

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Cambodia**

The European Union places great importance on free and fair elections in Cambodia on 26 July. It has demonstrated its commitment to democracy in Cambodia with an eleven million dollar package of electoral assistance.

Much of that assistance has focused on creating the conditions under which free and fair elections will be possible. The Union is encouraged by the successful conclusion of the EU-funded voter registration programme, and by the peaceful campaigning of political parties throughout the country.

Now, at the start of the official campaign period, the European Union urges the Cambodian Government to continue to improve the situation by further promoting a political climate conducive to free and fair elections. It is particularly concerned at the extra-judicial killings and other human rights abuses and urges the Cambodian Government to investigate these crimes as a matter of priority and to bring those responsible to justice. The EU further encourages the Cambodian Government to prevent any form of political intimidation, violence, or malpractice in the election process and to ensure that opposition leaders and their parties are given fair access to the media.

The European Union strongly urges the National Election Commission (NEC) to act at all times in an independent manner and actively to promote voter education, emphasising in particular the secrecy of voting, and to reinforce confidence in the integrity of the ballot process.

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The European Union encourages all political parties, for their part, to work together to resolve outstanding issues. The Union places great importance on the full participation of all political parties in the elections. The EU has taken note with appreciation of the statement of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk that all Cambodians should vote according to their personal preferences.

The European Union will be sending a team of more than one hundred short term election monitors to supplement the team of long term monitors already in Cambodia. The Union is confident that this team, working closely with the UN and with monitors from other countries and organisations, will be able to assess the freedom and fairness of the 26 July elections. The Union attaches the utmost importance to the security of all international observers. It is the responsibility of the Royal Cambodian Government to ensure the safety of all international observers at all times during their mandate.

The European Union believes that successful elections would mark an important step in Cambodia's political and economic development.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Cyprus, associated to the European Union and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.
