



Press Release

Australia - First Donor Country to Contribute to 2003 Election

Phnom Penh, 28 November 2002: A signing ceremony between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Australia to formalize Australia's financial contribution to the 2003 Cambodian national election will take place tomorrow at the UNDP office.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has requested UNDP to provide technical and financial assistance for the holding of next year's national elections. In addition, UNDP has been asked to coordinate donor contributions from the international community and to offer a partnership fund for this purpose. Australia is the first donor country to make such a contribution. The A\$800,000 to be provided by Australia will be used in the following ways:

1. Allow the re-structured National Election Committee to begin the establishment and revision of a permanent register of voters. A credible and accurate voters' register is at the heart of any accepted electoral administration. Furthermore, substantial savings will be achieved with the introduction of a permanent register and delegating to the newly created commune councils an ongoing role in administering the voter list.
2. Conduct voter education activities related to the new voter registration system, which will be aimed at the country's estimated seven million voters. This will include material such as posters, banners, leaflets as well as radio and television advertisements and announcements.

The National Election Committee is currently working on developing and producing training manuals and voter education materials. Training of commune council clerks, who will collect voter information, will begin in December. Compilation of the permanent voter register will begin in January 2003. The NEC estimates the cost of this process to be US\$1.5 million.

"The money provided by Australia is a valuable contribution to the 2003 election process. It will allow the National Election Committee's voter list revision to proceed on time. However more funds are urgently required to ensure that the process is able to be conducted at an international standard. I encourage the international community to support this initial phase of the election process," said Ms Dominique AitOuyahia-McAdams, UNDP Resident Representative.

UNDP has provided early funding to cover the cost of the initial printing of the 2002 voter lists, so that they can be distributed to the Commune Councils. Four UNDP electoral advisers are currently working with the NEC. For the 2002 Commune Council elections, UNDP coordinated and managed \$US 6.7 million in contributions from the international community towards the \$15 million total cost as well as convening regular coordination meetings. The cost for the 2003 election has been estimated as \$12.5 million. The Royal Government of Cambodia has pledged \$5 million towards this.

The signing ceremony will take place at the Main Building Conference Room, UNDP at 10 a.m. on Friday 29 November 2002.

Further Information:

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About UNDP: UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.