STATEMENT OF ICAPP ON
THE COMMUNE COUNCIL ELECTION IN CAMBODIA

At the invitation of 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, leading fourteen delegates from eight countries, came to Cambodia to observe the commune council election and to understand democratic progress in the country.

During the visit, the ICAPP delegation also met with Prime Minister Hun Sen and leaders of three major political parties including the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), the National United Front for an Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec) and the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). Moreover, the ICAPP delegation also paid a visit to the National Election Committee (NEC) and other civil society organizations.

The ICAPP delegation was extensively briefed by leaders of political parties, the NEC and other relevant agencies on political situation in Cambodia and importantly the election process that the country genuinely practices since the early 1990s. We witnessed huge progress in Cambodia's efforts in promoting democracy, good governance and human rights. The most notable example is the reform to the NEC, the adoption of new Election Law and new Political Party Law, which aim to build public trust and confidence in the country's electoral process.

According to the NEC, 7,873,194 people aged 18 and above or 81.47 percent registered for the 4th mandate of the commune 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 name and duplicate name, 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 various polling stations in different locations. We were impressed by a large turnout at those polling stations. People were seen to cast their vote 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 was also asked to witness the vote counting process. Representatives from political parties, which registered to compete in this commune council election, were also 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.

What is astonishing is that 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, 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 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 accounts 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 consider this year commune council election is free, fair and transparent. Therefore, we strongly urge all the political parties and their supporters to respect the decision of a majority of Cambodian people. Moreover, we are confident that both winning party and losing party 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 party.

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, inclusive development and peace and we are willing to support 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 council election.

Vijay Jolly

June 12th, 2017

(VIJAY JOLLY)
Standing Committee Member
(ICAPP)

To,
His Excellency
Jose de Venecia, Jr
Chairman, ICAPP

His Excellency
Chung Eui-yong
Co-Chairman, ICAPP