

ADN Statement on Myanmar's National Election of November 8, 2015

November 19, 2015

The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) congratulates the people of Myanmar for their enthusiastic and peaceful participation in the historic national elections that took place on November 8, 2015. This general election was the first multi-party elections in 25 years since the 1990 general elections. With the suggested voter turnout at 80%, it is highly commendable that the people of Myanmar have exercised their civic duty as voters.

Given that the election is a chance to lay a foundation for the country's democratic future, the ADN encourages the voters in Myanmar to hold their candidates accountable for campaign promises in the coming steps.

Nevertheless, the ADN acknowledges that Myanmar has many tasks ahead in their path to consolidate democracy based on justice, equality and peace through these parliamentary elections. We would like to raise several key challenges to be taken into consideration through a transitioning process in Myanmar.

Firstly, the fairness and equity of the representatives should be ensured in the parliament seats. The inclusion of ethnic and religious minority groups such as the Rohingya into society should be prioritized. In addition an increase of gender balance voice, increased representation of women in various sectors taking the leadership role is needed.

Secondly, the mechanism of the Union Election Commission (UEC) has been criticized as being fundamentally flawed in transparency and impartiality. Considering their key role of monitoring and resolving the complaints, the ADN reminds the UEC and all concerned bodies to ensure their distinguished role by improving their lack of transparency in management and keeping the allegations in check.

Thirdly, the peaceful transfer of power from military rule to democracy should be guaranteed by both the current and next government. With the election results, the current military ruling regime is waning, and yet the transfer of power remains in question. With our core belief, the ADN stresses the importance of peaceful and democratic transition in Myanmar through this milestone election. In this regard, we further demand the government of Myanmar and the next political leaders to help unconditionally release the political prisoners, students and those facing trials due to their political beliefs.

Lastly, the ADN urges the new government of Myanmar to review the undemocratic clauses of the constitution and further remove the laws that deny the fundamental rights of the ethnic minorities and marginalized groups of people. Considering the history of the decades-long internal conflict, we ask the new government to make sure to address the political grievances of the ethnic minorities after the next phase of peace process due to start in January 2016.

By reaffirming the principle and its importance of fair, free and inclusive election as the essence of democracy, the ADN, a civil society led regional network promoting democracy in Asia, continues to stand in solidarity and support of the people of Myanmar as they keep moving forward to a more democratic country.