



ខុមហ្វ្រែល COMFREL

គណៈកម្មាធិការដើម្បីការបោះឆ្នោតដោយសេរី និងយុត្តិធម៌លើកម្ពុជា (គ.ប.ស.យ)

COMMITTEE FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA (COMFREL)

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P.R./No 18/07 COMFREL/M.U.

Press Release

On

Youth Evaluation of the Achievement of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) or Elected Political Parties in “Combating Corruption”

Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Center, Phnom Penh, September 26, 2007

This score-based evaluation was carried out at the “Youth Voters’ Voice Forum” on elected officials or political parties’ achievements on “Combating Corruption”. The forum was organized by COMFREL in conjunction with the Youth Council of Cambodia, the Khmer Youth Association and the Youth Resource Development Program. The forum is one part of COMFREL’s “Government Watch” project; the issue under discussion is one seriously affecting the livelihood and future of voters.

Mr. THUN Saray, First Representative of COMFREL and President of ADHOC said during this forum that: “*Voters who fulfill their duties well [through monitoring and observing the performance of elected political parties] will contribute to the strengthening of democracy in Cambodia through combating corruption*”.

Youth voters are dissatisfied with the achievements of the RGC or elected political parties on “Combating Corruption”. The average score given by youth voters was 2 (dissatisfied) on a scale ranging from 1 (absolutely dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

The evaluation focused on three main issues as factors in combating corruption as follows:

1- Adoption of the Anti-Corruption Law by 2005 and establishment of a neutral and independent institution to fight corruption within 2005. The performance of the RGC or elected political parties on this promise was given an average score of 1.79, in the category of absolutely dissatisfied.

Discussion during the forum and reports found that the RGC had not yet fulfilled its promises. The draft Anti-Corruption Law has not yet been submitted to the National Assembly and an independent institution to fight corruption has not yet been established.

2- Promoting effectiveness, transparency and accountability in public financial management through the strengthening of audit process and public procurement. The performance of the RGC or elected political parties on this promise was given an average score of 2.06, falling into the category of dissatisfied.

Discussion and reports revealed that the National Audit Authority had been set up to conduct external audits of government bodies. Transparency International’s “Country [Cambodia] Study Report 2006” shows that this large institution is independent by law but in practice is financially tied to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The report further states that, although the institution has produced several reports, not one of these has been made publicly available as stipulated by law. The forum also argued that bids for

most government-owned projects were not made public, apart from donor-sponsored projects.³ Permission to directly relevant ministries and institutions **to examine all commercial contracts and concession contracts on natural resources and state assets**. The performance of the RGC or elected political parties on this promise was given an average score of 2, falling into the category of **dissatisfied**.

Discussion and reports found that no relevant institutions had been allowed yet to examine **commercial contracts and concession contracts on natural resources and state assets**. Even the Chairperson of the National Assembly's Expert Commission had received no information related to commercial contracts. However, some information related to some land concessions had been posted on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The forum agreed that the RGC and elected political parties should address priority issues within this mandate: namely, the adoption of the Anti-Corruption Law.

COMFREL will soon organize a series of forums of this kind, focusing on other topics related to the political platform of the RGC.

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COMFREL's mission is to help to create an informed and favorable democratic climate (1) for free and fair elections through lobbying and advocacy to establish a permanent and suitable legal framework; education to inform citizens of their rights; and monitoring activities that both discourage irregularities and provide comprehensive data to enable an objective, non-partisan assessment to be made of the election process, and (2) for the general public to fully understand democratic processes not just before elections but after and between them. It arranges, towards this end, educational sessions and public forums to encourage citizens to participate in politics and decision making. It encourages constructive advocacy and lobbying for electoral reforms that increase the accountability of elected officials. Finally, by providing comprehensive observation and monitoring, it enables objective, non-partisan assessments to be made on the progress of commitment made in political platforms and on the performance of elected officials.