

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION Mongolia – Parliamentary Elections, 28 June 2024

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 28 June parliamentary elections were well-administered, but competitiveness was negatively affected by the lack of a level playing field. The legal framework is adequate for conducting democratic elections but needs further alignment with international standards on fundamental rights and freedoms. The election administration enjoyed high public confidence and worked professionally, including by implementing a comprehensive voter information programme. Contestants could campaign freely despite several restrictions, including on social networks, but the short official campaign favoured the well-established parties with substantial resources. Further, a series of salary and social benefit increases close to the elections provided an undue advantage to the ruling party. While stakeholders had confidence in the voter list's inclusiveness, concerns were raised about the ability of some voters, including mine workers, to vote on election day. Media coverage was extensive but limited in news programmes and analytical reporting, with bias in favour of the ruling party, which further hindered the voters' ability to make informed choices. On election day, the polling process was smooth and orderly, and election results were reported swiftly and transparently after the automatic vote count; however, non-adherence to ballot reconciliation and vote-count verification procedures in a number of polling stations negatively affected the process.

The parliamentary elections took place after significant constitutional amendments in May 2023, which increased the size of the parliament from 76 to 126 members and introduced a mixed electoral system, aiming to enhance the parliament's strength and diversity. The ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP) has dominated the political landscape for the past eight years and further consolidated power by winning the presidency in 2021. The elections were held against a backdrop of high-profile corruption cases and economic hardship faced by the rural herder population and those living in several economically and infrastructure-deprived areas of the capital.

The legal framework is adequate for conducting democratic elections, but there is a need for further improvements with regard to fundamental rights and freedoms. Apart from reflecting the constitutional changes that modified the electoral system, the 2023 legal amendments include some positive developments, including allowing newly formed parties to nominate candidates, increased gender quotas for candidate lists and gender and diversity requirements for participation in the parties' executive bodies. However, several longstanding ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to voting and candidacy rights, freedom of speech and media freedoms, and deadlines for dispute resolution by the judiciary.

Seventy-eight members of parliament (MPs) are elected in 13 majoritarian districts, and the remaining 48 MPs by proportional representation in a single, nationwide constituency. The law mandates that the creation of electoral districts must consider various criteria; however, most electoral districts significantly deviate in the size of the electorate, contrary to international good practice related to equality of the vote.

The General Election Commission (GEC) worked in a professional and generally transparent manner, open to observers and contestants, and most International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) interlocutors expressed trust in the election administration at all levels. The IEOM observed one GEC session, but it was mostly not invited to the lower-level commissions' sessions, and their meeting minutes were not published. The GEC and the Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) implemented

a comprehensive voter information campaign, including online and through media. Doubts about the accuracy of the machine-based vote count persisted among some election stakeholders, but without detailing the allegations in concrete terms or providing evidence of potential manipulation, and regardless of the newly introduced requirement to check results through a manual count. Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, the law does not mandate independent verification and certification of electronic devices used for the vote count.

On 28 May, the General Authority for State Registration (GASR) announced that some 2.2 million voters were registered. Citizens could verify their data and the records of all persons registered at their address and request corrections. In general, the IEOM interlocutors expressed trust in the inclusiveness of the voter lists but underlined concerns related to the lack of transparency by the GASR in providing data on the re-registration of voters. Some IEOM interlocutors asserted that a number of voters had been pressured by their employers to move their registration between constituencies to secure more votes. Additionally, concerns were raised about the ability of certain categories of voters, particularly mine workers, to vote on election day.

The legislation contains several excessive restrictions on the right to stand, including financial and legal capacity conditions. Political parties and coalitions must declare their intention to contest elections to the GEC no later than 60 days before election day and receive State Audit Office (SAO) approval of their platforms' compliance with government policies and national security concepts. On 10 June, the GEC announced that 19 political parties and 2 coalitions with 1,336 candidates were registered for both races, including 42 independent majoritarian candidates. While the GEC conducted candidate registration adhering to procedures and allowing for correction of the submitted applications, several candidacy restrictions and excessive eligibility requirements put under question the overall inclusiveness in terms of ballot access. At least four candidates with disabilities were registered.

Overall, contestants campaigned freely, but the campaign lacked a level playing field for the contestants. The campaign was marred by an isolated violent incident that resulted in the death of a district party head, currently under investigation. Established parties held a clear advantage in conducting in-person campaigning across the large electoral districts over the short campaign period of 17 days, while smaller parties mostly used social networks and volunteer workers in their campaigns. The online campaign is restricted to websites and social network accounts registered by the TECs; based on the recommendations of law enforcement agencies, the electoral authorities can request social network platforms to limit the spread of disinformation, fake news, or voter manipulation campaigns. The law requires contestants to align their electoral platforms with specific government policies, including long-term strategy goals and fiscal stability requirements. This limits the freedom of opinion and expression and could stifle political pluralism.

Widespread allegations of pressure on civil servants and public employees to support the ruling party's campaign raised concerns about voters' ability to choose free from undue pressure. Before elections, the government implemented a series of salary and social benefit increases, which were promoted by state officials and featured prominently in the ruling party's campaign. These practices blurred the line between party and state providing an undue advantage to the ruling party, at odds with OSCE commitments.

Constitutional guarantees for gender equality are in place. Yet, women remain underrepresented in political life, and persistent gender stereotypes and limited resources continue to act as barriers. Positively, recent legal changes introduced a 30 per cent gender quota for all candidates, gender parity on proportional lists, and financial incentives for increased women participation beyond the legal quota. Women are well-represented in the lower levels of the election administration, while at the TEC level, their representation is minimal, and only one GEC member is a woman. Out of 1,336 candidates registered for both races, 519 were women. Although they campaigned actively nationwide, messages geared toward women were mostly absent.

The State Audit Office, responsible for overseeing campaign finance, sets the maximum campaign spending limits based on constituency size and voter demographics. Several IEOM interlocutors deemed the campaign spending limits too high, noting an advantage for well-established parliamentary parties and party-nominated candidates with substantial financial resources. Although the SAO is mandated by law to monitor campaign funding and spending, it did not engage in monitoring activities, which reduces the effectiveness of the legal provisions and accountability of parties. The SAO has no authority to enforce sanctions on violations; instead, it transfers information to other authorities. Overall, the framework for campaign finance lacks an effective mechanism of oversight and dissuasive sanctions.

The media sector is pluralistic, despite a relatively small advertising market, but faces challenges due to political affiliations and economic conditions undermining editorial independence. The Mongolian National Broadcaster (MNB) enjoys relatively high popularity; it complied with the requirement to provide free airtime to candidates, including through debates. Various other debates were aired by private channels. However, the lack of investigative and analytical reporting, compounded with time limits for the news coverage, undermined voters' ability to make an informed choice. Media monitoring during the campaign showed that public MNB and several privately owned TV channels showed a visible preference towards the ruling party. The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression. However, the legal provision against dissemination of false information was re-introduced in 2020 and is being actively used to prosecute several journalists. The legal framework and its enforcement stifle investigative journalism, lead to self-censorship, and have a negative impact on public discourse.

There is no expedited procedure for adjudicating election-related cases by the courts; instead, the general deadlines for administrative procedures apply. The courts strive to resolve election-related cases expeditiously, but since the deadlines are not aligned with the election calendar, they undermine the effectiveness of legal remedy. A total of 15 cases were filed with the Administrative Court of Appeals pertaining to party and candidate registration for these elections. Five were deemed inadmissible, and in five of the ten adjudicated cases the court overturned the GEC's decision allowing those candidates to register, most of them halfway through the election campaign. Overall, the rules for the dispute resolution process do not ensure the timeliness and, therefore, the effectiveness of legal remedies.

The law provides for citizen and international observation. Political parties and coalitions can also appoint observers to polling locations. The GEC accredited a total of 259 international observers and it reported that a total of 300 civil society observers and approximately 29,000 party observers were registered at the PEC level. The Coalition for Fair Elections observed voter registration, campaigning, campaign finance and the use of technologies in elections. On election day, they deployed some 300 observers in Ulaanbaatar and 12 provinces (*aimags*).

The election day was calm and orderly, with the polling procedures largely adhered to, but with the inadequate layout of polling stations, positioning of voting equipment and overcrowding in some cases, which had a detrimental impact on secrecy. The GEC published turnout data throughout the day and started posting the election results soon after polls closed, contributing to transparency. The official results were automatically counted and transferred to the GEC's central server soon after closing. The closing and manual vote-counting procedures were not followed in a number of cases, leading to a more negative assessment of the process by the IEOM observers.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background and Political Context

The parliamentary elections were announced on 28 December 2023, following significant constitutional amendments in May 2023. These amendments increased the size of parliament and introduced a mixed electoral system, with the stated aim of making the parliament stronger and more diverse.¹

The ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP) has dominated the political landscape since the country's independence and for the past eight years, securing an absolute majority in the past two parliamentary elections and further consolidating its power in 2021 by winning the presidency.² The second largest parliamentary party, the Democratic Party (DP), experienced severe internal divisions in recent years and to some extent in the lead-up to these elections.

In recent years, corruption has been one of the most prominent topics in public discourse, with several new claims of misconduct of high-level officials.³ In April 2022, demonstrations were held protesting corruption and the government's perceived ineffectiveness. Larger protests occurred in December 2022 after a corruption scheme related to coal exports was made public. In response, the authorities established a parliamentary investigative committee, arrested several high-level officials and members of parliament (MPs), and amended the criminal code with stricter sanctions for corruption offences.

The particularly harsh winters of 2023 and 2024 exacerbated economic hardship for the rural herder population and those living in several economically and infrastructure-deprived areas of the capital. In April 2024, parliament adopted new legislation in an expedited manner aimed at supporting the sustainable livestock industry. Many ODIHR Election Observation Mission (EOM) interlocutors criticized the bypassing of the standard legislative process and the ruling party campaigners using the new provisions to promote their party.

Stakeholders' concerns regarding the independence of the judiciary and pressure on journalists remain.⁴ Civil society organizations operate in a somewhat challenging environment, with limited financial and human resources, insufficient state support and weak public participation.⁵

Women remain underrepresented in political life and decision-making positions despite the legal provisions against discrimination. In the outgoing parliament, there are 13 women (17 per cent), only 3 out of 22 ministers are women (14 per cent), and there is only 1 woman governor out of 22. According to most IEOM interlocutors, persistent gender stereotypes and limited resources continue to act as barriers for women entering political life.

¹ The constitutional amendment increased the number of MPs from 76 to 126, and the electoral system was changed from a purely majoritarian to a mixed one.

² In the 2020 parliamentary elections, the MPP secured 62 seats, the Democratic Party (DP) won 11 seats, and a single seat was won by Our Coalition and the Right Person Electorate Coalition each, and by an independent candidate. The HUN party holds one seat in coalition with Social Democratic Party and Justice Party as Right Person Electorate Coalition. All 22 ministers, and 14 out of 21 governors are from MPP.

³ These include a scandal related to the alleged misallocation of student loans revealed in May 2023, the procurement of 1,000 buses for public transportation in Ulaanbaatar and the alleged misappropriation of funds in June 2023, as well as the [forfeiture complaint](#) filed by the U.S. Department of Justice in March 2024, alleging that former prime minister and current MP Mr. Sukhbaatar Batbold had purchased apartments in New York City from embezzled state funds totalling USD 14 million (approx. EUR 12.9 million).

⁴ See the 2023 [Preliminary Observations from the Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers: Freedom in the World](#) Report 2023; [23rd Report on the Human Rights and Freedoms in Mongolia](#), National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia; [Media Freedom Mongolia Report 2022-2023](#), Globe International Center.

⁵ Some stakeholders [reported](#) on the need to consolidate and harmonize the legal framework to ensure there is a comprehensive policy to safeguard the growing civil society sector.

Several election stakeholders, including IEOM interlocutors, described the political disengagement of youth as a potential concern.⁶ Despite a growing disillusionment with political parties among young voters, attitudes towards the democratic system remain largely positive. Notably, Mongolia ranks high in terms of political and civic youth participation.⁷

Legal Framework and Electoral System

Mongolia is a party to major international and legal instruments pertaining to the conduct of democratic elections.⁸ The primary legislation regulating the parliamentary elections comprises the 1992 Constitution, the 2019 Parliamentary Elections Law (PEL), the 2006 Law on the Central Election Body, the 2011 Law on the Automated System of Elections, all amended in 2023, as well as the new Law on Political Parties, enacted in 2023.⁹ The legal framework is adequate for conducting democratic elections, but there is a need for further improvements with regard to fundamental rights and freedoms.

The latest amendments to the PEL largely reflect the constitutional changes that have, *inter alia*, modified the electoral system. Positively, the amendments allow parties formed after the announcement of elections to nominate candidates and increase gender quotas for candidates. However, the law still contains undue restrictions on voting rights and freedom of speech, alongside several gaps and vague provisions.¹⁰ Several longstanding ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those pertaining to the restrictions on voting rights, limitations on freedom of speech and media freedoms, and the deadlines for the resolution of election-related cases by the judiciary.

The new Law on Political Parties, which came into force on 1 January 2024, introduced several changes, including public funding for parties that obtained at least one per cent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections.¹¹ Positively, the law establishes gender and diversity requirements for participation in the parties' executive bodies, as well as in their policies and activities. Additionally, a financial incentive is provided for parties that nominate women candidates above the gender quota required by the PEL. However, the law contains some overly prescriptive provisions on the structure and internal organization of political parties and imposes restrictions on party membership, which challenges the possibility of associating freely, at odds with international standards.¹² It also does not foresee any legal remedy in case of denial of registration of a party by the Supreme Court.¹³

⁶ Mongolia's youth (15 to 35 years of age) [comprises](#) a significant 28 per cent of the population.

⁷ Mongolia is ranked 24th out of 183 countries in the [2023 Global Youth Development Index](#). See also the [2022 survey](#) conducted by the Center for Insights in Survey Research.

⁸ Including the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), 1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2003 Convention Against Corruption (CAC), and 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

⁹ The applicable legislation also includes the 2015 Criminal Code, the 2017 Code of Criminal Procedure, the 2016 Code of Administrative Procedure, the 2017 Law on Offences, the 1992 Law on the Constitutional Court, the 2021 Law on Courts, the 2016 Law on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2006 Law on Anti-Corruption. For example, the law does not stipulate a procedure in case of a discrepancy arising from the mandatory manual count of ballots.

¹¹ At least 50 per cent of the public funds must be spent on specific purposes, namely capacity building of social groups, such as women, elderly, youth and persons with disabilities, education of party members and citizens and policy.

¹² Paragraph 7.6 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to provide "the necessary legal guarantees to enable [electoral contestants] to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities". See also Article 22 of the [ICCPR](#). See also the [2022 Joint ODIHR and Venice Commission Opinion on the Draft Law on Political Parties](#).

¹³ See paragraphs 151-155 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#): "The internal functions and processes of political parties should generally be free from state interference. Internal political party functions are best regulated through the party constitutions or voluntary codes of conduct elaborated and agreed on by the parties themselves... Overall, state control over political parties should remain at a minimum, and should be limited to what is necessary in a democratic society... In sum, any political or other excessive state control over activities of political parties, such as membership, number and frequency of party congresses and meetings, operation of territorial branches and subdivisions, should be avoided".

Seventy-eight MPs are elected by majority vote in 13 majoritarian districts, and the remaining 48 MPs are elected by proportional representation in a single, nationwide constituency.¹⁴ For each constituency, a different number of MPs is elected through a plurality-at-large (block voting) system, in which voters must cast as many preferences as there are seats in the constituency. Although the parliament's resolution to establish the electoral districts did not detail the selection criteria, the PEL mandates that the creation of districts must consider population size, territorial dimensions, and administrative divisions. Currently, 11 of the 13 electoral districts present deviations exceeding 15 per cent from the average number of voters, with four districts, all in Ulaanbaatar, showing deviations greater than 50 per cent, contrary to the international good practice related to the equality of votes and a prior ODIHR recommendation.¹⁵

Election Administration

Elections are administered by a four-tiered election administration. The General Election Commission (GEC) is a permanent body composed of nine members, only one of whom is a woman. Five members are nominated by the parliament, and the president and the Supreme Court each nominate two members; all members serve six-year terms.¹⁶ The GEC has a wide range of responsibilities in administering the elections, including the appointment of the lower-level commissions, registration of candidates, election preparations, the tabulation of results, and the implementation and maintenance of the automated counting system. The GEC worked in a professional manner and generally met legal deadlines.

The GEC established 22 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) in the provinces (*aimags*) and 339 District Election Commissions (DECs).¹⁷ The formation of all 2,198 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) was delayed beyond the 14 May deadline due to the introduction of the GEC's digital platform, but the late registration of PECs did not affect their work.¹⁸ Women are well-represented in the DECs and PECs, comprising around 76 per cent of all electoral staff altogether, but at the TEC level, only 9 per cent of the commissioners are women. The PEC members had to complete online training and be certified through the online platform to be able to serve. DECs organized additional in-person training for the PECs, primarily focusing on election-day procedures.

Most IEOM interlocutors expressed trust in the work of the election administration at all levels and underlined its efforts to work in an impartial and generally transparent manner. The GEC posted its decisions and regulations on its website and shared voter education and information materials.¹⁹ However, the GEC's and lower-level commissions' sessions were not publicly announced. While the GEC meeting minutes were published, minutes of the lower-level commissions were not made available to the public. Since the EOM was established, the GEC held only one session on 5 June, which the IEOM was invited to observe.²⁰ ODIHR EOM observers were mostly not notified about the lower-level election commission sessions, and when occasionally invited, they received last-minute notice. The GEC produced two separate ballots, one for the proportional and one for the majoritarian race. All polling stations were equipped with electronic devices for combined scanning, counting, and storing of ballots; to mitigate overcrowding, those serving more than 1,700 voters had two devices. To increase trust in the machine vote count, amendments to the PEL added manual counting of ballots in all polling

¹⁴ The number of majoritarian constituencies was reduced from 29 to 13.

¹⁵ Paragraph I.2.2.iv of the 2002 Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) recommends that the "permissible departure from the norm should not be more than 10%, and should certainly not exceed 15% except in special circumstances".

¹⁶ The GEC members are civil servants and may not be members of political parties. The current members of GEC were appointed in 2020 with two replacements in January 2024 due to resignations.

¹⁷ A separate commission was established within the MFA for out-of-country voting, with 47 PECs set up at the diplomatic representations in 37 countries. Voters abroad voted only for the proportional race.

¹⁸ The [platform](#) is used for registration, online training and certification of election administration officials at all levels, as well as registration of candidates and citizen observers.

¹⁹ The [GEC website](#) is adapted for persons with visual impairments.

²⁰ The GEC holds irregular sessions only to take formal decisions and informs on their actions through regular press releases.

stations to be conducted after the machine count, an approach that was already implemented in the 2021 presidential election. While the law stipulates that the machine-counted results are official, it does not contain provisions on managing any discrepancies between the machine and manual count, nor does it provide detailed procedures for manual counting.

Some election stakeholders expressed concerns to the IEOM regarding the use of electronic devices for the vote count, but they could not describe mechanisms or disclose evidence of potential manipulation of the official results through these machines, including for prior elections. To address these concerns, the GEC conducted a demonstration test on 21 June to verify the functionality of randomly selected devices involving various stakeholders, primarily media, political parties, candidates and observers. Despite a prior ODIHR recommendation, the law does not foresee the conduct of independent verification and certification of the automated vote count system, which could help alleviate concerns regarding its security and accuracy.²¹

The GEC implemented a comprehensive voter information campaign, including demonstrating election-day procedures, explanations of the electoral system and how to correctly mark ballots. A brochure with voter information and an explanation of the voting procedures was produced by the GEC and distributed to all households. TECs, DECes and PECs also proactively demonstrated election-day procedures, and the TEC worked directly with local broadcasters, online media and social networks. On 24 June, the functionality of the electronic devices was successfully tested at the PECs level. Additionally, some TECs collaborated with regional CSOs to disseminate voter information to women and to young voters.²²

To enable independent voting for voters with disabilities, the GEC informed the IEOM that they produced Braille ballot frames for both races in each constituency and provided magnifying glasses and wheelchair-accessible ramps at each polling station. Voter information videos with sign language interpretation were broadcast on public and private media and posted on the GEC website and on social networks.

Voter Registration

All citizens at least 18 years of age on election day have the right to vote, except persons deprived of legal capacity by a court decision and those serving a prison sentence, irrespective of the gravity of the crime committed. These restrictions are contrary to international obligations and prior ODIHR recommendations.²³

Voter lists are extracted from the continuously updated national population database managed by the General Authority for State Registration (GASR). Voters are identified using their biometric data, which includes photos and fingerprint records that are automatically checked against voter's fingerprints at the time of voting.²⁴ The latest amendments to PEL require the voter identification devices at the polling stations to be connected to the central server of the GASR. In general, the IEOM interlocutors expressed

²¹ See Paragraph 33 of the 2017 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on standards for e-voting, which prescribes that “[t]he components of the e-voting system shall be disclosed for verification and certification purposes”. See also paragraphs 38 and 39 recommending issuance of certificates or other documents for safeguarding systems as well as making them open to audits.

²² As observed in the TECs in Govi-Altai, Övörkhangaï, Khovd, Uvs and Darkhan-Uul.

²³ Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls on participating States to “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”, while paragraph 24 provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be “strictly proportionate to the aim of the law”. Article 12 of the [2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) provides for the equal recognition of persons with disabilities before the law. Article 29 requires States to “guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.” Paragraph 48 of the 2022 General Comment No 1 to Article 12 of the CRPD states that “a person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising [...] the right to vote [and] the right to stand for election”.

²⁴ In case there is a mismatch between the two, the voter is not allowed to vote.

trust in the inclusiveness of the voter lists but underlined concerns related to the lack of transparency by the GASR when it came to providing detailed summary data per province on voters' re-registrations.

Preliminary voter lists were published on the GASR website on 1 April for voter verification, and on 28 May, GASR announced the figure of 2,238,360 eligible voters. Final voter lists were sent to the PECs on 25 June.²⁵ Voters could verify their data online and, as a new provision following the 2023 legal amendments, verify the records of all persons registered at their address. Additionally, registration data could also be verified at the PECs from 3 to 25 June and voters could request corrections until 14 days ahead of the elections. Upon request by the contesting parties, GASR provided them with copies of the preliminary and final voter lists in an electronic format on 8 and 25 June, respectively.

Changes in the citizens' residence records that provide the basis for voter allocation to precincts are allowed up to 60 days before election day.²⁶ Some IEOM interlocutors asserted there was persistent pressure on a number of voters in the last two years by their employers, who were going to run as candidates to transfer their voter registration to the constituencies where they would run, in an attempt to secure their votes. The GASR informed the ODIHR EOM that there had been some 70,000 recorded civic migrations in recent months, mostly within Ulaanbaatar.²⁷ Several political parties requested a breakdown of the number of re-registrations, but the GASR declined to provide such information, thereby limiting the overall transparency related to voter registration.

Several IEOM interlocutors were concerned about whether some categories of voters would be able to vote on election day, particularly mine workers and some election stakeholders requested the GEC to facilitate the voting for this category of voters, including by organizing transportation. There is a legal obligation for employers to provide their employees with the opportunity to vote.²⁸

Candidate Registration

Eligible voters aged 25 or older may stand as candidates. Although some undue restrictions have been removed from the electoral law, several excessive restrictions on the candidacy right remain. Candidates are ineligible if they have court-established debts or overdue taxes and if a company where a candidate owns more than 51 per cent of shares has overdue taxes. Persons serving a sentence or who have committed a crime of corruption or abuse of power are also ineligible. Additionally, certain categories of civil servants, including chairpersons, deputies, directors, or deputy directors of legal entities owned fully or partially by the state or local government authorities, must resign from these positions before 1 January of the election year. These restrictions do not align with the OSCE commitments and international standards on the right to be elected.²⁹

To be formally registered, the law requires prospective parties to gather the support of at least 801 founding party members and submit it to the Supreme Court along with a range of other documents, such as the party's founding charter and list of assets. However, the Supreme Court informed the

²⁵ For these elections, a total of 13,095 voters were registered to vote abroad.

²⁶ Election officials, police officers, representatives of the civil registration office and IT personnel who have duties on election day can request to vote in the precincts where they serve until 14 days before election day.

²⁷ For the period from 1 January to 29 April 2024, 42,750 people changed their address registration within the capital; 9,420 moved from the capital to the *aimags*; 11,389 moved from the *aimags* to the capital; and 6,512 changed their address between *aimags*.

²⁸ In case of non-compliance, the fines for individuals and legal entities is respectively MNT 10,000 (approx. EUR 2.7) and MNT 100,000 (approx. EUR 27.4).

²⁹ Paragraph 15 of the UNHRC General Comment No. 25 to Article 25 of the [ICCPR](#) states that "Persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation". Paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that participating States will respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office without discrimination. Further, paragraph 24 provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be "strictly proportionate to the aim of the law."

ODIHR EOM that it is their policy to accept lists of only exactly 801 members.³⁰ Such practice appears to constitute a *contra legem* interpretation and may effectively restrict the right of association.

Political parties and coalitions must declare their intention to participate in the elections to the GEC no later than 60 days before election day. Furthermore, all contestants must submit their election platforms to the State Audit Office (SAO), which examines if the platforms comply with the government's long-term development policy, if their budget proposals align with the Law on Fiscal Stability and if they are compatible with the concept of national security.³¹ The SAO issues a statement on compliance for each contestant no less than 60 days prior to election day, which they must submit to the GEC.

Political parties and coalitions registered to participate in the elections could nominate candidates within seven days, starting from 14 May. Independent candidates could be nominated within the same period, but each had to submit at least 801 support signatures to be registered. The legislation mandates that at least 30 per cent of all candidates nominated by parties must be of each gender and that every other candidate on the proportional party lists must be of a different gender. While this ensures parity on the proportional lists and represents an overall positive development, the parties can nominate many more men than women as majoritarian lists.³²

Parties and coalitions may nominate up to as many candidates as there are mandates available in each district; each candidate may be listed only once, either in the proportional race or in a majoritarian constituency. On 10 June, the GEC announced that 19 political parties, two coalitions and 1,336 candidates (817 men and 519 women) were registered for the majoritarian and proportional races. Forty-two independent candidates were registered for the majoritarian race. Eleven candidates did not meet the registration criteria and were denied registration on various grounds.³³ Of these, five were registered through court decisions following successful challenges. While the GEC conducted candidate registration adhering to existing procedures and allowed for correction of the submitted applications as necessary, the several candidacy restrictions and excessive eligibility requirements put under question the overall inclusiveness.

Recent amendments to the legal framework encourage political parties to include persons with disabilities on candidate lists by providing financial incentives if they do so. According to the Mongolian National Association for Wheelchair Users, four candidates with disabilities were registered, one as a majoritarian candidate and three for the proportional race.

Campaign Environment

The official campaign period commenced on 10 June, 18 days before elections, and ended 24 hours before election day. The law permits incumbent MPs running as candidates to promote themselves before this period. Many interlocutors noted that MPs and high-level government officials had been intensively campaigning in the months leading up to the elections. Overall, established parties had considerable advantages in campaigning across the newly created large electoral districts within the very short campaign period.

Campaign regulations are highly prescriptive, defining permissible activities and limiting the number and type of campaign staff, facilities and vehicles per electoral precinct. The law also prohibits calls for boycotts or publishing political opinion polls in the election year until after the elections. The

³⁰ If the list contains more than 801 names, it is sent back to be shortened. Further, all entries are checked, and if a single entry is shown to be erroneous, the list is sent back for corrections.

³¹ See the government's long-term programme named [Vision 2050](#).

³² The law also stipulates that, from the 2028 elections, the minimum gender participation on candidate lists will be increased to at least 40 per cent of each gender.

³³ Three candidates had overdue tax debts, three candidates had incomplete documentation, four candidates were members of parties other than the ones that nominated them, and one candidate, a civil servant, did not resign from their position by 1 January 2024.

contestants must align their electoral platforms with the government's long-term development policies, the Law on Fiscal Stability, and national security policies. These restrictions unduly limit freedom of opinion and expression, stifle political pluralism and run contrary to the OSCE commitments and other international standards.³⁴

Overall, the contestants campaigned freely and without interference, but the campaign lacked a level playing field.³⁵ The campaign was generally subdued; however, it was marred by a violent incident on 15 June that resulted in the tragic death of a district party head of the DP in a scuffle with a campaign staffer of the Minister of Defence, Gürsediin Saikhanbayar, who is an MPP candidate. DP alleged that the murder was politically motivated and called for the resignation of the prime minister and the minister of defence. The prime minister met with the chair of DP to offer condolences afterwards.³⁶ On 25 June, police raided the headquarters of the National Alliance, reacting to allegations of illegal campaign activities.³⁷

The incumbent parties held larger campaign events in provincial centres and conducted active door-to-door campaigning nationwide, especially in some regions.³⁸ Smaller parties focused on outreach on social networks and on localized campaigns. Contestants exchanged mutual accusations of corruption but also discussed broad national topics such as economic development, infrastructure and the environment. The MPP emphasized its achievements and recently introduced government programmes, while the DP primarily criticized the ruling party's ineffective governance and, along with the HUN party and the National Alliance, called for limiting social welfare spending and a more liberal market economy. Many IEOM interlocutors alleged widespread vote-buying, claiming that voters were offered goods or cash.³⁹

There are no requirements for the separation of official duties and candidacy, and the law lacks adequate safeguards to prevent officeholders from using state resources in their campaigns.⁴⁰ Public officials campaigned actively across the country.⁴¹ In the lead-up to the elections, the government implemented salary and social benefit increases and one-time payments, which were promoted by state officials and

³⁴ Paragraph 7.7 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document requires OSCE participating States "to ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications, or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution." See also paragraph 43 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#).

³⁵ The DP reported to the ODIHR EOM that contracted members of its PR team had been detained on 2 June. On 18 June, the DP branch in Ulaanbaatar's Songinokhairkhan district announced that their planned campaign events would be cancelled to ensure the security of campaigners and voters.

³⁶ The MPP also submitted a request to GEC to withdraw the candidacy of Mr. Saikhanbayar; however, the GEC denied this request as there is no formal mechanism for withdrawal.

³⁷ On 25 June, a journalist from *neguun.mn* entered the headquarters of the National Alliance and conducted a live broadcast in which they alleged that the coalition was operating a 'troll farm' with Chinese agents, and called the police. Following the raid, on the same day, the GEC submitted a letter to the National Police Agency stating that any such search is prohibited without the permission of the GEC if there is no evidence of crime at the scene. The police stated that they had found that unregistered, fake social media accounts were used for election-related activities at the premises and that of 148 electioneers at the campaign office, only 2 were registered with the GEC.

³⁸ ODIHR EOM has observed 50 campaign events, of which 31 featured women speakers, 46 of these events were accessible to persons with physical disabilities and, although required by law, only one included sign-language interpretation.

³⁹ Such allegations were made in Dornod, Khovd, Orkhon, Ömnögovi, Ulaanbaatar, and Zavkhan.

⁴⁰ The Law on Civil Service requires those in the public administration and the special state service to refrain from political party activities. On 10 June, the Civil Service Council of Mongolia issued a [notice](#) with a code of conduct in connection to the elections, calling on civil servants to refrain from participating in political activities, maintain neutrality, and not to involve subordinates in political activities.

⁴¹ ODIHR EOM observed governors or mayors actively take part in the campaign of MPP in Ömnögovi, Övörkhangaï, Ulaanbaatar, and Zavkhan, and of DJP in Ulaanbaatar.

featured prominently in the MPP's campaign.⁴² These practices blurred the line between party and State, providing an undue advantage to the ruling party, at odds with OSCE commitments.⁴³

There were numerous allegations of pressure on civil servants and public employees to support and conduct campaign activities on behalf of the ruling party, and to attend campaign events.⁴⁴ These raised significant concerns among many IEOM interlocutors about the voters' ability to choose free from undue pressure.⁴⁵

Online campaigning is restricted to websites and social network accounts registered by the TECs. However, restricting campaigning solely to the registered individuals could have the effect of curtailing political debate and thus limiting freedom of opinion and expression, at odds with international standards.⁴⁶ Defamation, slander of a candidate, and false information are also prohibited on social networks. The PEL provides for monitoring and oversight of online campaigns by the Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC) in co-operation with other state institutions. However, while the CRC reacts based on complaints or signals it receives from police, there was no effective monitoring for these elections.⁴⁷

Most political parties stated that a substantial portion of their campaigning would take place on Facebook.⁴⁸ Political contestants actively shared content from campaign events, held live press conferences, and promoted individual candidates on their Facebook accounts.⁴⁹ Overall, the tone of the posted content was neutral and focused on the economy, regional development, and social issues. DP, National Coalition and MPP were the most active in publishing content and generated the most engagement. Several opposition parties met by IEOM alleged that organized campaigns attempted to discredit them on Facebook, including through disinformation.

Apart from DP, MPP, and Motherland Party, all other contestants nominated more women candidates than required by the gender quota. Several parties, including DP, HUN party, and Civic Unification Participation Party, called for increased political representation of women. Although women candidates

⁴² In January, *Erdenes Tavan Tolgoi*, a state-owned joint-stock company allocated shares to 893,432 children born after 2012. The salary of public transport drivers in Ulaanbaatar was increased effective 1 March. On 20 March 2024, the government [increased](#) pensions by MNT 100,000 (approx. EUR 27) and on 27 March 2024, it [increased](#) civil servants' salaries. On 19 April, parliament adopted a law in an expedited manner to create a Sovereign Wealth Fund, which would receive 34 per cent of dividends from certain strategic mining deposits. On 24 April 2024, the government [introduced](#) a new loan programme aimed at supporting herders and allocating MNT 5 trillion (approx. EUR 1.4 billion) from the state budget, an unforeseen spending for the year. The Ulaanbaatar municipal budget was amended in 2024 to include a raise in wages for employees of the Landscaping Services Company, effective 1 June.

⁴³ Paragraph 5.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides for "a clear separation between State and political parties". Paragraph II. B. 1.1 of the [2016 Joint ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources During Electoral Processes](#) stipulates that "the legal framework should provide effective mechanisms for prohibiting public authorities from taking unfair advantages of their positions by holding official public events for electoral campaigning purposes".

⁴⁴ Multiple reports of alleged pressure on civil servants or of civil servants enlisted in canvassing and of targeted MPP campaign events for civil servants during working hours were made to ODIHR EOM in Darkhan-Uul, Dornod, Dornogovi, Khovd, Övörkhangaï, Ulaanbaatar, and Zavkhan.

⁴⁵ Paragraph 7.7 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) enshrines that votes should be able to participate in the elections freely, without being exposed to violence, intimidation or fear of retribution.

⁴⁶ By law, campaigning can be conducted by a candidate, aide to a candidate, election manager, or electioneer.

⁴⁷ In case of a violation of the election law, upon recommendation from the police or intelligence agency, the CRC can request the removal of content or the blocking of social network accounts, however, the responsibility for content removal or blocking lies with the social network platform. The SAO does not monitor or investigate spending on social networks.

⁴⁸ Facebook is the [most widely used social network](#), with 2.5 million active users identified in January 2024. According to [DataReportal](#), internet penetration in Mongolia is 83.9 per cent.

⁴⁹ From 29 May until the start of the official campaign period, ODIHR EOM followed the accounts of 25 political parties and coalitions, and key politicians and other stakeholders on Facebook. For the official campaign period, ODIHR EOM followed a total of 32 accounts: 9 parties or coalitions, and 21 candidates and political actors.

campaigns actively across the country, messages geared towards women were mostly absent, and most campaign events were dominated by men.⁵⁰

Campaign Finance

Election campaigns may be financed through private donations by individuals and legal entities and from party and candidate assets. All transactions must be through a designated bank account registered with the SAO.

Individual donations are limited to MNT 10 million (approx. EUR 2,750), and legal entities can donate MNT 30 million (approx. EUR 8,250). The names of citizens donating over MNT 1 million (approx. EUR 275) and legal entities donating more than MNT 2 million (approx. EUR 550) must be published by the SAO. In-kind donations in goods or services are permitted and valued at market price, counting towards the donation limits. The law establishes the list of impermissible donations.⁵¹ Acceptance of a donation from a prohibited source constitutes grounds for the de-registration of a candidate. However, such a sanction can only be enforced before election day, reducing the effectiveness in case the violation is not immediately detected.

The SAO oversees campaign finance and sets the campaign spending limits using a GEC-approved methodology that considers the size of constituencies, as well as the location and number of households and voters. For these elections, each party or coalition could spend up to MNT 6.4 billion (approx. EUR 1.7 million). Depending on the district, candidates could spend between MNT 0.9 billion and MNT 1.5 billion (approx. EUR 244,000 and EUR 407,000, respectively). Several IEOM interlocutors regarded these ceilings as too high, disproportionately favouring the well-established parliamentary parties with sufficient resources. Although the PEL grants the SAO the authority to monitor campaign funding and spending independently or in co-operation with other authorities, it did not engage in any fact-finding or monitoring activities.⁵² The lack of efficient oversight reduced the effectiveness of the legal provisions and accountability of parties.

Addressing an ODIHR recommendation, since the 2020 parliamentary elections, contestants must submit an interim report on donations and expenses to the SAO three days before election day, which the SAO then publishes. On 26 June, the SAO published interim reports of 969 majoritarian candidates, which included 42 independent candidates, as well as 2 coalitions and 19 parties. Final reports, audited by certified private auditors, are due 45 days after elections for political parties and 30 days for independent candidates. The SAO has no authority to enforce sanctions on violations; instead, it transfers information to other authorities.⁵³ Overall, the framework for campaign finance lacks an effective mechanism of oversight and dissuasive sanctions despite a previous ODIHR recommendation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Of the 50 campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM, 31 events featured women speakers, with a total of 57 women speakers versus a total of 200 men speakers. In the observed campaign events, women's participation rate in the audience averaged 56 per cent.

⁵¹ From foreign citizens, international organizations, state or local authorities, stateless persons, minors, entities with tax debts, trade unions, religious organizations, and entities established less than a year ago.

⁵² The SAO has regional offices in each *aimag*.

⁵³ The State Inspector of Taxation related to donor eligibility, the Ministry of Finance related to reporting and the Central Bank related to account keeping.

⁵⁴ Paragraph 272 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that sanctions should be applied against political parties found to be in violation of relevant laws and regulations and should be dissuasive in nature. Moreover, in addition to being enforceable, sanctions must at all times be objective, effective, and proportionate to the specific violation.

Media

Mongolia has a pluralistic media environment with more than 400 outlets. High Internet usage contributes to the importance of social networks, which, alongside TV, serve as primary sources of information. Numerous IEOM interlocutors noted a worsening in press freedoms and highlighted various structural problems, most notably the lack of economic sustainability of the media outlets and compromised professional and ethical standards, resulting in low public trust.⁵⁵

The public Mongolian National Broadcaster (MNB), comprising eight thematic TV and radio stations, enjoys relatively high popularity. Most media outlets are privately owned, competing for a limited advertising market and remain financially dependent on their owners. According to several IEOM interlocutors, many media are politically affiliated, while owners of many others do not consider media as their core business; rather, they use media as political leverage to protect their economic interests. Additionally, a contracts-based system is widely used among journalists, essentially offering payment for favourable editorial content.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and further legislation provides for a detailed media framework. Defamation was decriminalized in 2017. However, the provision prosecuting the dissemination of false information was re-introduced in 2020, at odds with international standards.⁵⁶ Also, the PEL prohibits defaming a candidate, damaging their reputation, or giving to media or publishing false information. According to some IEOM interlocutors, currently, there are at least seven journalists facing investigations based on complaints by some government agencies, senior politicians and civil servants.⁵⁷ The legal framework and its enforcement stifle investigative journalism, lead to self-censorship, and have a chilling effect on critical political and social discourse in general.

The PEL, supplemented by the CRC regulations, stipulates the conduct of election campaigns in the broadcast media and on the Internet. The MNB complied with the requirement to offer the candidates free airtime, including through debates. As of 10 June, a total of 55 debates featuring numerous candidates from both races had taken place. The schedule, approved by the CRC, included three daily debates broadcasted simultaneously on MNB TV and radio. However, the impact of these debates in informing voters remains questionable, as most were aired outside of prime time.⁵⁸ Out of 304 participants in the debates held by the MNB, 24 per cent were women.

Paid political content is allowed, up to a total of 60 minutes a day, on private broadcasters.⁵⁹ The PEL limits the daily news coverage to five minutes per contestant. Oversight of broadcast and online media is shared among several bodies. The Authority for Fair Competition and Consumer Protection (AFCCP) monitored compliance with the requirement to provide balanced news coverage in terms of time allocation through an external contractor and without assessing the content. The CRC, based on complaints, monitored the time usage for news coverage and paid advertisements. The law grants

⁵⁵ Mongolia's annual press freedom status dropped 21 places to 109 out of 180 countries, according to the [2024 Press Freedom Index](#) by the Reporters Without Borders.

⁵⁶ Art. 13.14 of the Criminal Code. Paragraph 47 of [the 1996 General Comment No 34](#) to the [ICCPR](#) notes that "States parties should consider the decriminalization of defamation and, in any case, the application of the criminal law should only be countenanced in the most serious of cases and imprisonment is never an appropriate penalty".

⁵⁷ The editor-in-chief of one of the most popular online news sites [Zarig.mn](#) who was detained in December 2023 on accusations of spreading false information, was released in February 2024, and is kept under house arrest ever since. She faces four charges, with a potential sentence of up to five years in prison, with a hearing scheduled after elections, on 1 July 2024.

⁵⁸ There were three daily debates, aired always at 10:00, 14:00 and 17:50. Each debate hosted up to five guests, drawn by the lottery conducted by the MNB on 8 June, and focused on two topics from amongst 102 pre-determined ones. The last set of debates (five debates each with six or seven participants) on 26 June started at 4 pm and lasted for four hours. Private Tenger TV aired daily debates paid for by the contestants and aired in evening prime time (starting at 21:00), which attracted higher viewership.

⁵⁹ A total of 125 broadcast media, including 83 TV channels and 42 radio stations, as well as 245 online media outlets, were registered by election commissions to sell political advertisements.

extensive sanctioning powers to the CRC, including the authority to suspend offline and online media, but it informed the IEOM that it intended to act mainly in an advisory capacity.

On 1 June, the ODIHR EOM commenced its media monitoring of major Mongolian outlets.⁶⁰ Before the start of the election campaign, most of the broadcasters provided extensive coverage of the authorities, with the tone being either neutral or positive. During the campaign, most of the monitored media focused on the coverage of the largest political parties, in particular the MPP and DP.

The ODIHR EOM findings revealed that the public MNB TV showed a visible preference towards the MPP during the official campaign. MNB provided the MPP with 37 per cent of new coverage, which was overwhelmingly positive and neutral. A similar approach was adopted by several other monitored TV channels, most notably TV9, owned by the former president, and Mongol TV, co-owned by the current Minister of Culture, Ms Nomin Chinbat, which gave 68 per cent and 50 per cent to the MPP, respectively, with the tone being mostly positive. While NTV also provided a critical reflection of the ruling MPP, the Eagle News channel showed a balanced coverage of the major contestants. Most of the six monitored online media gave the biggest portion of its relevant politics and election-related coverage to the MPP, providing it with between 23 and 42 per cent. While most of the outlets covered the ruling party in a positive and neutral manner, *itoim.mn* adopted a more critical approach and also gave the biggest coverage to the DP (39 per cent). The opposition party received in other monitored online media between 12 and 33 per cent, of mostly neutral coverage.

The EOM monitoring identified that on numerous occasions the news coverage content replicated the paid advertisements of the parties, suggesting that the materials were provided to the media by the parties. Overall, the limited news coverage, along with virtually non-existent investigative and analytical reporting, detracted the ability of voters to make an informed choice.

The limited representation of women among senior party and government officials was reflected in the news coverage of the monitored media. The coverage of women candidates in the monitored TV channels was between 9 and 35 per cent, and in monitored online media, it was between 9 and 19 per cent of the election and political coverage.

Election Dispute Resolution

Complaints against decisions of lower-level election commissions are submitted to the respective higher-level commission. Complaints against decisions of the GEC are lodged with the Administrative Court of Appeals at the first instance and with the Supreme Court at the final instance. Complaints regarding GEC decisions on election results are filed with the Constitutional Court by any citizen. Election-related administrative and criminal offences are investigated by the police and adjudicated by district courts. Some IEOM interlocutors conveyed the view of the persistent lack of public trust in the independence of the judiciary.⁶¹

There is no expedited procedure for adjudicating election-related cases by the courts. The Law on Procedure of the Administrative Court stipulates a 30-day period for the court to render a decision, extendable by an additional 10 days. The Supreme Court is mandated to adjudicate appeals within 21

⁶⁰ This included public MNB (both TV and radio), private TV channels Eagle TV, Mongol TV, NTV, TV9 and MN25, and online sources *eguur.mn*, *gogo.mn*, *ikon.mn*, *itoim.mn*, *news.mn*, *zarig.mn*. The monitoring assessed the coverage of the contestants and other political entities, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing on prime-time TV programming as well as online political and election-related content.

⁶¹ See the [2023 Preliminary Observations](#) of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers raising concerns about the lack of trust in the judiciary and the use of social networks to disparage judges, including by holders of public office. The 2022 report on [Perceptions of Corruption in Law Enforcement](#) by the Independent Authority Against Corruption includes findings that the courts and the prosecutor's office are perceived among the worst institutions in terms of corruption.

days. Additionally, the PEL includes a provision that contradicts provisions of other laws, stating that entities authorized to adjudicate election-related complaints must reach a decision within the election year. Even though the courts strive to resolve election-related cases within a few days, the deadlines for electoral dispute resolution are not aligned with the election calendar, despite a previous ODIHR recommendation. Therefore, the deadlines do not ensure the timeliness and, therefore, the effectiveness of legal remedies.

Since the start of the election year and up to 26 June, 786 complaints related to election offences have been filed with the police. Of these, 471 concern administrative offences, and 315 pertain to criminal offences. According to the National Police Agency, 65 per cent of the complaints relate to the dissemination of false information.

In the pre-election period, 15 cases pertaining to party and candidate registration were filed with the Administrative Court of Appeals. Five of the cases were deemed inadmissible. Out of the ten adjudicated cases, the court overturned the GEC's decision in five instances, allowing those candidates to run. Four of these decisions were made after the start of the election campaign.

Citizen and International Observers

The law provides for citizen and international election observation, as well as for authorized representatives of electoral contestants to observe elections. The law limits the number of observers to two per organization per polling station and prohibits civil servants from observing elections. Political parties and coalitions can also appoint observers to polling locations.

The Civil Society Coalition for Fair Elections co-ordinated efforts of a group of CSOs to observe the voter registration, election campaign, including on social networks, campaign finance and the use of technologies in elections.⁶² The coalition deployed 280 stationary observers on election day in 140 polling stations in Ulaanbaatar and 25 observers in 12 *aimags*.⁶³ The GEC accredited a total of 259 international observers, and it reported that a total of 300 civil society observers and approximately 29,000 political party and candidate observers were registered at the PEC level.⁶⁴

Election Day

Election day proceeded calmly and orderly across the country. While the polling procedures were largely followed, the process was negatively affected by the polling stations' layout, positioning of the vote-counting equipment (VCE) and overcrowding, compromising the secrecy of the vote in some instances. The GEC regularly published turnout data throughout the day and started posting the election results soon after polls closed, contributing to transparency. Voter turnout was reported at 69.3 per cent but with notably lower participation among younger voters. The official vote count was automatic, with data instantly transferred to the GEC's central server. However, the PEC's adherence to procedures deteriorated considerably in relation to the closing procedures and the manual vote count verification, which in some cases did not conclude on election night.

Most polling stations opened on time or with slight delays. Opening procedures were assessed positively in 69 out of 75 observations, highlighting the generally uniform application of procedures. Exceptionally, the PEC members did not show that the ballot boxes were empty before sealing them in 5 instances.

⁶² The coalition is composed of Voter Education Centre, MIDAS, Fact Checking, Youth Policy Watch and Global International, and is co-ordinated by the Open Society Forum.

⁶³ Övörkhangai, Bayan-Ölgii, Khövsgöl, Dundgovi, Khentii, Uvs (Ulaangom and Ömnögovi *soums*), Govi-Altai, Selenge and Darkhan *aimags*.

⁶⁴ The GEC accredited a total of 259 international observers from 40 countries deployed by 21 organizations. In addition, the GEC extended direct invitations and accredited an additional 68 international observers from various international organizations and foreign diplomatic missions in Mongolia.

The IEOM observers assessed the voting process positively in 98 per cent of the polling stations, describing the process as well-organized and smooth. However, the polling station layout was not conducive for voting in secrecy in 14 per cent of observations, particularly in the capital, due to overcrowding, noted by observers in 10 per cent of polling stations, and voters or PEC members staying too close to the VCE.⁶⁵ In 22 per cent of observations, the IEOM observers noted a large number of voters outside the polling stations waiting to vote. Some technical issues with the VCEs were noted in 7 per cent of the polling stations, which may have led to minor delays.

Women constituted 85 per cent of PEC members at the polling stations observed, and 78 per cent of PEC chairpersons were women. Political party and candidate observers were reported in 99 per cent of observations, contributing to transparency, though in 9 per cent of cases persons present in the polling stations did not have a clear view of procedures.⁶⁶ Citizen observers were present in 12 per cent of polling stations, mostly in the capital. The IEOM observers remarked on a significant presence of police officers posted at the polling stations (36 per cent), and while the law does not forbid their presence, there were a few isolated cases of police interfering in the process.

Polling procedures were generally followed, but in 14 per cent of cases, voters did not pass the fingerprint scan. According to election officials, this mainly affected older voters due to age-related degradation of fingerprints; these voters were identified with ID cards as per procedures. Family voting was reported in 6 per cent of polling stations, mostly in rural areas. In 7 per cent of observations, some voters were allowed to vote without presenting an ID card, as required by procedures, after being identified through the fingerprint scan. In 18 per cent of polling stations, IEOM observers saw that some voters were re-directed for not being on the voter list.

The IEOM observers did not report any serious irregularities or electoral malpractice. In some cases, party agents photographed the screens displaying voters' personal data and photos at the time of voter identification, potentially undermining voters' privacy.

Notable measures were undertaken to facilitate the participation of voters with visual impairments, with magnifying glasses available at more than 98 per cent of polling stations and Braille templates at 93 per cent. However, only 40 per cent of polling stations were suitable for independent access by voters with physical disabilities.

The GEC regularly released turnout data, contributing to transparency. The data was disaggregated by the constituencies and provinces, and by voters' age and gender. All polling stations closed on time, and the final voter turnout was reported at 69.3 per cent with notably lower turnout among younger voters, particularly those aged 20 to 24 (49.6 and 43.7 per cent of male and female voters, respectively). Female turnout was 8 per cent higher than male turnout.

The assessment of the machine vote count and the tabulation of the electronic results at the GEC was assessed overall positively. However, a lack of adherence to all related procedures led to a negative assessment of the process in 18 out of 64 observations. A third of the PECs did not count and pack the unused and spoilt ballots before the vote count. After the machine count, in 32 observations, not all PEC members present signed the VCE-printed result slips. Additionally, in 8 instances, observers and party candidates were not given a digital copy of the results slip upon request.

The manual vote count did not begin immediately after the machine count in 20 cases. In 23 polling stations, the ballots were not extracted individually from the ballot box, and in 29 observations each

⁶⁵ Persons staying close to the ballot box could see the ballots being cast, as voters frequently inserted them face-up, thereby potentially revealing their choices.

⁶⁶ Of all observation, 97 per cent by DP, 96 per cent by MPP, 41 per cent by HUN and 30 per cent by the National Alliance.

ballot was not shown to all the persons present. Those observing the manual vote count lacked a clear view of the process in 14 cases.

*The English version of this report is the only official document.
An unofficial translation is available in Mongolian.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ulaanbaatar, 29 June 2024 – This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is the result of a common endeavour involving the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the European Parliament (EP). The assessment was made to determine whether the elections complied with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Both institutions involved in this International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) have endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

Ambassador Jennifer Brush is the Head of the ODIHR EOM, deployed from 20 May until 9 July, and Mr Tomáš Zdechovský headed the EP Election Observation Delegation.

This Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the electoral process. The final assessment of the elections will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining stages of the electoral process, including the vote count, tabulation and announcement of results, and the handling of possible post-election day complaints or appeals. ODIHR will issue a comprehensive final report, including recommendations for potential improvements, some two months after the completion of the electoral process. The EP Head of Election Observation Delegation will report on the mission's results in September 2024 at the meeting of the Delegation for Central Asia and Mongolia of the European Parliament.

The ODIHR EOM includes 13 experts in the capital and 18 long-term observers deployed throughout the country. On election day, 199 observers from 30 countries were deployed, including 18 long-term and 151 short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 13-member delegation from the European Parliament. Opening was observed in 75 polling stations, and voting was observed in 650 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 64 polling stations and the tabulation at the GEC.

The observers wish to thank the authorities of Mongolia for their invitation to observe the elections, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Election Commission for their assistance. The IEOM wishes to also express their appreciation to other state institutions, political parties, media and civil society organizations, and international community representatives for their co-operation.

For further information, please contact:

- Ambassador Jennifer Brush, Head of the ODIHR EOM, in Ulaanbaatar (+976 86 141606);
- Katya Andrusz, ODIHR Spokesperson (+48 609 522266), or Goran Petrov, ODIHR Election Adviser, in Warsaw (+48 697 990989);
- Gonzalo De Mendoza Asensi, EP (+32 460 764416 or gonzalo.demendoza@europarl.europa.eu).

ODIHR EOM Address:

International Commercial Center

8th floor, Jamiyun Gun Street #9

14210 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Phone: +976 80 180529

e-mail: office@odhr.mn

website: <https://www.osce.org/odhr/elections/mongolia/567448>