

CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF THE MEETING ON COOPERATION BETWEEN ELECTION COMMISSIONS OF SOUTH ASIA REGION

DHAKA, 29-30 MAY 2010

At the initiative of the Bangladesh Election Commission, a Meeting on Cooperation between Election Commissions of the South Asia Region was held in Dhaka on May 29 and 30, 2010. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: exchange of views on some of the continuing and emerging issues before the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) relevant to the conduct of free and fair elections but, more importantly, discussion and agreement on the steps towards establishing an institutional mechanism for such interaction on a regular and continuing basis.

The heads of EMBs of Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Bangladesh attended the meeting. Afghanistan was represented by the Vice President of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan. Sri Lanka was unable to send a suitable representative due to devastating flood in the island. The two Election Commissioners of Bangladesh Election Commission and senior officials of the respective electoral bodies also attended. A list of delegation members is attached.

The meeting appreciated that while there are differences in terms of capacity and experience in EMBs in these countries, there are also many common features in the sphere of elections that create opportunities for cooperation among them for further improvement of election administration and management. An institutional framework for contact among these bodies provides a good platform for detailed discussion on many unresolved issues and sharing of knowledge for common initiatives. Such a platform can facilitate the establishment of key network relationships that may possibly open up avenues for common solutions to problems.

The meeting appreciated the initiative of the Bangladesh Election Commission in organising the meeting and agreed in principle to take all necessary steps towards establishing a SAARC Forum of Electoral Management Bodies (SFEMB).

The meeting also discussed the draft Charter of the proposed forum circulated by the Bangladesh Election Commission to all the participating Heads of the EMBs. It was agreed that this Concluding Statement along with the Charter as revised pursuant to comments made by delegation members be sent to the Heads of the EMBs for further processing with their relevant authorities. Such revised versions, if any, may be presented in the next meeting of the Heads of EMBs.