Statement by the ICAPP Mission on Presidential Election in Azerbaijan
(Baku, October 10, 2013)

At the invitation of the *Milli Mejlis* (Parliament) of Azerbaijan, the Standing Committee of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) has sent an observation mission to monitor the presidential election in Azerbaijan held on October 9, 2013. The mission was composed of representatives of leading political parties of Iran, Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam.

The mission had meetings with representatives, authorized by the candidate of the governing *Yeni* Azerbaijan Party and candidates of several competing parties prior to the election. On Election Day, the mission was divided into three groups, and each group visited several polling stations throughout the day, monitored ballot casting and interviewed randomly selected voters, election observers representing different political parties and officials of the Central Election Management Committee. They also monitored the process of ballot counting conducted in several polling stations.

The ICAPP mission also had opportunities to exchange views and impressions on the election process with other international observers, including missions of COPPPAL, CAPDI and countries like Pakistan, and foreign diplomats stationed in Azerbaijan.

Although contacts have been limited, overall election environment appeared to be peaceful, orderly, transparent and non-violent. The mission did not encounter any incidents that might have adversely affected the democratic process or the results of the election. It also seemed that voters had fair access to information on different platforms and policies of each candidate, enough to make their own choice.

All the representatives in the mission were of the view that Azerbaijan was moving in the right direction to achieve more mature democracy. In particular, they noted with admiration great interest and participation demonstrated by the Azerbaijani people in the election process, which was confirmed by the high turn-out rate. They were impressed by the eagerness of political leaders to actively engage with voters. They also noted with particular interest a new on-line webcam monitoring system at the polling stations which enabled the whole process more transparent.

As an emerging democracy, like the countries which the mission represented, however, there appeared some areas which required more efforts to make the democratic institution in Azerbaijan more effective in the future, such as upgrading TV debates among key candidates and further improving access to information on candidates and their platforms and policies.

Azerbaijan has been at the crossroads of several civilizations over the centuries, with its own proud history that dates back thousands of years. And since its independence in 1991 and the adoption of its first democratic constitution in 1995, Azerbaijan has made remarkable achievements both in economic development and political democratization under the able leadership of the first two presidents.

The ICAPP mission believes that the decision made by the people of Azerbaijan yesterday is the right one for their future, and extends heartiest congratulations to the people, political parties and their leaders, media and civil societies, and the government of Azerbaijan on the successful conduct of the election.