

March 24. Session 3 " State Building and Governance - Beyond Election "

Mr. Toshio Ozawa, Director-General, Secretariat of International Peace
Cooperation Headquarters, Cabinet Office, Japan.

Election Monitoring

Wikipedia Definition

Observation of an election by one or more independent parties, typically from another country or a NGO, primarily to ensure the fairness of the election process

There are national and international election observers

Monitors do not directly prevent electoral fraud, but rather record and report such instances

A notable individual is often appointed honorary leader of a monitoring organization in an effort to enhance its own legitimacy

History of UN election monitoring/assistance

Korea 1948 UNTCOK

From Namibia (1989), election monitoring often became part of a broader mandate of peacekeeping (Exit strategy)

UN electoral assistance division ('92 DPA, '94 DPKO, '95 DPA)

363 requests during 1989-2005, 96 implemented

Of those implemented, 46% of requests from Africa (Asia 18%)

Merits

Attracts international attention (media, governments and international organizations)

Becomes an incentive for political leaders to 'behave'

Increases transparency

Raises peoples' expectations for free and fair elections

Encourages participatory democracy and higher voter turnout

Helps strengthen the election authority's commitment to enforce electoral laws and rules, and facilitates compliance

Awareness regarding accountability of administrators

Detection of technical problems

Helps to deter and reduce fraud and electoral violence

Freedom to make public statements by monitors is the deterrent

Helps build trust in the accuracy of the balloting results

Accords credibility and legitimacy to election results

Facilitates acceptance of results by candidates and political parties

Identify challenges for future improvement

Some critique

Monitors/observers are ignorant of local circumstances related to history, culture, etc

Monitors/observers arrive shortly before the vote, without training for language nor culture

Monitors/observers tend to avoid working together with domestic observers in order to eschew appearance of bias

Monitors/observers are not entirely independent, with ties to a funding entity

GOJ's Approach

Division of labor

Important post-conflict elections: dispatched by IPCHQ, under IPC

Law

Other important elections: dispatched by MOFA

Election observers dispatched by IPCHQ

Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Bosnia-Herzegovina x 2, East Timor, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Nepal

IPC Election Observation Mission is formed through Cabinet decision. Participants from private sector are employed as government officials for a fixed term, receiving orders from the Prime Minister

Private sector participants: academics (experts on host country or on election monitoring), researchers (those with interest in peace-building), NGO members (those in NGOs with ongoing projects in the host country), JICA staff

Government sector participants: MOFA official, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication election expert, IPCHQ Secretariat officials

Head of IPC Election Observation Mission: Ambassador experience or equivalent

Characteristics of IPC Election Observation Mission

Long term planning, with Cabinet decision one month prior to vote

Advance teams sent to make logistical arrangements for transportation, hiring of local assistants, etc

Two to three day intensive training focused on local election laws and rules, political parties and main candidates, overall political atmosphere, local culture, important local language phrases, internal Mission discipline, internal Mission communication rules and procedures, and security issues

"Buddy system" where two observers move together with the driver and locally hired assistant

Working together with the election implementing authority of the host country and the UN, liaison with domestic and international observers
Head of Mission is requested to deliver GOJ message to leaders of the host country government and also the leaders of the main political parties

Mission announces its tentative findings and impressions at a press conference, when a majority of the ballots are counted and announced

Example of Timor-Leste (2007)

April 9 (14 members), May 9 (8 members), June 30 (14 members)

Meetings with President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and leaders of main political parties

Written tentative observations and impressions (in English and Tetun languages) are distributed at each press conference

"Evaluation and Suggestions" of the Election Observation Mission is delivered to Timor-Leste government and UNMIN (the paper mentions commendable points and suggestions for future elections including improvement of the technical skills of electoral staff, improvements that could be expected in the attitudes of voters and political parties and institutional improvements for smooth and safe operations in the polling stations and tabulation centers. In addition to media coverage, symposia and lectures were held to inform interested people and students about post-conflict experience of Timor-Leste