

**Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership
Election Observation of the 4 August 2010
National Parliamentary Elections
Solomon Islands**

Organized by:
East-West Center
Honolulu, Hawai‘i

Preliminary Statement

Upon invitation by the Solomon Islands government, the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) in cooperation with the East-West Center organized a 20-member delegation to observe the 4 August 2010 National Parliamentary Elections. The Election Observation Mission (EOM) included election specialists, government officials, academics and civil society representatives from 8 countries including Australia, Mongolia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Timor-Leste, and the United States. The delegation was headed by the Honorable Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi, former Vice President and former Minister of State of the Republic of Palau.

Prior to being fielded to various areas of the country on 2 and 3 August, observers participated in a range of familiarization and orientation activities. Briefings were conducted on 30 July and 1 August. The observers learned about electoral processes and the structure of the Solomon Islands' democratic institutions. Police and election officials provided detailed information to the EOMs about the election law and electoral procedures during the voting, counting and tabulation phases of the election.

On Election Day, observers traveled by air, land and sea to reach polling stations throughout the country. Thirty-one teams of observers were fielded, assisted by guides and translators. The polling places included schools, community centers, government offices, and youth centers. The observation mission visited more than 150 polling stations and engaged in conversations with a diverse range of voters, officials and other community leaders. Additionally, the EOM observed the chain of transmission of the ballot boxes from a number of polling places to the provincial tabulation centers and witnessed the early tabulation process at various sites.

The APDP delegation wishes to convey its congratulations to the people of the Solomon Islands for an open and spirited electoral process, and for conducting an election that generated high voter interest and was free of violence. This statement is based on the delegation's observations as of today and must be qualified by the fact that vote tabulation is ongoing. Notably, the delegates reported that the counting process has been transparent and appears to be being conducted without significant irregularities.

During the pre-election period, campaigning was peaceful and lively. The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission produced a range of useful informational materials and distributed a creative DVD video program informing voters about the election. Media coverage suggested open, highly competitive campaigns were conducted for the fifty parliamentary seats. The APDP observer team would encourage the expansion of issue-based exchanges among candidates in future elections and the development of means for ensuring even broader dissemination of information related to the election.

Based on Election Day observations representing a sample of voting sites, the APDP delegation noted some irregularities and procedural inconsistencies which may merit further investigation by election officials. In particular, the delegation either observed or heard reports of a substantial number of potential voters turned away from polling places because their names were not included on the roles. While this may not necessarily impact results, the delegation would strongly recommend a thorough review of voter registration lists to minimize disenfranchisement and the potential for fraud. Observers also noted concerns over delays in voting procedures at some large polling stations.

These will be further elaborated in the Election Observation Mission's final report which will be shared with government officials and non-governmental organizations. The ultimate legitimacy of the election can only be determined by the citizens of the Solomon Islands after all the votes are tabulated and any challenges adjudicated.

The Honorable Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi, Head of Delegation for the APDP, found the Mission both educational and informative and wishes to personally express her gratitude to the government and the people of the Solomon Islands for their warm hospitality to all members of the delegation. The East-West Center and the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership delegation also wish to convey deep appreciation to their hosts for their warm hospitality and gracious acceptance of the delegation. The delegation is grateful for the opportunity to renew old acquaintances and establish new friendships that help to build a stronger and more democratic Asia-Pacific community. It is the delegation's hope that citizens of the Solomon Islands will join future international election observation missions to other areas of Oceania and Asia.