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ELECTION COMMISSION OF BHUTAN

(Ensuring Free, Fair & Democratic Elections & Referendums)



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Press Release



THE 5th MEETING OF THE FORUM OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES OF SOUTH ASIA (FEMBoSA)

Nepal: 29th – 30th of November 2014

The 5th Meeting of the Forum of Electoral Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA) was held on the 29th and 30th of November, 2014 at Kathmandu, Nepal attended by eight Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) of South Asia on the theme “*Campaign Finance*”. The Resolution Adopted at the 5th FEMBoSA meeting is as mentioned hereunder:

Recalling the objectives as envisaged in the Forum Charter and Thimpu Resolutions, 2013;

Reaffirming our commitment to ensure free and fair elections promoting participatory and inclusive democracies;

Accepting that inclusion and participation of eligible electors as the cornerstone of free and fair elections;

Admitting the importance of voters' education in general and women voter's education in particular for informed voters' choices;

Recognising the importance of autonomous and independent **Election Management Bodies (EMBs)** for strengthening democracy;

Appreciating that Research and Development, Technological Advancement and Electoral Reforms for transparency and purity of electoral processes are of utmost importance for electoral excellence; and

Acknowledging that constructive and proactive media engagement is essential for election management;

Realizing that campaign/political finance regulation is necessary for fair, free, transparent and effective election management;

The member EMBs of **Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA)**, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka adopted unanimously the following Resolutions:

1. Commend the excellent role played by the Election Commission of Bhutan in forming active and effective coordination among member EMBs of FEMBoSA during its Chairmanship.
2. Adopt "**Free and Fair Election: Pride of Nation**" as the motto of the Forum of Election Management Bodies of South Asia.
3. Welcome the proposal made by Election Commission, Nepal for the establishment of a centre for research, exchange, documentation and consolidation of electoral learning and innovations taking place among the South Asian election management bodies. Such a Centre will be called the "**South Asia Institute for Democracy and Electoral Studies (SAIDES)**" and will be located in Kathmandu,

The institute will endeavor to set up a work plan and carry out the following studies, which will be coordinated by the FEMBoSA secretariat:

- a. Recognize that regulation of campaign finance is now embedded in FEMBoSA's work. FEMBoSA will endeavor to build on this theme by conducting a study to analyse the current status, organise a regional seminar coordinated by the FEMBoSA secretariat, establish a regional research network on Campaign Finance and frame an aspirational common minimum requirements for South Asian Region.
- b. Recognising that use of technology is crucial to conduct of free and fair elections, member EMBs of FEMBoSA will carry out a regional FEMBoSA study on the current status in various EMBs and an initial map of the way forward.
- c. Acknowledging the importance of autonomous and independent EMBs for strengthening democracy, the forum resolves on regional collaboration on autonomy and independence of EMBs and decides to establish a regional FEMBoSA study network whereby the Forum will conduct a study on the current comparative status of autonomy and independence of all member EMBs and set aspirational common minimum requirements in the region.
- d. Acknowledging the importance of media monitoring as well as the press office, the member EMBs of FEMBoSA will:
 - Conduct a FEMBoSA regional study on the current status and sustained media engagement
 - Conduct a regional seminar to share the study and map out the way forward
 - Prepare a model media manual for EMBs on handling their press office and conducting media monitoring
 - Develop an aspirational common minimum requirement of media monitoring and media regulations

All the aforementioned activities will be coordinated by the FEMBoSA secretariat. However, the member EMBs will actively participate in the research and offer to host the regional seminars.

4. Decide that member EMBs of FEMBoSA will endeavor to introduce electoral/voter education curriculum at school level to spread electoral literacy.
5. Decide that each member EMBs of the FEMBoSA will endeavor to ensure inclusion and gender equality in overall electoral processes and systems as per their demographic structure.

FEMBoSA suggests each EMBs to consider appropriate measures to address voter registration and voting of the out-of-country citizens according to the need of respective EMBs, having realised the necessity of such measures.

6. Decide that member EMBs of FEMBoSA will organize exposure visits for other EMBs to share experiences and best practices during their countries' elections and at other times suitable for them.
7. Decide that member EMBs of FEMBoSA will conduct regular capacity development exercises in member country's respective training institutes as an essential activity for enhancement of capacity of officials and staff of member EMBs of FEMBoSA. Such capacity building exercises will be inclusive and suitably and preferably represented by female election administrators.
8. Accept the proposal made by Honorable Mahinda Deshapriya, Commissioner of Elections, Department of Elections, Sri Lanka to host the Sixth Meeting of FEMBoSA in response to the request made by Hon'ble Neel Kantha Uprety, Chief Commissioner of Nepal at the Closing Session of the Meeting. The Meeting proclaims that the date will be decided by the host EMB in consultation with the Chairperson of FEMBoSA. The Meeting further agrees that the theme for the Sixth Meeting of FEMBoSA could include "**Autonomy and Independence of Electoral Management Bodies**" as proposed by Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of Nepal.
9. Decide that the proceeding of FEMBoSA Meetings will be published by the host country after holding of the Meeting. Besides such a publication, the host country will also publish an annual standardized publication of academic value on the key thematic areas of FEMBoSA Meeting at the end of an annual conference proposed in the work plan.
10. The forum suggests that each member EMBs of FEMBoSA will observe a day in each calendar year to mark the importance of role played by voters in strengthening democracy.

Done and concluded at Kathmandu on this 30th of November, 2014.

(Media Unit)
ECB, Thimphu