



The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan to Timor-Leste

Presidential Elections of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on 9 April
Preliminary assessment by the Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan
Dili, April 11, 2007

1. The Election Observation Mission of the Government of Japan was deployed in the electoral districts of Dili, Liquica, Manatuto and Baucau from 4 to 10 April to observe election procedures, including campaigning, preparation for the polling day, polling and counting procedures. On the polling day (April 9), our 14 observers had visits totaling 127 times to polling and counting stations set in 59 polling centers.
2. Although there have been continuous efforts to build a democratic state in Timor-Leste since its independence in 2002, the security situation has become less stable since last April, and adequate supports from the international society, such as the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in last August, are continuously regarded as essential. As the first national election based on the electoral laws enacted by Timorese people and implemented by their Government after the independence, the presidential election promotes the ownership of Timor-Leste and is considered to be an important milestone in the nation-building process. Furthermore, along with the Election of the National Parliament planned in near future, the election is a significant step to contribute to a democratic nation through ending division among political entities caused by the disorder last year. The objective of our activities was to assist, by verifying the fairness of the elections, the people of Timor-Leste, who would take this opportunity as one step forward with the results of the elections.
3. Although our observing activities were geographically limited and shortly timed, we found, based on the information we gathered and also considering views comprehensively exchanged with other international observation teams and UN officials, that the campaigning, polling station preparation, polling and counting procedures had been conducted in compliance with the election rules, except some technical problems. It seems, therefore, that the elections were carried out so far in a free and fair manner and also in generally peaceful environment.
4. We observed the preparations effectively made by polling station staffs, and we were deeply impressed by the staff who were strongly committed to their duties and responsibilities executed during not only preparation, but also polling and counting. We consider this to be a manifestation of the strong aspiration of the people of Timor-Leste for the peace process.
5. We commend the people of Timor-Leste on the orderly, generally speaking, implementation of the elections, while considering the fact that it was their first democratic election implemented by their own government. Timorese people have successfully overcome various challenges such as public awareness campaigns, voter registration, training of electoral staff, the procurement and distribution of election materials, and maintenance of security. This clearly shows that the Government of Timor-Leste has been steadily building on its capacity to implement elections. We applaud the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE), National Election Commission (CNE), and National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), which endeavored to bring a success about the election process, and the international community, including the UN and UNMIT, for supporting the election operations. And, what is more, we express our sincere respect to the people of Timor-Leste who participated in the election to build their country.
6. Finally, but not least, we hope that, after going through the appeal and complaint procedures in a fair and transparent manner, and with the acceptance of results by all parties concerned, the people of Timor-Leste collectively take firm steps towards consolidating solidarity and building a democratic state. (END)