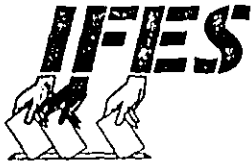


Date Printed: 11/03/2008

JTS Box Number: IFES_8
Tab Number: 21
Document Title: Kingdom of Nepal: Parliamentary Elections
Document Date: 1991
Document Country: Nepal
IFES ID: R01771



* E B B B 5 D E E - C A 3 A - 4 3 9 2 - B 1 6 7 - C 4 7 6 7 2 F 0 B 3 8 C *



International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1620 I STREET, N.W. • SUITE 611 • WASHINGTON, DC 20006 • (202) 828-8507 • FAX (202) 452-0804

**The Kingdom of Nepal
Parliamentary Elections**

May 12, 1991

United States Election Observer Report

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

F Clifton White
Chairman

Charles Manatt
Vice Chairman

Patricia Hutar
Secretary

John C. White
Treasurer

James M. Cannon

Richard M. Scammon

Robert C. Walker

Randal C. Teague
Counsel

Richard W. Soudriette
Director



INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is a private, nonprofit foundation that was established in September 1987 with a mandate to monitor, support and strengthen the mechanics of the election process in emerging democracies and to undertake any appropriate education activities which contribute toward free and fair elections.

The Foundation fulfills its objectives through four major capabilities: election problem analysis, technical election assistance, information transfer, and election observation.

IFES' program activities have expanded dramatically since the worldwide shift toward democratic pluralism and the ever-increasing demand for the technical support services of the Foundation.

In less than five years IFES has sent 14 pre-election survey teams to four continents and provided on-site technical assistance to the election councils of Bulgaria, Haiti, Guyana, Paraguay, Romania, and Venezuela. Election related material and equipment have been shipped to countries in Latin America and Central Europe, and IFES election observers have produced comprehensive reports on 14 elections on four continents. Since 1987, post-election analysis reports have been completed for eleven countries in Latin America, Asia, Central Europe and North Africa.

Among IFES' significant contributions have been the undertaking of training for voter registration workers, poll workers, and other election officials in Bulgaria, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and the Soviet Union.

IFES is a vital resource center for any nation seeking expert assistance in developing a sound election process, an essential step in establishing and maintaining a democratic form of government. IFES also serves as a clearinghouse for sharing information about any technical aspect of electoral systems, including names of those expert in these systems and the materials essential to establishing and managing democratic elections.

BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

F. Clifton White
Chairman

Charles Manatt
Vice Chairman

Patricia Hutar
Secretary

John C. White
Treasurer

James M. Cannon

Richard M. Scammon

Robert C. Walker

Randal C. Teague
Counsel

Richard W. Soudriette
Director

The Kingdom of Nepal Parliamentary Elections
May 12, 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	1
Executive Summary	2
I. Project Description	5
II. Electoral Process	
Constitutional Framework	9
Determination of Electoral Constituencies	10
The Election Commission	11
Voter Eligibility	12
Preparations for the Vote	12
The Role of Political Parties	13
Conduct of the Campaign	18
Local Security and Administration	19
Voter Registry	20
III. Election Day	
Background	21
Overview of May 12, 1991	
General Organization of Polling Centers	21
Polling Officials	22
Voter Identification	22
Ballot	22
Vote Counting	23
IV. Election Results	24
V. Findings	26
VI. Recommendations	27
VII. Conclusion	33
Appendices	34

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) gratefully acknowledges the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIIA) and the National Republican Institute for International Affairs (NDIIA) for their joint cooperation with IFES in sponsoring the United States observer team to the May 12, 1991 Nepal elections.

This observer report and IFES' previous work in Nepal were made possible by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development/Kathmandu. IFES is grateful for the invaluable support of U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Julia Chang Bloch, USAID/Kathmandu Country Director Kelly Kammerer and the staffs of the American Embassy and A.I.D. Mission. IFES is also grateful for the assistance of Richard Whitaker and John Gunning of A.I.D./Washington and Susan Bennett, State Department Country Officer for Nepal.

The United States observers were: Carleton Coon, Howard Denis, Charles Greenleaf, Jr., Martha Keys, Ken Melley, Leon Weil, Richard Soudriette, and Mark Freeman. Mark Freeman prepared this report and IFES Program Officer for Asian Affairs Tom Whatman coordinated the delegation.

The IFES Nepal pre-election assessment was conducted in November 1990 by Lewis Macfarlane, Rei Shiratori, and Richard Smolka and a copy of the report is available from the IFES Resource Center.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I welcome Nepal to the Third World Democracies", proclaimed Ishtiaq Ahmed, an election observer from Bangladesh. He mirrored the sentiments of the sixty-four international delegation members who observed Nepal's first parliamentary elections since 1959 held on May 12, 1991. This delegation representing 22 countries was hosted by the Nepal National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), a private non-partisan organization.

Eight observers from the United States participated in the international election observer delegation. The U.S. observers were sponsored by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in cooperation with the National Democratic and National Republican Institutes for International Affairs (NDIIA and NRIIA). Prior to departure, the U.S. observers were familiarized with the political and electoral process of Nepal through IFES pre-election activities which began in October 1990. Representatives of IFES made three pre-election visits to Nepal to 1) study the development and progress of the political and electoral process; 2) evaluate the need for civic education programs; and 3) assess the need of electoral commodities for the May 12 election.

The seven-day mission began with the observers arriving in Kathmandu four days prior to the election for briefings by US Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch and her staff. Prime Minister K. P. Bhattarai welcomed the entire international delegation prior to a series of briefings organized by NEOC on the procedural and political aspects of the election. The international delegation was divided into three-member teams in order to canvass nineteen of Nepal's seventy-five administrative districts and five of the ten constituencies in the Kathmadu Valley. NEOC and its district level committees organized these local site visits. The field duties of election observers included discussions with election officials, party candidates, representatives of civic organizations, and private citizens on the conduct of the election and visits to polling centers on election day. Selected observers watched the vote count at district centers before returning to Kathmandu where each group offered its report. A drafting committee, including U.S. observer Kenneth Melley, was formed to prepare an interim draft report which was debated, revised, and released the afternoon of May 14.

The international delegation stated:

...that the elections were generally conducted in a manner fair, free, and open, enabling the full expression of the will of the people. In the opinion of the International Observer Delegation, the conduct of the May 12 election in Nepal satisfies the generally accepted principle providing for the right of political participation....We leave Nepal with the firm belief that the Nepali people are on the path of multi-party democracy and that this process will be respected and supported by the international community.

Election results from the 205 constituencies reveal that approximately 7 million of about 11 million eligible voters cast a ballot. Analysis of the conduct of the election showed a general absence of violence. It had been predicted that five to twenty percent of the polling centers might experience unrest. A former prime minister had publicly stated that violence would be part of an intentional campaign to intimidate voters associated with certain political parties. These concerns proved greatly exaggerated although there were a few serious instances of polling place harassment and violence. Forty-five of 8,225 polling centers required repolling. Credit for a peaceful election belongs to the Nepalese voter, the Election Commission and its staff, and the Home Ministry which was assigned security responsibilities.

Many analysts had predicted that the Nepali Congress Party would gain a plurality but not a majority of votes. The analysts had thought the balance of the seats would be distributed between the various communist parties and the two National Democratic Parties containing elements of the old political leadership. However, Congress did gain a majority of the seats, but the NDP parties were only able to win four seats. The communist parties did better than expected by garnering 4 out of 5 seats in the Kathmandu Valley, sweeping the Prime Minister out of office and accumulating a total of 82 seats in the new parliament. The election resulted in the emergence of two dominant political parties which will have to develop a working relationship for votes requiring a two-thirds majority, such as ratification of treaties. Detailed election results are included later in this report.

The organizational framework and successful functioning of the Nepal Election Commission and NEOC provide valuable lessons for emerging democracies organizing multiparty elections. There were some aspects of the electoral process, however, which should be studied in order to make the system operate in a more effective manner. Recommendations are offered in this report in a spirit of strengthening the electoral process.

In summation, the U.S. observer delegation was privileged to have witnessed Nepal's first freely held multiparty parliamentary elections since 1959 and shares the hope for the continuation of Nepal's strong commitment to a democratic society.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since its founding in 1987 IFES has been providing technical election assistance to countries around the world. Assistance has included both pre- and post-election activities designed to strengthen the electoral process, civic education programs, and election observation missions.

IFES was awarded a grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to: 1) study the electoral process of Nepal and recommend needed commodities in support of the May 12 parliamentary election, 2) propose civic education programs, and 3) organize US experts to observe the May 12, 1991 election.

In furtherance of these objectives, IFES organized a pre-election survey team which visited Nepal from October 24 to November 3, 1990. The team's responsibilities included:

- analyzing the current Nepalese political environment and consulting with election officials, political party representatives, and representatives of civic organizations;
- reaching conclusions about preparations for Nepal's planned national elections, scheduled for May 12, 1991; and
- identifying areas for possible pre-election technical assistance and/or observer participation in the elections.

A series of options and recommendations were offered including a list of commodities requested by the Nepal Election Commission, forms of technical assistance, and a statement on the need to organize an international election observer team with strong US representation.

By mid-March, there was general support by the Government of Nepal for having an international observer team witness the May 12 parliamentary elections. The Government also requested that all inquiries by foreign governments for inclusion in this delegation be channeled through the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC). The Committee itself was formed by the Foundation for Protection of Human Rights (FOPHUR), a noted leftist human rights group in Nepal. NEOC's composition included nationally known leaders in the field of law, human rights, and politics. While this mechanism won general support among Nepalese and in the international community, there was some concern whether true

objectivity could be achieved without the inclusion of the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON), another Nepali human rights group with more centrist leanings.

During a follow-on mission by IFES it was apparent the Election Commission was well organized and prepared for the election. The Commission was in the process of distributing materials to the 8,225 polling centers in the 205 parliamentary constituencies around the country and conducting training for election judges and other officials in Nepal's seventy-five administrative districts. Voting lists were being posted in each district center and registration of political parties and assignment of party symbols was well underway. Negotiations between FOPHUR and HURON were also proceeding, and it seemed that a suitable arrangement whereby both groups would be involved in national and international election observer activities would emerge. Later, HURON withdrew its participation in this proposed joint arrangement.

During the IFES follow-on mission discussions centered on whether the United States should be part of a larger international observer delegation or should organize its own independent mission. Assurances were offered by NEOC representatives that the organization of an international delegation under its auspices was designed to better facilitate and coordinate the work of the observers. The US could select its own delegates, travel freely around the country, and issue its own report subsequent to the release of the delegation's findings. An initial cap of sixty international observers was established by the Government of Nepal (GON).

Based on these assurances, Embassy and IFES officials concurred that it would be advisable for the US team to be part of the international delegation. Observers would be selected by IFES, the National Democratic Institute and National Republican Institutes for International Affairs (NDI, NRI). IFES also proposed to work with NEOC to assist it in preparing for this large international delegation. NEOC accepted the IFES offer with an IFES representative to return to Nepal in advance of the international delegation to assist with finalizing logistics. An IFES memorandum was prepared for NEOC outlining steps to support the international delegation.

During the pre-election phase, USAID/Nepal contracted with a Nepalese group, Himalayan Research, to produce political baseline profiles on selected districts in Nepal likely to be visited by members of the observer delegation. These districts were selected as

being either representative or critical in the election outcome. This information was used to brief observers who traveled to 15 of the districts surveyed by Himalayan Research. Six other districts were chosen to replace six of those profiled because of logistical difficulties.

The US delegation was headed by Charles Greenleaf, former USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia and Visiting Scholar at the Center for Research and Economic Development (CRED) at the University of Michigan. The other members of the delegation included the Honorable Carleton Coon, former U.S. ambassador to Nepal; Mr. Howard Denis, Senator, State of Maryland; the Honorable Martha Keys, former Member of Congress from Kansas; Mr. Kenneth Melley, Assistant Director of the National Education Association; and, the Honorable Leon J. Weil, former U.S. ambassador to Nepal. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Richard Soudriette, Director of IFES. IFES Consultant Mark Freeman was present in Nepal to assist NEOC with coordination of the international observer delegation and to observe the elections.

The activities of the international election observer delegation were designed to provide briefings in Kathmandu, observation in the field through election day, and provide time back in Kathmandu to consider members' observations in order to release an interim statement reflecting their findings. Prior to election day representatives from the major political parties presented platforms to observers and commented on the electoral process. A briefing was conducted by Election Commission members, and US observers received a briefing by Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch and members of the country team.

Arrangements were made by NEOC for the field portion of the delegation's visit. The group of sixty-four was divided into twenty-two teams in order to visit nineteen districts and five constituencies in the Kathmandu Valley. NEOC formed district committees to host the group and to facilitate arrangements for observers to meet local political leaders, election officials, and observe actual polling places. In most cases the group was accompanied by a member of NEOC's Central Committee. Each small team leaving the Valley departed on May 10 in order to conduct pre-election interviews and select specific polling places for site visits. Election day, May 12, was spent visiting polling places with some teams visiting more than a dozen locales. Many observers witnessed the vote count, but some did not participate in this aspect of the election until back in Kathmandu. On May 13, each group returned to Kathmandu.

The American delegation was widely dispersed. Howard Denis went to Morang in the eastern part of the country while Kenneth Melley journeyed to Banke in the far western region. Martha Keys was in the Pokhara area while Leon Weil went to Tanahu District. Carleton Coon and Richard Soudriette travelled to Nuwakot and Charles Greenleaf canvassed Kathmandu polling stations. Mark Freeman spent the day in Bhaktipur, also in the Kathmandu Valley.

Upon their return to Kathmandu each team was asked to submit written and oral reports based on its observations. These reports served as the basis of the international delegation's interim report. A committee was selected including US observer Ken Melley to draft the official statement of the international delegation. During deliberations on the district reports there was a suggestion that the group issue its interim report the day after the election in order to accommodate media requests. This precipitous action was tabled with the delegation opting for a report that accurately reflected the entire delegation's observations.

On May 14, the interim report was issued with the finding that the elections were generally conducted in a free and fair manner. A copy of the interim report is included in the appendices of this report.

II. ELECTORAL PROCESS

A. Constitutional Framework

Nepal's 1990 constitution made a major organizational change in the basic electoral framework by providing for multiparty election to directly elect a House of Representatives of 205 members. This is contrasted with the 140 members in the old partyless National Panchayat (112 elected and up to 28 nominated members). All members of the new House of Representatives were elected from single member constituencies with the candidate receiving the largest number of votes, whether simple or absolute majority, winning.

The new constitution provides for nearly twice as many elected representatives on a per capita basis and redresses the imbalance in the old system whereby less populous districts were overrepresented. The Third Amendment of the 1962 Constitution, which provided for the first time for direct popular election of members of the National Panchayat, also prescribed a highly disproportionate system of representation. The electoral system used the districts (administrative units roughly comparable to counties) as constituencies. Each of Nepal's 75 districts was allocated either one or two seats depending on population. Many hill and mountainous districts have very low populations while nearly all of the districts of Nepal's Terai region (the populous lowland areas adjacent to India, with an estimated 40-50% of Nepal's population) have over 100,000 residents. The result was a seat allocation system which gave more political weight to the less populous (and presumably more pro-system) hill districts.

The new formula greatly reduced some of the disparities which the old one created. While each district is assured of one seat regardless of population, more populous districts like Kathmandu were awarded five and Jhapa and Morang were each allocated six. On the other hand, there remains a slight built-in overrepresentation of smaller districts (all of which are in the mountains or hill regions). The breakdown of the 205 seats on a regional basis awards the mountainous areas about 14%, the hill regions 47%, and the Terai 39%.

B. Determination of Electoral Constituencies

The Delimitation of Constituencies Commission Act was passed in order to establish the country's 205 electoral districts. The Act provides for the creation of a Delimitation of Constituencies Commission. This body was formed on December 25, 1990, and completed its task in less than six weeks. Seat allocations for the 1991 elections were based on the 1981 census, the most recent taken, modified by population projections for 1990. Article 45 (2) of provides that, for the purpose of election to the House:

The administrative districts shall be deemed to be the election districts and the number of seats to be allocated to each district shall be in the ratio of the population of that district which has been determined by the census held prior to the concerned election. The ratio of seats to be allocated shall be based on the number of such population of a district, and as far as possible such number of seats in any district shall be in the same ratio between the population and number of seats amongst all the districts. The election constituencies shall be determined in the ratio of one constituencies (sic) for each seat thus allocated. Provided that at least one seat shall be allocated for purposes of election from one district irrespective of population.

The constituencies were demarcated as follows:

<u>Number of Constituencies</u>	<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Total Seats</u>
1	11	11
2	26	52
3	21	63
4	8	32
5	7	35
6	2	12
TOTAL	75	205

C. The Election Commission: Constitutional and Legal Provisions

The constitution provides in Articles 103, 104, and 108 for an Election Commission, to be named by the King on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council. (The Commission is in fact a carryover, in similar form, from the 1962 Constitution as amended). Article 103 provides that the Commission "is to consist of a Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Commissioners as may be deemed necessary."

Commissioners serve six-year terms and are eligible for reappointment; they must, however, retire at age 65, and they may be removed from office on the same grounds and in the same manner as prescribed for judges of the Supreme Court. Commissioners must be at least 45 years of age, must hold a graduate degree from a recognized university, and may not be a member of any political organization at the time of appointment. Election Commissioners are not thereafter eligible for other government appointments (except that a Commissioner may be appointed Chief Commissioner).

The legal framework for the functions of the Election Commission is Article 104 of the constitution which provides that:

(1) The Election Commission shall, subject to the provisions of this Constitution and other laws, conduct, supervise, direct and control the election to the Parliament and other local organizations of village, town and district levels. The electoral rolls of the voters for the above purpose shall also be prepared by the Election Commission.

(2) If after the nomination for election to Parliament has been filed a question arises before the election is completed that a candidate suffers or has become disqualified pursuant to Article 47, final decision thereon shall be made by the Election Commission.

(3) The Election Commission may delegate any of its functions, duties and powers to the Chief Election Commissioner or any other Elections Commissioners or to any office of His Majesty's Government subject to the conditions specified in the authority letter. The person so delegated shall comply with or exercise the delegated powers only.

D. Voter Eligibility

Articles 8-10 of the constitution define citizenship. Article 45 (2) provides that "any citizen of Nepal who has attained the age of eighteen shall be entitled to vote in any one of the election constituencies in the manner specified by law". A practical problem in Nepal relates to citizenship documentation. Many voters in the Terai and some in urban centers are recent arrivals from India or have close family ties with people on the other side of the 500-mile open border with India. While the government is acutely aware of the problem, there is not, at present, any nationwide identity documentation system.

The 18-year-old vote is new to Nepal. In previous elections, the lower age limit was 21. There is a feeling in certain quarters that lowering the age limit may have opened the door to less informed voting, but there was a strong view among the parties making up the interim government, particularly in view of the role of youth and students in the popular movement earlier in the year, that young people in this age group should be given the opportunity to vote. Overall, the decision does not appear to be a controversial one.

Voting in Nepal is voluntary. The last two national elections drew turnouts of about 60%. Most political observers questioned thought turnout would be higher in 1991. The actual vote exceeded 65%.

E. Preparations for the Vote

Despite the dramatic changes in the political environment, Nepal's Election Commission has considerable experience in holding elections. It has, in the past decade, supervised five elections-- one national referendum (1980), two nationwide elections to the National Panchayat (1981 and 1986), and two nationwide series of elections to local offices (1982 and 1987). Although the legalization of political parties has made the process more complex, there were not any major administrative or procedural changes in the way the 1991 elections were administered.

With 205 constituencies for the House of Representatives, and a total estimated electorate of nearly 11.1 million, the average constituency contained over 50,000 voters. The number of polling places per constituency varied depending on terrain, isolation, population density and other factors, with 8,225 polling centers nationwide.

Except for the 1959 general elections, individual candidates in all previous elections in Nepal competed without any explicit identification by political party. In 1991, however, candidates ran either as representatives of recognized parties or as independents. As is common on the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere where literacy rates are low (Nepal's is below 30%), the basic voting document is a printed paper ballot which carries a symbol for each party or candidate. In 1991, there were two sets of reserved symbols-- one for use nationwide by specific parties qualifying for the ballot, the other for use by individual candidates and allocated to them by constituency. Thus, the same ballot could be used across the country. The election symbols used are contained in the appendix of this report. The Election Commission considered requests from political parties for preferred symbols (and the election law spells out ground rules for use of symbols, such as a prohibition on religious symbols) and had the final say in which party was allocated which symbol.

F. The Role of Political Parties

Political parties, although technically outlawed under the 1962 Constitution, have since that time enjoyed a "shadow existence" in Nepal-- officially tolerated and permitted to exist, organize and operate in what has amounted to a quasi-legal status. For example, parties during the 1980s maintained their own offices, vehicles, and stationery. Their leaders (if not in prison or under house arrest or detention) circulated freely in society and were usually able to organize public meetings. Statements by political party leaders could even be quoted freely in the local independent press-- as long as the name of the party was followed by "(O)"-- meaning "outlawed".

One theory is that Palace and Panchayat leaders believed they could better monitor and even influence the role of parties if they were allowed to function in this mode, while complete suppression of party activity would merely drive them further underground, foment extremism, and make it harder to monitor their activities. But, while parties were tacitly permitted to operate on this basis, the Palace and government did not hesitate to detain and imprison principal party leaders, sometimes for periods of years, if they felt their activities unduly threatened the system. Despite these constraints, the long-established parties (Congress and the various Communist factions) maintained their opposition to the partyless panchayat system and, in 1990, led the organized resistance which finally brought about fundamental change. A more detailed description of the chronology of events leading up to

King Birendra's decision to accept a role as a constitutional monarch and to permit the resumption of political parties was included in each international delegate's Programme Book and is included in the appendix of this report.

The official April 8, 1990, announcement that the ban on political parties had been lifted triggered a wave of party organization and activity unprecedented in Nepal's history. Old parties reappeared, and many new ones came on to the scene. One factor which further stimulated the early reactivation of parties was the opportunity to register views about the new constitution with the Constitutional Recommendations Commission.

The new constitution provides that political parties register with the Election Commission. The Commission went to great lengths to canvass national and regionally based parties in order to include them in the election. Eventually, 44 parties were registered and of these, 20 actually fielded candidates. Three hundred and ninety seven independents also ran. The number of candidates and specific party breakdown are given by the chart on the following page.

The proliferation of parties is not unique to Nepal. Most newly established multi-party systems experience an explosion in the numbers of parties. A major problem is a lack of understanding of what constitutes a political party. In most instances the parties are organized around individuals and often lack specific party platforms. A major way to strengthen democracy in Nepal is for the parties to focus more attention on party building and organization.

**Political Parties and Candidates for
1991 Nepalese Parliamentary Elections**

	Political Party or Independent	Nomination <u>Filed</u>	Nomination <u>Invalidated</u>	<u>Withdrawals</u>	Final Numbers		
					Male	Female	Total
1	The Nepali Congress	205	1		193	11	204
2	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist)	193	1	15	168	9	177
3	The National Democratic Party (Thapa)	170		7	154	9	163
4	The National Democratic Party (Chand)	162	1	7	146	8	154
5	United People's Front, Nepal	90		21	65	4	69
6	Communist Party of Nepal (Democratic)	84		9	66	9	75
7	Nepal Sadbhavana Party	76		1	70	5	75
8	Nepal Rastriya Jana mukti Morcha	53	1	2	47	3	50
9	Nepal Workers & Peasants Party	38	1	7	28	2	30
10	Communist Party of Nepal (Burma)	37		2	31	4	35
11	Rastriya Janata Party (H)	33		5	27	1	15
12	Janata Dal (Socialist Democrat)	20	1	4	14	1	15
13	Nepal Communist Party (Amatya)	17		2	11	4	15
14	Janawadi Morcha Nepal	16		2	13	1	14
15	Rastriya Janata Party (Nepal)	10		1	8	1	9
16	Nepal Conservative Party	6			6		6
17	Nepal Rastriya Jana Party	4			4		4
18	Dalit Mazdoor Kissan Party	2		1	1		1
19	Akhil Nepal Sarva Pakshiya Rajnaitik Ekta Party (Ekta Party)	1		1			1
20	Bahu Jana Janata Dal Anter Anterrastriyatabadi Democratic Party	1			1		1
	Sadbhawant Samajbadi Dal Independents	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Total Candidates	397	6	172	211	8	219
		1617	13	259	1265	80	1345

While twenty parties and 219 independent candidates competed in the elections, only eight parties and three independents gained seats in the new parliament. The following is an analysis of the notable parties:

Nepali Congress (Centrist)

This centrist party was founded in 1947 and owes its origins to the Congress Party of India. Nepali Congress won the last multi party parliamentary elections in 1959 and went underground after its leader and former Prime Minister B.P. Koirala was deposed in 1960. Nepali Congress was led into the May 12, 1991 elections by Interim Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai. The party has long been viewed as the most dominant political party in Nepal. Although Nepali Congress won a majority in the parliament they received a major blow by losing control of four of the five constituencies in Kathmandu.

Communist Party/United Marxist Leninist (UML) (Left of Center)

At a time when communism is collapsing in all parts of the globe, Nepal experienced the phenomena of the Communist Party and the United Marxist Leninist league mounting a major campaign to win popular support at the polls. Although this party proudly incorporated the terms Marxist/Leninist, they tried to present a more moderate appearance to the voters. They did not campaign on a platform that appeared to differ from any of the other major parties. They even embraced the concept of the importance of maintaining a constitutional monarchy. Although late polls suggested that a communist sweep was in the making, in the end the voters handed an absolute majority to the Nepali Congress. The Communist/UML did sweep Kathmandu and much of the Kathmandu Valley but overall were rebuffed. With the collapse of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union it will be interesting to see if the Nepali Communist Party and the UML change their name and platform.

The United People's Front, the Nepal Worker's and Peasant's Party, and the Communist Party of Nepal chose not to participate under the UML umbrella, but all are decidedly left of the center parties. These parties gained a total of thirteen seats to make a total of 82 left of center members in the new parliament.

Nepal Goodwill Party (Center/Left)

Although the electoral law of Nepal was drafted to discourage participation of parties with a purely regional base, the Goodwill Party represented a major exception to the provision. The party was based in the Terai and its focus was primarily on issues of interest to the Terai. It is also considered pro-India. Nevertheless, to avoid the possibility of being decertified by the Election Commission, the Goodwill Party fielded candidates throughout Nepal. The final outcome showed the Goodwill Party electing six members to parliament all of which came from constituencies in the Terai.

National Democratic Party--Thapa and National Democratic Party--Chand
(Right of Center)

Both of these parties were largely based upon the personalities of the names that are attached to the parties. The NDP-Thapa was led by Surya Bahadur Thapa, a former prime minister and Pancha leader. The-Chand was led by another former prime minister and Pancha leader, Lokendra Bahadur Chand.

Although both parties competed in the elections separately they both represented the former partyless Panchayat system. In many respects these parties represented the status quo. The most significant message from the election results was the rejection of these two parties which was largely viewed as a repudiation of the old Panchayat system. Conversely the election results indicated overwhelming support for the return of multiparty parliamentary democracy.

G. Conduct of the Campaign

The parties were able to campaign openly, festooning the country from one end to the other with posters, handbills and painted slogans. Mass rallies, at least in urban areas, were the favored political rallying approach supplemented with loudspeakers and door-to-door campaigning. Each candidate was limited by law to an expenditure of funds not to exceed NR 75,000 (\$2,250). Political parties were required to run 5% women candidates on respective tickets. Candidates must receive 3% of the total vote count in the election or be dropped from the ballot of the next general election.

Access to the media was an area of concern. The major media in Nepal are government-operated. They include:

- Radio Nepal (heard throughout the country)
- Nepal Television (available only in and near the Kathmandu Valley and in other major urban centers). Estimated viewership: 600,000
- Two daily newspapers: The Rising Nepal (English, circulation 15,000) and Gorkhapatra (Nepali, circulation 30,000)
- RSS, the national news service

Concerns relating to equal access were regularly voiced. The Editor of The Independent, in response to a question raised by an international election observer, claimed Nepali Congress received the most media coverage, followed by the United Marxists-Leninists with all other parties behind.

Representatives of the major parties were generally in evidence at each polling place. However, there were suggestions that some representatives were unable to execute their poll-watching duties at select locations. Each party contesting the election was permitted to have poll watchers present at each polling center. Although they generally were active in scrutinizing the voter lists and in assisting voters find their names on the voting lists, many of the poll watchers appeared to be unaware of their duties. The parties should undertake training for poll watchers in the future. Each polling place was cordoned off and no campaigning could take place within these confines. Party officials were permitted to accompany Election Commission officials while transporting ballot boxes to the district center for tabulation and were also permitted to witness the vote count.

Charges of voter intimidation and harassment were levied both before and after the May 12 election by various Communist Party factions, Nepal Sadbhavana Party, and the National Democratic Parties. As noted, 42 polling places will require repolling, but there is no question that voting irregularities extended beyond these scattered instances of gross election violations. A thorough post-election in-country survey is required to reveal the extent of these problems and to recommend steps which must be taken by the Election Commission and Home Ministry to ensure various pressure tactics are minimized before next year's local elections.

H. Local Security and Administration

The fundamental jurisdictions where the work of the election was carried out were at the polling place and at district headquarters where votes were tabulated and results announced. The constituency is the unit from which a member of the House is elected.

The Election Commission confirmed that although the Chief District Officer (CDO) remained the senior official at district level, for purposes of election administration the CDO would be subordinate to the Chief District Judge. The judge has broad powers to ensure that all aspects of the election are carried out properly and to supervise the some 66,000 civil servants assigned to help with elections.

The maintenance of law and order fell mainly to members of Nepal's 30,000-strong police force augmented by 42,000 temporary policemen. The military was also placed on alert and operated in roving patrols in some constituencies. The Election Commission also moved to defuse possible election day disturbances by prohibiting "any activities to the detriment of peace in and around the building and place housing the polling centers". It is generally accepted by the international observers that the presence as well as the demeanor of the police on election day contributed to insuring a peaceful election.

The Election Commission maintained communication links with all 75 of Nepal's district headquarters-- the administrative centers where voter lists tabulation is coordinated and where votes are tallied on election day. In some cases, this was by telephone; in others, it was by government radio.

I. Voter Registry

Critical to the election process is the preparation and updating of voter registry. This is the main ongoing function of the Election Commission. Voters' rolls were prepared at the ward level, based on a house-by-house count. Information tabulated includes full name, address and house number, year of birth, and family members. The system relied heavily on local officials' knowledge of members of the local community. A longer-term approach lies in the government's plan to issue identity cards to all Nepalese citizens, but this program is only 35-40% complete and is proceeding slowly. It is possible that use of identity cards will make the present system of house-by-house enumeration unnecessary.

Ward lists once compiled were forwarded to district level officials, and then to EC headquarters in Kathmandu. At the EC offices a computerized voter list was prepared for each jurisdiction. The computer printout was then compared, item by item, against the original list. Corrections and copies were made.

The completed voters' list was then returned to district headquarters, where it was posted in a public place for at least 15 days to allow for local voters to examine it and register any questions or complaints regarding names of local voters who have been omitted, names on the list which should be deleted, and other apparent errors or irregularities. The original Electoral Roll put the total at just under 10.7 million and after revisions, the final number of voters was put at 11.1 million. Estimates, including those made by the Election Commission, place the number of eligible voters not having been registered at between 5 and 10 per cent.

The issue of double entries on Nepal's voters' rolls also was acknowledged to be a problem by political parties, by a foreign elections expert, and even by the Election Commission itself. One complicating factor is the over 80,000 college and university students, most of whom live and voted away from their normal places of residence and yet, many of whose names undoubtedly appeared on local lists. Double voting was also cited as a problem but early indications did not reveal this as a major problem.

III. ELECTION DAY

A. Background

Election day was a public holiday with no regular government functions performed and no liquor was permitted to be sold. A moratorium on campaigning went into effect 48 hours before the voting began. Balloting began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m. Local authorities could extend the voting period if bona fide voters were standing in line at the 5:00 p.m. deadline.

There is no absentee, mail, or postal ballot system. Votes must be cast in person. Voters are registered in the location where they normally reside. The only way in which voters can arrange to vote elsewhere is to notify the Commission or the Chief District Officer well in advance and have one's name transferred from one local list to another. This appears to be a time-consuming and somewhat uncertain process, and it is therefore likely that this feature of the Nepalese election system has the effect of disenfranchising substantial numbers of voters.

B. Overview of May 12, 1991

1. General Organization of Polling Centers

Polling stations were usually located in schools or other public buildings no more than two miles from the residence of the most distant voter. The number of voters assigned to each polling place varied depending on geographical location. Lines at most polling stations were long with waits of up to four hours not being uncommon. This was partly due to large numbers of voters arriving before the polls actually opened and a slow and cumbersome process of voter identification. Separate lines for men and women were formed. Upon reaching polling officials the voter's name was checked off in the registration book, and voters were required to sign their name in the book. Illiterate voters were required to dip their thumbs in a bottle of ink and place this impression by their names. This was not wholly satisfactory as the voter could smudge the ballot, thereby invalidating his vote. In order to discourage double voting an election official marked the back of the voter's thumb with indelible ink. The Election Commission experimented with a variety of ink before deciding on a permanent ink produced in Mysore, India.

After completing the identification process the voter has handed a ballot which contained the symbols of each political party. Each polling center had a secured area for voting. A rubber stamp was given the voter to affix a mark next to the symbol of the chosen party. The ballot was then folded and the voter left the voting area and placed the folded ballot in a metal ballot box.

2. Polling Officials

Polling officials included a Chief Election Officer, several clerks handling all phases of the voting process and uniformed security personnel. As in past elections, the Election Commission had prepared detailed pamphlets outlining the responsibilities of officials at each level of the process. The training of election officials was evident in the uniformity of polling centers' organization and procedures. In addition to public officials who administer the vote, representatives of party and individual candidates were at the polling station to monitor voting.

3. Voter identification

Voter identification proved to be one of the most cumbersome and problematic aspects of the electoral process. While voter lists were quite large and took some time to locate individual voters, it was the incompleteness of the lists that proved troublesome. Observers noted both voters who were turned away because their names were not on the list and a large number of obviously underage voters. In the latter case the Chief Election Officer made a judgment based on physical appearances and either allowed the individual to cast a ballot or rejected the potential voter as underage. A recommendation designed to reduce registration problems is put forward in a later section of this report.

4. Ballot

The ballot was a one page sheet listing the election symbols of each political party or candidates running as independents. Next to each symbol was a box in which the voter stamped his preference. The ballot was then folded and placed in the ballot box. While this seems straightforward, almost 4.5% of all ballots cast were voided. Observers noted two

situations which certainly led to some of these invalidated ballots. The first was a problem of the ink causing a double mark on the ballot when it was folded. The second was the smudging of the ballot caused by illiterate voters whose thumbs had been dipped in an ink bottle as a means for identification. In some cases a residue of this ink was transferred to the ballot which would also be grounds for invalidation.

5. Vote Counting

When the time for voting had expired, the ballot boxes were sealed in the presence of candidates or their representatives. The ballot boxes were then transported to the district headquarters by election officials and security personnel. Once all ballot boxes from all constituencies in a given administrative district were received, counting took place at tables set up for this purpose. Again, parties and candidates were allowed to have their representatives present to verify the process. Vote totals were tabulated and relayed to the Election Commission by phone, fax, or radio on an hourly basis. Although this appears as a brisk process in some cases it took many hours or even days for ballot boxes to be transported to district headquarters for counting. Yet, a remarkable 50% of the returns were tabulated within 48 hours of the closing of the polls.

When counting was completed, the Chief Judge at District level certified the results. Ballot boxes will be retained at District level and the ballots kept for three months in case there are allegations of irregularity or challenges to be adjudicated. A single judge, appointed by the Election Commission, is empowered to settle election disputes.

IV. ELECTION RESULTS

Large crowds assembled outside of Kathmandu City Hall for two days awaiting the results from the five local constituencies. Inside, the vote count proceeded in an orderly manner. US observer Martha Keys commented, "party and election officials alike were professional and quite prepared to undertake the long process of manually tabulating the vote". Meanwhile, at the Election Commission headquarters, returns were released twice a day to the media from constituencies around the country.

By the morning of May 14, trends were discernible with the Nepali Congress Party obtaining an early but not decisive lead, with the UML not far behind. Prime Minister Bhattarai had gone down to defeat in Kathmandu Constituency 1 and Supreme Leader of the NCP, Ganesh Man Singh's wife and son were defeated in Kathmandu Constituencies 3 and 4. In fact, in the Kathmandu Valley, the Communist candidates captured eight of the ten seats, and the Nepali Congress Party the remaining two seats. As it turned out, the Nepali Congress Party confounded the experts and gained 110 seats giving them a clear majority to form the new government.

No doubt the most surprising result of the election was the collapse of the right. Most political experts gave the Nepali Congress Party no more than 90 seats with the left and the right splitting the remaining 115 seats. This, of course, would have forced a coalition government and rumors were rife on how this coalition might be composed. The defeat of the right also created a second phenomenon not expected by the experts. What emerged was a loosely knit two party system as opposed to a multi-party system. Whether this holds through the local elections to be held next year and the next general election is hard to gauge.

The chart on the following page gives specific election results by political party.

House of Representative Members Election - 1991
Overall Status

<u>Party & Independent</u>	<u>Total Candidate</u>	<u>Elected Candidate</u>	<u>Total Vote</u>	<u>P.C. of Vote Cast</u>
The Nepali Congress	204	110	2752452	37.75
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	177	69	2040102	27.98
United peoples' Front, Nepal	70	9	351904	4.83
Nepal Sadbhavana Party	75	6	298610	4.10
The National Democratic Party (Chand)	154	3	478604	6.56
Nepal Workers and Peasants Party	30	2	91335	1.25
Communist party of Nepal (Democratic)	75	2	177323	2.43
The National Democratic Party (Thapa)	163	1	392499	5.38
Dalit Mazdoor Kissan Party	1	0	92	0.00
Rastriya Janata Party (H)	27	0	4406	0.06
Nepal Rastriya Jana Party	4	0	5732	0.08
Nepal Communist Party (Amatya)	14	0	4846	0.07
Janawadi Morcha Nepal	14	0	1518	0.02
Communist Party of Nepal (Burma)	36	0	16698	0.23
Bahu Jana Janata Dal	1	0	2012	0.03
Rastriya Janata Party (Nepal)	9	0	4280	0.06
Ekata Party	1	0	94	0.00
Janata Dal (Socialist Democrat)	15	0	5760	0.08
Nepal Conservative Party	6	0	2562	0.04
Nepal Rastriya Janamukti Morcha	50	0	34509	0.47
Independent Candidates	219	3	303723	4.17
Total	1345	205	6969061	95.58
Invalid Votes			322023	4.42
Total Casted Votes			7291084	100.00

Source: Final Results as published by Nepal Election Commission

V. FINDINGS

1. The essence of democracy is a free and fair election. This basic IFES tenet finds its expression in the May 12, 1991 Nepal parliamentary elections. The voters of Nepal exercised their franchise in a peaceful manner and in great numbers. As a result, no one seriously challenges either the outcome of the election or the manner in which it was conducted.

2. The Election Commission of Nepal did an outstanding job in conducting the elections and serves as a model for other emerging democracies heading toward a resumption of democratic government or engaging in elections for the first time.

3. The National Election Observation Committee (NEOC) successfully hosted and facilitated the work of the sixty-four member international observer delegation. As IFES Director Richard Soudriette commented, "I have observed a number of elections and in no case have I worked with a group like NEOC who was so well prepared and responsive to our every need. It made our job much easier and more productive".

4. International donor assistance such as that from DANIDA, the Danish Government foreign assistance agency, materially aided both the Election Commission and NEOC in carrying out their responsibilities.

5. The US Mission actively supported the Government of Nepal's electoral process. Baseline surveys of most districts visited by the international delegation were prepared with USAID assistance. USAID/Kathmandu contracted with IFES in order to offer technical electoral assistance to the Government of Nepal, the Election Commission, and NEOC.

6. The Government and people of Nepal are to be congratulated for a successful election. In a short period a new democratic constitution was passed and the first multiparty elections in over thirty years were conducted. The organization and peacefulness of the elections set a new standard for the Indian subcontinent. Nepal seems to be well on its way to institutionalizing democracy as a tradition and way of life. The many challenges that lie ahead can all be surmounted if the same enthusiasm and responsibility that made May 12, 1991 a success is applied.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

While the success of the May 12, 1991 elections is duly noted, the democratic election process is a dynamic one that always leaves room for improvement. Based on the observations of the international observer delegation present in Nepal for the elections and pre-election work done by IFES, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems makes the following recommendations to strengthen the democratic process in Nepal.

A. Election Commission/Voter Specific

1. *Voter Registration Lists.* IFES recommends that voter registration lists be distributed to all polling centers and be posted for at least one month to ensure adequate time for citizen review. It was reported that 5 to 10 percent of the population was not contained on the voting lists. One reason for this may be that the lists were posted only in district capitals and for only 15 days. This made it impossible for many people to travel on foot to check their name on the voter lists. Another cause for an incomplete list may have been the late decision to extend the vote to 18-year-olds. House to house enumeration may be the most complete method of developing a comprehensive voter registration list. While a national identity card system would provide complete documentation, the cost is likely to be prohibitive.

2. *Polling Center Locales.* IFES recommends an assessment of the number and location of polling centers. Numerous complaints were received by the delegation regarding the length of lines and distance of travel to polling centers. The purpose of this assessment would be to ensure that no voters are being disenfranchised by having to wait in line too long or travel too far to vote.

3. *Marking Ballots.* IFES recommends that the Election Commission examine alternatives for marking ballots and for identifying illiterate voters. According to the Election Commission, 4.42% of all ballots cast were invalidated for various reasons. The election law declares, among other reasons, that a ballot is invalid, "If it is not marked in the prescribed manner and is marked differently, or bears different type of marks." Observers witnessed many ballots being invalidated because the voting stamp ink smudged after ballots were folded by voters. Additionally, illiterate voters had to place a thumb print

on the voter registry to attest to voting, and subsequently residue ink often appeared on the ballot from the voter's thumb. Alternative inks, methods for folding the ballots, and ways for illiterate voters to sign the registry (such as simply with an "X" to attest to voting) should be explored.

4. *Transporting Ballots.* IFES recommends that adequate provisions be made to ensure that party poll watchers can easily accompany ballot boxes from polling to counting centers as stipulated under electoral procedures. Observers noted that party and candidate representatives took their right seriously to accompany ballot boxes from polling to counting centers. Often, however, when the ballot transport arrived it was a vehicle much too small to accommodate the representatives.

5. *Campaign Finance.* IFES recommends that more comprehensive guidelines for reporting campaign expenditures and for full disclosure of campaign contributions by candidates be adopted. Many reports to observers indicated that the campaign expenditure levels set by the Election Commission at NR 75,000 (approximately \$2,250) were largely ignored. An anonymous survey of what candidates actually spent may help the Election Commission establish an expenditure limitation that would not be ignored.

6. *Election-day Campaigning.* IFES recommends stricter enforcement of laws prohibiting campaigning in and around polling centers on election day. Although not permitted by law, observers witnessed many instances of partisan political activity in and around the polling centers on election-day. Clear instructions should be issued regarding allowable activity and subsequent enforcement of these guidelines must be undertaken by polling and law enforcement officials.

7. *Poll Watcher Access.* IFES recommends that steps be taken to ensure equal access by political party poll watchers. It was reported to observers that in villages where one party was particularly strong it was difficult for other parties to effectively carry out their poll-watching responsibilities. The impartiality of Chief Election Officers dictates that they ensure equal access by all party representatives entitled to be present as provided by the election law.

8. *Election Crime and Punishment Act.* IFES recommends that more specific guidelines and an administrative process for resolving election disputes by the Election Commission be developed and that any subsequent appeals to this process be pursued through the established judicial system. The Election Commission, as an administrative body, may find that it is the most appropriate first level for resolving disputes. If disputes cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved, then a judicial discourse may follow. This should speed the process for resolving minor disputes which the Election Commission would have the expertise and authority to do without involving the judiciary. Any appeals to the decisions of the Election Commission could be filed with the established court system rather than a judge appointed by the Election Commission to resolve disputes.

9. *Post-election Assessment.* IFES recommends a post-election assessment to be undertaken by the Election Commission and selected non-governmental organizations. Any electoral system, not to mention a new one, leaves room for strengthening and improving the process. IFES' pre-election survey team recommended the preparation a post-election analysis by Nepali experts in different fields to provide an objective, multi-disciplinary assessment of the 1991 elections. It now seems appropriate that the Election Commission would initiate such a project as it serves to learn and benefit the most from an objective assessment of the electoral process. This assessment would provide a uniquely Nepali insight into the electoral process of more depth than could be accomplished by foreign observers.

B. Documentation of the Nepalese Experience

IFES recommends the full documentation of the Nepal electoral experience to be shared with other emerging democracies. Nepal's ability to carry out a successful election within a short period in spite of its difficult topography, low literacy rate, poor economic condition, and a formerly repressive government deserves to be shared with the rest of the world. A case study of Nepal should serve as a realistic example that no obstacle is too difficult to overcome in order to peacefully transfer power through free and fair elections.

Such a case study would consider the ten critical areas of an electoral process as they relate to Nepal:

The Electoral Commission and election laws;

Voter registry;

Voting station procedures;

Poll worker training;

Transportation;

Voting materials;

Security;

Counting, reporting and certification of votes;

Systems management; and

Voter education and motivation.

The case study on Nepal would also consider the political atmosphere throughout the campaign period and the role of the National Election Observer Committee and international observers, the donor community, and non-government sponsored civic education activities.

C. Civic Education

IFES recommends that a long-term commitment to a comprehensive civic education program be made by the Government of Nepal and private voluntary organizations to work together for democratic civic education for the youth and adult population.

Nepal's recent successful elections were a result of a coordinated and focused endeavor on behalf of the people, private organizations, and government of Nepal. Since the first multi-party elections in over thirty years have concluded, now is the time to take steps in anticipation of future elections and for strengthening democracy in Nepal. IFES recommends that the people, private voluntary organizations, and the GON once again join in a spirit of cooperation to develop and implement a nationwide civic education program concentrating on the electoral process, the democratic process, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a democracy.

An election is but one more step in the participatory process within the context of a democracy. Now that the elections are over the focus must turn to establishing democracy as an everyday way of life. This includes how to go about solving problems and promoting ideas in democratic society. The prospect of local elections in the near future makes implementation of a civic education program all the more needed.

D. National Election Observation Committee (NEOC)

IFES recommends that the NEOC model with as broad a representation of democratic forces as possible continue to be used for future Nepalese elections. NEOC is to be congratulated for its efforts in coordinating international and domestic observers for the May 12, 1991 election. The concept of a broadly based indigenous organization to coordinate observers has merit and may serve as a model for future coordinating efforts in Nepal and in other countries.

E. Political Party Poll Watchers

IFES recommends that the political parties of Nepal undertake a specific training program for volunteers that emphasizes the rights, responsibilities and duties of poll watchers at polling centers. It was evident to many observers that party representatives had little training or knowledge of their duties at polling centers on election day. This situation is neither beneficial to the party or the electoral process as nothing is gained from the representative's presence. A training program for all poll watchers would explain why the observer is present, what the person is to observe, and how to go about conducting their duties.

F. The Donor Community

IFES recommends that the international donor community continue to pool their resources and work in a coordinated fashion in support of the full democratization of Nepal. Participation in the international observer delegation was a prime example of the international community working together to avoid a duplication of efforts. Such cooperation in Nepal can broaden the support of the many worthwhile projects that have emerged and will continue to emerge in Nepal.

VII. CONCLUSION

On May 26, Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai accompanied the new leader of the Nepali Congress Party, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, to the Palace to introduce him to the King as the leader of the party in the House and, therefore, the second Prime Minister in Nepali history to achieve this office through democratic means.

Answering a question raised in a press interview, Mr. Surya Prasad Shrestha, Chief Election Commissioner declared "that a free and fair election constituted a sound foundation of democratic participation and the May 12 polls, which were enthusiastically but peacefully completed, showed that every Nepalese voter had the political maturity and desire to institutionalize democracy in the country". Both the international observer delegation and the US team members concurred in this assessment.

The May 12th parliamentary elections firmly established Nepal's place among the community of democratic nations. The free, fair and peaceful nature of the elections clearly demonstrated the abiding commitment of the Nepali people to democracy. The Nepalese elections also serve as an important example for the rest of the world to examine and follow.