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PRESS STATEMENT: The Philippines Hold Successful Elections with E-Voting

There is no such thing anywhere in the world as perfect election arrangement, but if democracy in Africa is to succeed then it requires solutions to the basic instruments of rigging which undermine it. The problems which led to the disenfranchisement of hundreds of UK voters during the May 6 general elections attest to that. Hints from the head of UK's electoral commission point to future reforms involving election automation technology.

Last year, India, a developing nation, showed that electronic voting is the best way forward for democracies around the world. The Danquah Institute believes that the Philippines on Monday, May 10, made an even stronger case for Ghana to consider seriously the proposals to introduce e-voting here.

The Philippines used e-voting for the first time in the Asian country's general elections. In short, they deployed 76,300 voting machines or Precinct Count Optical Scanners (PCOS) for a voting population of 50.7 million people. Only 465 (0.6%) of the machines malfunctioned on Election Day but they were quickly replaced without any major disruption to voting.

Voting closed at 7pm and by 10pm two-thirds of the results nationwide were known. This is something that until Monday was unheard of and considered impossible to happen. At around 10 p.m., the Comelec (the electoral commission) had been reporting millions of counted votes in the presidential, vice presidential and senatorial races, marking a new page in the country's electoral history. Thus, Filipinos had a clear idea on who were leading in the race just before they called it a night on Election Day. There were nine presidential candidates.

The Philippines, noted for electoral violence and killings, faced problems similar to those confronting us in Ghana, namely, a bloated voter register, ballot box stuffing, ballot box theft and destruction, multiple voting, voter impersonation, spoilt ballots, intimidation and violence at the polling station, alteration of counted ballots before declaration, and the tensions and results manipulation which take place during the long periods between the closure of polls and the declaration of results.

In Ghana's volatile and charged partisan political environment, it is extremely important that we have a trusted election process, where elections will be regarded as reasonably fair, even by the losing side.

Official COMELEC tally

2010 Philippine presidential election, COMELEC tally			
Candidate	Party	Results	
		Votes	%
<u>Benigno Aquino III</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	12,233,002	40.19%
<u>Joseph Estrada</u>	<u>PMP</u>	7,749,597	25.46%
<u>Manuel Villar, Jr.</u>	<u>Nacionalista</u>	4,329,215	14.22%
<u>Gilberto Teodoro</u>	<u>Lakas Kampi CMD</u>	3,243,688	10.65%
<u>Eddie Villanueva</u>	<u>Bangon Pilipinas</u>	916,543	3.01%
<u>Richard Gordon</u>	<u>Bagumbayan-VNP</u>	431,954	1.41%
<u>Nicanor Perlas</u>	<u>Independent</u>	42,205	0.13%
<u>Jamby Madrigal</u>	<u>Independent</u>	37,119	0.12%
<u>John Carlos de los Reyes</u>	<u>Ang Kapatiran</u>	34,833	0.11%
Total valid votes cast		29,018,156	100.00%
Registered voters/turnout		50,723,733	57.21%

2010 Philippine vice presidential election, COMELEC tally			
Candidate	Party	Results	
		Votes	%
<u>Jejomar Binay</u>	<u>PDP-Laban</u>	12,025,429	39.51%
<u>Mar Roxas</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	11,213,563	36.84%
<u>Loren Legarda</u>	<u>NPC</u>	3,259,963	10.71%
<u>Bayani Fernando</u>	<u>Bagumbayan-VNP</u>	847,100	2.78%
<u>Edu Manzano</u>	<u>Lakas Kampi CMD</u>	593,653	1.95%
<u>Perfecto Yasay</u>	<u>Bangon Pilipinas</u>	295,558	0.97%

<u>Jay Sonza</u>	<u>KBL</u>	50,722	0.16%
<u>Dominador Chipeco, Jr.</u>	<u>Ang Kapatiran</u>	40,335	0.13%
Total valid votes cast		28,326,323	100.00%
Registered voters/turnout		50,723,733	55.84%

NOTES FOR EDITORS

How Poll Automation in the Philippines Works

Statistics of the Philippines 2010 polls

- Total Number of registered voters: **50,723,733**
- Voting Machines deployed: **76,300**
- Polling stations: **36,679**

Candidates

On December 15, 2009, about half a month after the deadline of filing of certificate of candidacy aspirants for local and national positions, the Commission on Elections announced the official shortlist for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. From the original 99 applicants for presidential race, only nine people were admitted to join the elections.

On the other hand, there were also eight people out of 20 vice presidential hopefuls were given the chance to campaign for the elections

Results

The candidate in each position with the highest amount of votes is declared the winner; there is no runoff. Congress shall canvass the votes in joint public session.

When there are two or more candidates who have an equal and highest amount of votes, Congress, voting separately via majority vote, will choose among the candidates who have an equal and highest amount of votes to be the president.

The Supreme Court shall "be the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns, and qualifications of the President or Vice President".

Pre-Election Procedures

To ensure that the PCOS machines are accurate and functioning well, at least three days before election day, the Comelec conducted a dry run of the PCOS machines by inviting members of the public to accomplish test ballots. These ballots were counted manually and election returns showing the results were prepared. Then the same set of ballots was counted by the PCOS machines and the results compared with that of the manual

counting. It showed that the results were the same and the participants certified the veracity of the results by signing on the printed elections returns.

The PCOS machines were delivered to the 80,136 clustered precincts around the country where they were stored and sealed until Election Day - the only time when they were opened and in the presence of the public. During this time the machines were not connected to any transmission lines to prevent hackers from having access to them. The public, particularly candidates and their representatives, could secure the area where the machines were stored.

Pre-Voting Procedure

For every voting precinct, there was a Board of Election Inspectors (BEI) - consisting of a chairman, poll clerk and a third member - that supervised the elections. Before voting began, the BEI initialized the PCOS machine in the presence of the public, usually poll watchers and other election watch groups, and showed that the ballot box was empty. Initialization meant the BEI made sure that the machine was zeroed out or there were no votes or entries stored in the machine's memory. An initialization report was thereafter generated by the machine as proof of this fact.

Paper-Based System

Since voting was done through optical mark reader-type machines, paper ballots was still used during the voting process. In countries using the direct recording electronic (DRE) machines, voting is done by touching selections on the computer screen, like in touch screen ATMs.

The ballot contained the names of candidates for every position, and the parties under the party-list system. There were ovals opposite each name and party. The ballot was used front and back. Considering the number of positions filled from the national to the local level, as well as the number of candidates, the ballot was long.

The Voting Process

Voting in an automated election is simple and fast. The procedure is as follows:

- Voter's name is verified on the list of registered voters;
- Voter is given a ballot, a secrecy folder (to cover voter in making his/her choices) and a pen;
- Voter proceeds to a voting booth or spot;
- Voter darkens or shades the ovals opposite the names of candidates and parties of his/her choice;
- Voter feeds or inserts the completed ballot on the PCOS machine ballot slot (the ballot can be fed to the machine in any orientation: top, bottom or either end);
- The machine reads or scans the votes (marked ovals) on both sides of the ballot simultaneously;
- The scanned ballot is ejected through the other end of the machine and is dropped on the ballot box; and
- Voter returns the secrecy folder and pen to the BEI, his/her right index finger nail is marked with an indelible ink, and affixes his/her thumbmark on the computerized voter list.

Even if the voter fails to completely shade the ovals opposite the candidates of his or her choice, the PCOS machine is designed to still scan such marking. It is, of course, desirable for the voter to completely shade the ovals. Also, the PCOS machine have an LCD screen which will indicate if the ballot is accepted or rejected. This will prevent spoiled votes.

In manual voting, the voter has to write the names of candidates and parties which he or she will vote for. This is time consuming and prone to errors and confusion, such as when a name is misspelled, there are identical

names, or the names are confusingly similar. Under the automated system, these problems are immediately resolved as all the voter has to do is mark the names of the candidates of his or her choice, whose names have been pre-printed on the ballot.

Post-Voting Procedure

When the poll closed, the BEI performed what is called a "close function" by touching the appropriate button on the machine's LCD screen. This prevents the insertion of additional ballots after voting has ended. After the machine closed the poll at a particular precinct, it automatically counted all the votes cast and thereafter, an Election Return (ER) was printed in certain number of copies. The ER is a report on the result of voting in each precinct wherein the total votes cast for each candidate are tallied.

Transmission of Results

After the ERs were printed, the transmission cable was connected to the PCOS machine for the transmission of results from a particular precinct. The results were transmitted by the PCOS machines electronically to the City/Municipal Board of Canvassers (BOC) via canvassing/consolidation machines (CCMs), which consolidated the results from all precincts within the city or municipality. Results were also transmitted electronically to the Comelec central office. The same process took place from the city or municipality to the province, then from the province to Congress and Comelec.

As can be seen from this process, the PCOS machines were only online during the transmission of results to minimize the window for hacking the system.