



MEDIA RELEASE

Australia supports Cambodian Democracy

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Australia has agreed to contribute \$2.5 million Australian dollars to support democracy in Cambodia.

The commitment, which is more than US \$1.8 million, is part of a UNDP multi-donor project aimed at strengthening democratic and electoral processes.

According to Australian Ambassador, Ms Lisa Filipetto, the money will be used educate voters, help improve the registration process, provide more balanced news reporting and promote discussion between the government and civil society.

"The project will also assist in promoting the independence of the National Election Committee", she said. "At the same time we hope to see more open public debate of issues to prevent conflict in elections".

UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator, Douglas Gardner very much welcomed Australia's support.

"We especially look forward to the re-introduction of the Equity News television program on current affairs as a way of ensuring a wide range of citizens are informed," he said.

"While a free press is the cornerstone of democracy, a free, informed and balanced media is the mark of democratic maturity," Mr Gardner said.

Australia's pledge coincides with a meeting called Friday by the Royal Government of Cambodia to request donor support specifically for funding the 2007 Commune Council Elections.

UNDP is coordinating the donor response for this specific-purpose fund as well.

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