**Civil Society Organizations Conducted Observation and Monitoring of the 2024 Parliamentary Election Process**

**Press Release**
Ulaanbaatar, July 2, 2024

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YOUTH SUCCESSFULLY MONITORED THE ELECTION PROCESS
T. Amarzaya, Chairman of the Board of "Youth Policy Watch" NGO:

On June 28, 2024, 240 observers from the Civil Society Network for Fair Elections monitored the voting, counting, and manual recount processes of the Mongolian Parliamentary election to ensure compliance with the Election Law. On election day, 20 team leaders and coordinators worked continuously for 24 hours to organize the observers and compile information, as well as to take prompt action when necessary. The observation covered 112 committees, including 100 in Ulaanbaatar and 12 sections in 11 provinces.

Based on the information collected from the 240 observers, it was concluded that the voting, counting, and result announcement processes of the 2024 Mongolian Parliamentary election were conducted within the legal framework, with no serious violations that could have affected the election results. Although there were some organizational and incidental issues at the observed polling stations, these did not negatively impact the vote counting results.

**Polling Station Setup and Environment:**
An environment, internal organization, and security of the polling stations were generally well-maintained, but the following common shortcomings related to organization were observed:

* Out of 112 polling stations, 48 did not provide access for wheelchair users. In 29 stations, no voting booths were prepared for people with disabilities. In 16 stations, there were no Braille-equipped folders for visually impaired voters to read and mark their ballots.
* In terms of organization, 16 stations had issues where the screens were not positioned in a way that allowed observers to view the voting process without obstruction. The screens were small, and the observers were seated too far away.
* 56 stations, or 50% of the observed polling stations, did not start the voting process at 7:00 AM as required. Among them, 17 stations did not open at 7:00 AM, and 39 stations opened after 7:10 AM. The latest start was recorded at 7:50 AM.
* In 27 stations, the polling station chairman did not fully provide information regarding the number of voters on the voter list, the number of voters using mobile ballot boxes, and the unified number of ballot papers.

**Voting Process:**
The voting process generally proceeded smoothly, but due to the limited space at some polling stations and voters' lack of knowledge about filling out and scanning their ballots, the following common issues were observed:

* Due to factors such as employment status or age, there were cases where fingerprints could not be read. The fingerprint scanning device failed to operate in 12 instances.
* At three polling stations, 1001 issues were reported, with two cases involving signatures signed in the wrong place.
* At station 10-1-14-1, only the signatures of "temporarily removed" voters were collected, while the numbers of other voters were simply circled, resulting in 999 recorded incidents.
* At 31 polling stations, there were 1129 cases where voters did not mark their ballots in the voting booth. This includes:
	+ Elderly, physically or visually impaired, or illiterate voters who came alone were assisted by polling station staff.
	+ Two voters showed their marked ballots to each other. Additionally, a family member watched as another person filled out their ballot.
	+ Issues arose due to lines forming at the voting booths and some voters being too close to nearby staff, allowing others to see their choices.
	+ When a voter did not fully select their candidates, the station chairman instructed them to finish their selection at the secretary's desk.
* The issue of not using the secrecy folder which meant to protect the confidentiality of the ballot, occurred 4555 times across all polling stations.
* In 308 cases across 32 stations, incorrectly marked ballots or those not read by the device were not properly invalidated by cutting off the lower left corner.
* A potential breach of voter confidentiality occurred 2157 times at 80 polling stations when voters were scanning their ballots. This included family members assisting, ballots being openly displayed, IT staff or station leaders scanning the ballots on behalf of voters, etc. In constituencies with 10 mandates, the ballot paper was long, and the secrecy folder was insufficient, making the ballot visible. In some cases, voters left the station before the machine had fully scanned their ballot, causing incorrectly marked ballots to be ejected.
* In 19 polling stations, there were 68 cases where voters were not listed on the voter registry at the station where they were supposed to vote. Additionally, 17 cases of adding voters to the voter list were reported in 8 stations.
* In 114 cases across 37 polling stations, someone other than the authorized person filled out a ballot on behalf of a voter. Out of these cases, 63 were the incident that assisted voters with disabilities over 26 voter stations.
* At 63 polling stations, there were 238 incidents where voters took photos, recorded videos, live-streamed, or showed their marked ballots to others.
* An incident of ballot paper scanner’s head section became dirty and required cleaning counted as 26 times.

**Counting Process:**

* There were eight instances where the voting machines malfunctioned or froze while printing the results or transmitting the data. For example, at station 9-1-1-2, the machine froze from 10:00 PM to 10:40 PM, and at station 10-2-1-3, a network issue occurred during transmission, resulting in a server error. After 30 minutes, by 10:40 PM, the results from the first machine were transmitted, and the seal was removed. By 12:12 AM, the results from the second machine were transmitted, and the seal was removed after the area supervisor verified it with the deputy supervisor.
* In some cases, the manual recount was not initiated under the surveillance of the cameras immediately after transmitting the results. For instance, at station 11-1-2-3, there was a significant delay in starting the recount due to unclear instructions, with staff waiting and cutting invalid ballots. At station 8-1-13-3, although the results were transmitted, the station chief left to get instructions, delaying the process. Staff also took breaks to eat or go to the restroom, causing further delays.
* In 48 instances, the members of the polling stations conducting the recount did not adhere to the requirement to wear single-use gloves, short-sleeved shirts, and to avoid wearing bracelets, rings, necklaces, or watches.
* The manual recount was not conducted continuously, transparently, or openly in 11 cases. Such as, polling station staff frequently took breaks, went in and out, ate, or even slept, disrupting the process.
* In 76 polling stations, the number of ballots matched those reported by the parties and candidates. However, 15 stations did not finish, and the last station completed the manual recount at 7:30 PM on June 29, 2024.

**Future Recommendations:**

* In this election, the process of registering civil society observers and obtaining observer ID cards faced significant obstacles from the polling stations. Although an electronic registration system was used, the requirement to physically submit numerous documents and visit multiple times to obtain the ID should be eliminated. The procedure for electronically registering civil society observers needs to be updated.
* The practice of assigning civil society observers to sit alternately with party observers, based on the discretion of the polling station leader, should be abolished.
* Training on the procedures for conducting manual recounts should be provided to polling station staff. It is essential to organize training and information sessions at a higher quality.

**MOST OF THE ELECTION-RELATED TV COVERAGE FAVORED THE RULING PARTY**
B. Onon, Executive Director of "Globe International Center" NGO:

The Globe International Center, a member of the Civil Society Network for Fair Elections, monitored television coverage of the 2024 Parliamentary election campaign. The monitoring aimed to improve the role of the media during the election, ensure that campaign coverage was balanced and fair, and detect covert advertising. It also oversaw the implementation of the Election Law and the joint regulations issued by the General Election Commission (GEC) and the Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC), specifically the "Guidelines for Broadcasting Election Campaigns on Radio and Television."

The monitoring included five television channels: MNB, TV9, Mongol TV, NTV, and Eagle News. These channels were selected based on criteria such as their nationwide reach, use of public funding, high viewership ratings, and official authorization to broadcast election campaigns, as determined by the Press Institute and MMCG research agency.

During the campaign period, 1543 hours, 7 minutes, and 34 seconds of broadcasts were monitored, with 20% of the content being election-related. The breakdown of election-related content is as follows: 56% was educational content for voters, 39% was paid and ordered broadcasts, and the remaining 5% contained elements of covert advertising. Eagle News had the highest percentage of voter education content at 75%, while NTV had the most covert advertising at 26%. MNB's voter education content reached 53.6%, with 46% being paid advertisements. The channel with the least covert advertising was MNB at 0.4%.

Commercial channels allocated different amounts of airtime to political parties and did not provide sufficient coverage for independent candidates. In contrast, MNB allocated similar airtime to all parties, as required by law. The most airtime on MNB was given to the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) at 15%, followed by the Democratic Party (DP) at 10% and the HUN Party at 9%. Independent candidates received 7% of the airtime. Commercial channels, on average, gave 55% of their election-related airtime to the MPP and 27% to the DP.

Overall, 77% of the election-related content on these five channels was neutral, while 19% was positive or promotional. Negative content was minimal, accounting for only 4% of the coverage. Mongol TV had the highest percentage of positive content at 75%, followed by Eagle News at 74%. NTV had the highest percentage of neutral content at 88%, while 95% of MNB's content was neutral. Coverage of candidates and parties was 3% negative tone on MNB and 4-6% negative tone on commercial channels.

The preliminary monitoring results did not reveal any violations of the legal limits, such as the 60-minute total broadcast time, 15-minute maximum for any single party or candidate, and the 5-minute limit for news programs. Of the content related to parties and candidates, 24% introduced their platforms. Gender-wise, 81% of the candidate-related content was about male candidates, while 19% was about female candidates.

MNB organized political debates that ensured balanced participation of parties and candidates and played a significant role in voter education. However, there is a need to improve the organization of these debates and enhance the skills of the moderators.

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS ARE INCOMPLETE**
Ts. Mandhaikhatan, Executive Director of "Youth Policy Watch" NGO:

Youth Policy Watch NGO has been continuously monitoring the campaign finance reporting process. According to the National Audit Office (NAO), 787 out of 969 candidates registered their donation accounts within the legal timeframe. Additionally, 6 of the 21 participating parties and coalitions failed to submit their interim expense reports, and the NAO's report lacked information on 187 of the listed candidates.

According to Article 58.4 of the Parliamentary Election Law, the National Audit Office (NAO) was required to promptly and transparently disclose the interim expense reports to the public as soon as they were received. However, the NAO delayed this obligation by two days, only posting the reports on the night of the 26th and then making them available to the public. During the NGO's monitoring, it was found that over 130 candidates posted their expense reports on social media 1-2 days after the legal deadline. Additionally, the NAO has not provided a unified explanation or update regarding this matter.

Moreover, the methodology outlined in Article 50.2 of the Parliamentary Election Law, which is supposed to set the maximum election expenses to reduce costs, was not effectively implemented. According to the preliminary data, 747 candidates generated a total revenue of 76,153,415,020 MNT, with expenses amounting to 58,145,985,668 MNT, while 14 parties and coalitions generated 11,410,796,058.53 MNT in revenue and spent 8,501,881,280.18 MNT.

In summary, for the 2024 election, a total revenue of over 87.5 billion MNT was generated, with 66.6 billion MNT spent as of the reporting period. Of this, about 17 billion MNT was generated in Ulaanbaatar’s six constituencies, with 13 billion MNT spent, and the remaining 45 billion MNT was spent in the seven rural constituencies.

**Summary of the interim reports of the parties who won seats in the Parliament:**

* The MPP's 76 candidates generated over 41 billion MNT in revenue and spent over 29.6 billion MNT.
* The DP's 73 candidates generated over 26.2 billion MNT in revenue and spent over 21.7 billion MNT.
* The HUN's 74 candidates generated over 3.2 billion MNT in revenue and spent over 2.3 billion MNT.
* The National Coalition's 41 candidates generated 2.9 billion MNT in revenue and spent over 2.3 billion MNT.
* The Civil Will-Green Party's 12 candidates generated over 577 million MNT in revenue and spent 525 million MNT.

**Based on the preliminary assessment of the campaign finance monitoring process, the following common issues and shortcomings were observed:**

* Discrepancies between the reported revenue, expenses, and balances were found in the reports of both candidates and parties.
* Some candidates and parties reported more debts than their remaining balance, with the Civil Movement Party having the highest debt at 640 million MNT (with a balance of only 7.3 million MNT).
* The interim expense report forms were incomplete, manually filled out, or submitted late, highlighting the need for the implementation of an electronic system in the future.
* Unreturned donations that were not legally recognized amounted to 8.7 billion MNT for the candidates and about 1.2 billion MNT for the parties. The relatively high remaining balances demonstrates that there is a demand for improved legal regulations regarding campaign donations.