

INTERIM REPORT
23 May – 09 June 2017

13 June 2017

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 26 January, the parliament (*State Ikh Khural*) scheduled the presidential election for 26 June. The president is elected in a single nationwide constituency through a two-round majoritarian system by direct suffrage. Discussion of prospective constitutional amendments that would redistribute authority between the parliament and president forms a notable backdrop to the election.
- The electoral legal framework provides for fundamental rights and freedoms. While some previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations have been addressed, a number of key ones, in particular regarding suffrage rights, remain unaddressed.
- The General Election Commission (GEC) is organizing election preparations within key logistical and legal deadlines. However, the appointment process for lower-level commissions inserts a partisan element to an otherwise civil service-based election management system. Training for commissioners and voter education efforts are ongoing.
- There are 2,032,094 registered voters. Voter lists were displayed online from 1 March, and largely made available for public scrutiny at polling stations or local government offices by the 6 June deadline. Over 7,200 voters registered for out-of-country voting.
- In early May, the three parliamentary parties conducted an internal selection of their candidates, but not always in accordance with well-defined and transparent criteria. The GEC registered candidates representing the Democratic Party (DP) and the Mongolian People's Party (MPP), but refused the candidate of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). The MPRP nominated an alternative candidate who was registered by the GEC.
- The pre-campaign environment was relatively calm. Despite legal prohibitions, candidates conducted some campaign-like activities before the official start of the campaign. On 6 June, the campaign was opened with numerous rallies across the country and in the capital. Antagonistic and partisan commentary is prominent on social media and in paid and editorial broadcasts.
- To level the playing field for the candidates, the State Audit Office (SAO) set campaign spending limits at MNT 6.8 billion (EUR 2.5 million) per nominating party and MNT 3.9 billion (EUR 1.5 million) per candidate. However, candidates are not required to submit their financial reports for SAO examination until after the election.
- Despite a limited advertisement market, some 450 media outlets are operational. Media ownership structures are opaque and content is marked by political alignment. The public broadcaster is required to offer an equal amount of free airtime to all candidates, while at least 156 private media outlets will sell time and space for political advertisement. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced its media monitoring on 29 May.

- Every citizen and legal entity has the right to challenge decisions and activities pertaining to the electoral process. The deadlines have in the past led to protracted resolution of disputes until well after the election. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM is informed about three complaints so far filed with election commissions or courts. One complaint concerns the denial of candidate registration, the other two challenge the composition of lower-level election commissions.
- The legal framework recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to political participation, obliging political entities to make their campaign messages accessible. The GEC takes several measures to inform and facilitate voting rights of persons with disabilities.
- Civil society is active in observing the pre-election environment. Citizen observers are monitoring the media, campaign finance and the preparation of electronic vote counting equipment, and will conduct additional, independent testing of this equipment closer to election day.

II. INTRODUCTION

On 26 January 2017, the parliament (*State Ikh Khural*) scheduled the presidential election for 26 June. Following an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, and based on the recommendations of a Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 21 to 24 February, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) established a Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM) on 22 May.¹ The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM is headed by Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens (Germany) and comprises an 11-member core team based in Ulaanbaatar and 20 long-term observers deployed across Mongolia. Mission members are drawn from 20 OSCE participating States. In line with the OSCE/ODIHR's methodology, the mission will not carry out a comprehensive or systematic observation of election-day proceedings, but intends to visit a limited number of polling stations on election day.

III. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Mongolia is a semi-presidential republic, where the president and parliament exercise extensive, and at times overlapping, powers. An ongoing public and parliamentary debate about prospective constitutional amendments that would redistribute authority between the parliament and president forms a notable backdrop to the election.

The presidential election follows the 29 June 2016 the parliamentary elections as well as local and provincial elections held in June and October 2016, respectively. This election cycle placed the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) in a position of political preponderance with 65 of 76 seats in the parliament and majorities in most provincial and local citizens' representative assemblies. All cabinet ministers and all but one of the 21 provincial governors are MPP affiliates. The Democratic Party (DP) maintains nine seats in the parliament, enabling it to form a party caucus, and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) has one seat.

The election comes at a time of continued economic challenges, following recent years of paltry gross domestic product growth, falling foreign direct investment and increased unemployment. In February, Mongolia secured a bail-out agreement with the International Monetary Fund and other lenders, alleviating the prospect of immediate insolvency and enabling the government to maintain key social programmes. The economic depredations and Mongolia's growing economic dependence on China have fed populist and anti-foreign agendas, contributing to a volatile environment ahead of the election.

¹ See [all previous OSCE/ODIHR reports on Mongolia](#).

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Mongolia is party to key international human rights treaties and conventions. The legal framework for the presidential election consists of the 1992 Constitution (last amended in 2011), the 2015 Law on Elections (LoE) as amended in 2016, the 2006 Law on the Central Election Body (LCEB), the 2011 Law on the Automated Election System, and the 2005 Law on Political Parties.² The primary legislation is supplemented by regulatory acts of the General Election Commission (GEC). However, the LoE and the LCEB provide only limited authority to the GEC to interpret provisions and adopt regulations to supplement primary legislation. The GEC may, however, request the Supreme Court to issue binding legal interpretations of election legislation. Since 2012, the court has declined to exercise this constitutional mandate, thereby limiting the means to develop a coherent and comprehensive legal framework for elections.³

This is the first presidential election conducted under the LoE, which consolidated various laws for different types of elections. The LoE was amended twice after its adoption (in February and May 2016) shortly before the last parliamentary elections. Some previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations have been addressed, such as decriminalization of defamation; also, the jurisdiction of election commissions and courts regarding dispute resolution has been clarified to some extent. However, other recommendations, specifically pertaining to restrictions of suffrage rights, remain unaddressed.

The president is elected in a single nationwide constituency through a two-round majoritarian system by direct suffrage. If the nationwide voter turnout is below 50 per cent, repeated polling is conducted within a week in those polling stations where the turnout was below this threshold. In repeated polling, only registered voters who did not vote on election day can cast a ballot. The number of votes cast during the repeated polling is added to the number of votes cast initially and no further polling is conducted. If no candidate obtains the majority of votes, a second round is held within two weeks of the initial polling between the two candidates who obtained the most votes.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The GEC has a wide range of responsibilities in administering the election, and so far has been carrying out numerous tasks within key logistical and legal deadlines.⁴ Limitations on the GEC's authority to elaborate the basic legal framework for elections may hinder the work of the GEC in some areas of election administration.

The GEC is a permanent body composed of nine members, one of whom is a woman, nominated for six-year terms by the parliament (five members), president and Supreme Court (two members each). On 12 April, the GEC appointed 188 members to the 22 TECs. Of these, 97 (just over 50 per cent) are women.⁵ On 22 April, TECs completed the appointment process for the 339 District Election Commissions (DECs) at the *soum* and *duureg* level, who in turn appoint all members of the 1,983 Precinct Election Commissions (PEC). PECs are headed by chairpersons, the vast majority of whom

² Relevant legal provisions within the Criminal Code, the Law on Petitions, and the Law on Administrative Procedures are also applicable.

³ From 2012 – 2015, the GEC submitted a number of requests to the Supreme Court seeking binding interpretation of election law provisions and did not receive any response. As a result, the GEC has ceased submissions.

⁴ The GEC is charged with, among other duties, overseeing the election budget, forming Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) in the country's *aimags* (provinces) and the capital, registering candidates, reviewing campaign finance, considering complaints and appeals against TEC decisions, and establishing results.

⁵ While gender-disaggregated data is not yet available for lower-level commissions, the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM has so far noted a similar gender breakdown across the commissions visited.

were selected by the 27 May deadline. Other PEC members must be appointed no later than 19 June, although some TECs and DEC members report this process is already complete.

All TEC, DEC and PEC members must be selected from a pool of approximately 23,000 civil servants who have been previously certified by the GEC. There are no other guidelines or rules for appointing commission members at any level, although past performance is often cited as the main criterion. However, the appointment of senior staff of local governor offices and citizen assemblies to leadership roles in lower-level commissions introduces a partisan element to this otherwise civil service-based system of election management bodies. Of the 22 TECs, 21 are chaired by either the chief of the Governor's office (8), a director of a department of the *aimag* administration (9), or secretary of the *aimag* assembly (4). A perception of political bias in the commissions' decision making was expressed by a number of OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors.

The GEC established a seven-member Central Commission that administers voting for citizens residing abroad. This commission coordinates 45 sub-commissions in diplomatic missions in 32 countries where voting took place on 10 and 11 June. These votes will be counted by the GEC after polls close on election day.

The LoE and GEC procedures require election commissions at all levels to discuss issues in meetings with at least two-thirds of members present, and to take decisions by majority vote. By law, meetings of election commissions are to be open and transparent, and recorded in official minutes. Agendas and announcements of meetings are to be posted at the commissions' premises. Election commissions at all levels have been forthcoming with the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM. However, meetings are largely conducted *ad hoc*, usually with no public notice or advance agendas. Since the opening of the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM, the GEC has held one session to report on the number of voters abroad, approve the design and number of ballots, and decide on the allocation of free-of-charge TV and radio airtime. The decision and schedule of airtime was shared publicly through the GEC website.

The GEC has developed a voter education guidebook that has been provided to public information centres located within local administration offices, including information on citizens' right to vote, the voting process and the importance of democracy. The GEC has also produced public service announcements, shared through the public information centres and posted on its website, and intends to launch a media campaign to inform and motivate citizens. TECs are provided a budget for conducting voter education, including in the local media.⁶ The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM noted official voter education materials posted at or near the TECs and DEC members in most areas of the country.

The GEC has trained election commissions at all levels in Ulaanbaatar as well as all TECs. Trainings for lower-level commissions outside the capital are being conducted by TECs and DEC members.

This is the sixth election in which Mongolia will use electronic vote tabulation. An optical scanner mounted atop the ballot box saves and stores the ballot image, tallies the results, and prints and transmits to the GEC totals of all votes cast after the close of polling. The GEC plans to publish preliminary results on its website on election night broken down to the *aimag* level throughout the country and city district level in Ulaanbaatar.

⁶ TECs typically use GEC-produced materials, and from their budget allocation only pay for the airtime on local broadcasters.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens who have reached the age of 18 years have the right to vote, except persons deemed legally incapacitated by a court decision and those serving a prison sentence, irrespective of the gravity of the crime committed.

The General Authority for Intellectual Property and State Registration (GAIPSR) is responsible for the production and maintenance of voter lists. From 1 March, citizens could verify their voter registration status and other voting information on the GAIPSR's website. Based on citizen requests for corrections and inputs from several other state agencies, a revised list of voters was published on 31 May, within the legal deadline. This revised list contains 2,032,094 registered voters. Within this figure, 44,833 voters are marked as "temporarily removed", while another 7,209 have been registered as overseas voters.⁷ Military personnel are registered in the areas where they are deployed.

By 31 May, the GAIPSR provided voter lists to all TECs, and to the nine DEC's within Ulaanbaatar, that in turn delivered the lists to their respective polling stations prior to the 6 June deadline. Voter lists have been available for scrutiny at polling stations and local administration buildings, although not always immediately upon receipt as required by law. Citizens could make complaints regarding inaccuracies and omissions through 11 June. Even slight delays in making these lists available may have impacted citizens' ability to rectify errors and omissions in the voter lists, given the brief period for in-person verification.

By the same 11 June deadline, a voter, either in person or by proxy, could request to be transferred to another polling station outside of their home province. Election commissioners, police officers, representatives of the civil registration office and IT personnel who have election day duties may vote on 25 June via mobile ballot box. There may be practical constraints if such individuals are assigned to polling stations far from their home precincts.⁸ On election day, civil registration officers in polling stations will confirm the identity of voters in the lists through fingerprint authentication.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Three candidates have been registered for the election, nominated by each of the three parliamentary parties. No other party has the right of nomination, and independent candidates are not permitted. In addition, eligible candidates must also be at least 45 years old, born to Mongolian parents, and have resided in-country for the past five years. A candidate must have no loans, collaterals or debts, overdue taxes or criminal record. The OSCE/ODIHR has previously commented on the restrictive nature of candidacy requirements, specifically the lack of provision for independent candidature, and disqualifying candidates with overdue taxes and debts.

Prior to the five-day nomination period in early May, all three parliamentary parties conducted internal candidate selection, but not always in accordance with well-defined and transparent criteria. The DP held a nationwide, closed primary involving six candidates, formalizing their choice at its national convention on 6 May. The MPP held a party plenum to decide between its two prospective candidates on 3 May, while the MPRP nominated their party chairperson. Parties then formally submitted candidate applications to the GEC for review. The GEC approved the applications of the DP and MPP, but refused that of the MPRP, citing his failure to live continuously in Mongolia during

⁷ According to the LoE, "temporarily removed voters" include those determined legally incapacitated, serving imprisonment, or traveling abroad for a period of 60 or more days.

⁸ The GEC has advised TECs and DEC's that members of PECs should be assigned to polling stations within or close to their home precinct.

the period preceding his nomination, and an unexpired criminal conviction from 2012.⁹ The MPRP appealed this decision to the Administrative Court of Appeals, and simultaneously, and within the legal deadline, nominated an alternative candidate who was registered by the GEC on 17 May. The GEC issued credentials to the three registered candidates on 27 May. All presidential candidates are male.

VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The official campaign commenced on 6 June and will end 24 hours before election day. The LoE provides for extensive regulation of campaign activities. The local authorities and election administration play a significant role in campaign regulation by allocating places for outdoor advertisement and registering candidates' campaign staff and vehicles. Distribution and promises of cash, goods, services, employment, stocks, organization of festivals and tournaments for campaign purposes are prohibited as of the beginning of the election year. Promoting candidates' achievements in office is not considered campaigning, and is therefore not subject to campaign limitations.

Candidates' platforms must be pre-approved by the State Audit Office (SAO) for feasibility and compliance with Mongolia's economic and development policies, raising questions of respect for freedom of expression and political pluralism. In early May, all three parties submitted their platforms to the SAO. Campaign manifestos contained a total of 208 points, of which 41 were deemed by the SAO as needing revision.¹⁰ Revised platforms were resubmitted by 10 May, with the contested points reconsidered or removed. The MPRP, after their first nominee was rejected, had to resubmit their platform, which was promptly approved without further changes.

The pre-campaign environment was relatively calm. Instances of early campaigning by all three candidates were observed, though to a different extent. The MPP and DP candidates held large public rallies on 27 May in Ulaanbaatar after receiving their credentials. These festive occasions included statements by the candidates and their supporters, and street marches. Meanwhile, the MPRP candidate made repeated public appearances in Ulaanbaatar's markets. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM noted other campaign-like activities, including a DP-organized rally in Khovd and an MPP-supported concert in Ulaanbaatar.

Partisan political programming appeared in media, both as editorial and paid content. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM noted the presence of unverified claims concerning corruption and collusion with foreign interests, xenophobic and racially intolerant rhetoric, content of extremist nature and incitement to violence.¹¹

The MPP candidate is campaigning on a platform of economic and social stability, highlighting his party's successes in improving the economic situation. The DP and the MPRP candidates focus on corruption-related issues, endemic poverty, subservience to foreign interests, and unfair distribution of mining profits. In addition, the MPRP candidate is arguing against alleged collusion between the MPP and the DP. The DP and MPP candidates' platforms were published on 6 June with campaigning

⁹ The Criminal Code allows for a criminal record to be expunged after a certain time period, following serving of the prison sentence.

¹⁰ Specifically, 12 points did not conform to development policy goals, 13 points had incomplete financial calculations, and 17 points were inconsistent with the mandate of the president as stipulated in the Constitution.

¹¹ In particular, the documentary *Ulaan Tarianii Khukhduud* (Children of the Red Vaccine) contained calls for extrajudicial executions of unnamed officials for alleged corruption-related crimes. The documentary, produced by a company with widely-reported links to one of the candidates, aired on 29 May on five TV channels within prime-time programming hours. Furthermore, on 31 May two broadcasters aired a programme highlighting insufficient education of two presidential candidates. Instances of racial intolerance were also noted by the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM during campaign speeches.

beginning the same day. The MPP and MPRP candidates made personal appearances at well-attended rallies in Ulaanbaatar, while the DP candidate kicked off his campaign with a series of publicity events in Khentii *aimag*, as observed by the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM. Nationwide rallies attracted from some 150 to 1,000 participants with MPP rallies being generally more costly and organized. Many OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors raised concerns about instances of blurring the line between local administration and party campaigning.¹²

Social media plays an important role in the campaign. All candidates have Facebook pages, and the DP and MPP candidates use Twitter, as well as personal websites to promote their campaign activities. In addition, Facebook's livestreaming feature is applied to augment candidate outreach. Social media is used extensively to disseminate allegations of misconduct by officials and to cast doubts on the integrity of the electoral process.¹³

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The election campaign is financed by donations and candidates' own resources. The LoE limits individual donations to MNT 3 million (EUR 1,100) and to MNT 15 million (EUR 5,500) for a legal entity. All cash donations should be deposited in a dedicated bank account, while in-kind donations count towards expenditure limits.¹⁴ Anonymous donations are prohibited.

To level the playing field for the candidates, on 24 February, the SAO set campaign spending limits at MNT 6.8 billion (EUR 2.5 million) per nominating party and MNT 3.9 billion (EUR 1.5 million) per candidate. All financial transactions during the campaign must go through the dedicated bank account. All candidates opened such accounts by the start of the campaign. The DP and MPRP candidates used social media for fundraising, while MPP placed fundraising advertisement in the print media. In addition, the MPRP candidate appeared at events at Ulaanbaatar's markets asking supporters for cash contributions.

There are no campaign finance reporting requirements until after the election. Fines for violations are relatively low, although the acceptance of donations from prohibited sources, such as labour unions, religious groups, non-governmental organizations and foreign entities can lead to candidate de-registration.

X. MEDIA

There are 458 media outlets in Mongolia. Media ownership structures are opaque and its content marked by political alignment. The limited advertisement market and extensive government spending on social advertising encourages media to avoid controversial subjects to maintain good relations with public and private advertisers. Television is the main source of information, while Internet, especially social networks, is popular in Ulaanbaatar and urban centres.

¹² For example, governors of Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Bayan-Ulgii Darkhan, Khovd, Khenti and Umnugovi *aimags* participated in MPP rallies, while the Minister of Defence addressed the crowd during the MPP rally in Ulaanbaatar.

¹³ Much of the social media narrative concerns a leaked recording, allegedly documenting the MPP leadership's discussion of profiteering from the sale of public offices. The DP conducted a special parliamentary hearing on the matter on 31 May. In addition, social media serves as a platform for questioning the integrity of electronic vote tabulation.

¹⁴ According to the LoE, the value of in-kind donations is established by a mutual agreement, which could lead to a circumvention of the expenditure limits.

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and the Law on Media Freedom prohibits censorship. Defamation remains a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment.¹⁵ This provision will be repealed as of 1 July 2017 and replaced with civil liability. However, the fines for defamation, slander and dissemination of false information as proposed in the amended Law on Administrative Offences, are high, hence a number of broadcasters, newspapers and online media suspended their programming and publications for one day on 27 April.¹⁶ Although the parliament decreased the fines, the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM interlocutors still express concerns that such penalties will induce media's self-censorship.¹⁷

The LoE obliges public and private media alike to provide information about the contestants in a non-discriminatory, true and impartial manner. Furthermore, the LoE limits news coverage of the candidates to five minutes per day, and prohibits the sale of news space to contestants. The public Mongolian National Broadcaster (MNB) is providing every candidate with 15 minutes of free airtime daily within primetime hours as well as with 2 minutes daily within the news. Private broadcasters may sell up to 15 minutes of political advertisement daily to each candidate and the price should be equal. As of 5 June, 62 national and capital-based, and 94 regional broadcasters signed contracts with candidates and submitted them to the GEC and TECs, respectively.

Media's compliance with the legal framework is monitored by the State Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC) and the Authority for Fair Competition and Consumer Protection (AFCCP). The GEC is yet to establish a special media council to review complaints, though such complaints can also be submitted to the AFCCP and CRC. The AFCCP informed the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM that it will review editorial content of all media outlets for compliance with the LoE, while the CRC will monitor paid political advertisement segments as well as the allocation of free airtime. The AFCCP may only issue warnings, or in case of repeat violations, refer the matter to the CRC to introduce sanction. As of 6 June, the AFCCP has issued warnings to five television stations and nine websites.

The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced quantitative and qualitative monitoring on 29 May.¹⁸ Prior to the campaign, newscasts and current affairs programmes extensively featured the candidates. Instances of paid-for content being inserted within the broadcasters' news segments were also observed.

XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Every citizen and legal entity has the right to challenge decisions and activities pertaining to the electoral process. Complaints against actions or omissions of an election commission must be first addressed to the same election commission. The subsequent decision or failure to make a decision can be appealed to the higher commission. GEC decisions can be challenged at the Administrative Court of Appeal at first instance and further appealed to the Supreme Court. The constitutionality of GEC decisions can be disputed in the Constitutional Court. There is some parallel jurisdiction between election commissions and courts. Administrative and criminal offences, including campaign violations, are first investigated by the police and adjudicated by lower-level courts.

¹⁵ Defamation currently is punishable by a fine of up to MNT 36 million (EUR 13,370 EUR) or a six-month imprisonment, that can be increased up to five years, if false information concerns grave crimes.

¹⁶ The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media [underscores](#) the need for abolishing criminal defamation in Mongolia.

¹⁷ On 11 May, the parliament voted to decrease the fines for defamation and libel from MNT 100 million to MNT 10 million (from EUR 37,150 to EUR 3,715) against business entities and from MNT 10 million to MNT 1 million (from EUR 3,715 EUR to EUR 372) against individuals.

¹⁸ The sample of media monitored includes public broadcaster *MNB*, four commercial television channels (*Eagle News*, *Mongol HD*, *TV5* and *TV9*) and five private newspapers (*Udriin Sonin*, *Unuudur*, *Zuunii Medee*, *Unen* and *Zasgiin Gazryn Medee*).

The deadlines led to protracted resolution of disputes until well after the election.¹⁹ Plaintiffs can file complaints with election commissions within 10 days of the issuance of the disputed decision. The Administrative Court has up to 40 days to adjudicate election-related cases and the Supreme Court has up to 21 days to render a ruling on appeal. The Constitutional Court has no deadlines for issuing decisions.

The GEC decision to refuse the registration of the MPRP candidate on the grounds of not meeting the eligibility requirements was challenged in the Administrative Court of Appeals. The hearing was originally scheduled for 9 June. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM was informed of two further complaints pertaining to the composition of lower-level election commissions; the decisions are still pending.

XII. PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The legal framework recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to political participation, obliging political entities to make their campaign messages accessible, and to support candidates who have a disability.²⁰ The LoE facilitates voting rights of persons with disabilities, requiring that polling stations be accessible by wheelchairs, and be equipped with tactile ballot guides and appropriate voting booths. The GEC is fulfilling those requirements; however, infrastructure in rural areas may limit the accessibility of polling sites. Voters with disabilities can also request to vote at their place of residence via the mobile ballot box.

The GEC is producing voter education materials for persons with visual impairments, and adding sign language to the voter education videos. Several civil society organizations (CSOs) are also providing voter education for persons with disabilities, often in co-ordination with the GEC. The DP and MPP candidates' programmes contain provisions protecting the rights and quality of life of persons with disabilities. However, CSOs expressed concerns whether parties will make efforts to communicate information on their candidates to voters with visual or hearing impairments.

XIII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

The right to appoint observers is afforded to domestic, foreign and international organizations, and parties who field candidates. Citizen observer groups must first be accredited by the GEC, whereupon individual observers must apply at the polling station at least three days prior to election day. The GEC has accredited the Civil Society Coalition for Fair Elections, a network of six organizations that is currently monitoring media, campaign finance and preparation of the electronic vote counting equipment.²¹ The coalition is co-operating closely with the GEC to conduct additional testing of this equipment. Few CSOs outside of the capital are actively involved in election-related activities, including observation. Parties that nominated candidates intend to deploy observers on election day.

The rights of observers are wide-ranging, and include the possibility to document the voting process by using audio and video recording, notify and request the PEC to rectify mistakes, obtain information on complaints at all levels of election administration, publish observation reports and obtain printouts of the vote count and digital images of ballots cast.

¹⁹ For instance, a legal dispute pertaining to the GEC's refusal to register the MPRP party chairman as a candidate in the June 2016 parliamentary elections was resolved only at the end of November 2016.

²⁰ The 2016 Law on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

²¹ The members of the network include: Open Society Forum, Globe International, MIDAS, Women for Change, New Initiatives, and Youth for Policy Oversight.

XIV. OSCE/ODIHR LEOM ACTIVITIES

The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM commenced its work on 22 May. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM has met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the GEC, state agencies as well as representatives of political parties, media, civil society and the international community. The Head of Mission also travelled to Arkhangai *aimag*, where he met local administration and election management bodies, regional parties' leadership and civil society representatives. Twenty long-term observers have been briefed and deployed as of 30 May, and have established contacts with electoral stakeholders at the local level. The OSCE/ODIHR LEOM will be joined by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, who will deploy their delegations for election-day observation.

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