the IFE in an impartial and fair manner. The IFE briefed that it had implemented new measures to ensure

the election process to become more democratic and transparent. For the first time, the IFE oversaw the whole electoral process, including the cap on the campaign expenses of each candidate. The whole period of campaign was also limited to 90 days, the shortest span ever, and the election of the federal president and governors of 15 states were conducted simultaneously. The most outstanding feature in the new electoral system was requiring equal-time broadcasting for all candidates.

In any democracy, the tradition of graceful concession by losing candidates after the fair elections is important to social cohesion. In the case of Mexico, the smallest margin of 0.58%, or 243,934 votes out of 50 million, between the winner Felipe Calderon of the PAN and the runner-up Lopez Obrador of the PRD in the 2006 presidential election, created huge political instability in the country for a prolonged period, which had been very unfortunate to the nation in many perspectives. Although such a small margin in any election may have caused controversy, Lopez Obrador's continued refusal to concede the results of the 2006 election, referring to himself as "the legitimate president of Mexico," may have been a factor in his defeat in this year's election.

Certainly, there could have been irregularities of various forms in this year's election in Mexico like elections in any other country. We hope that the government and the people of Mexico will take full advantage of their collective wisdom and sort out their differences they might have had during the campaign and leave them behind. We also hope that they will succeed in meeting their national challenges, such as economic recovery, internal security and fight against narcotics.

Finally, the ICAPP delegation was encouraged by the statement made by the president-elect, Mr. Enrique Pena Nieto, during his meeting with international monitors on June 29. He said that barriers in trade should disappear in this globalised world and leaders of nations should have global perspective in implementing their policies. He mentioned, in particular, that Asia has the biggest economic dynamics and he would look forward to expanding opportunities for greater economic transactions between Mexico and Asia. He also promised to do his best to keep Mexico as the best platform for Asian economies for their trade and investment in the Americas. End.