

The Bangkok Declaration would aim to put together “a regional electoral instrument/s,” in the form of a declaration to make stakeholders in the election management process in Asia more accountable and therefore more transparent.

The *Bangkok Declaration* comes on the heels of the July 3 2011 Thailand election for a number of reasons. Following the Thailand election there has been an expression of interest amongst many stakeholders in the electoral process in Asia on the need for a regional arrangement, which would complement the ‘Declaration of International Election Principles,’ and would also have its own character and applicability suited to the prevailing political and cultural conditions in Asia. Thus, aspirations and concerns aired by election stakeholders, primarily election management bodies, civil society and election observer groups to use the post election space in Thailand to organize a series of post election dialogues were taken into consideration and factored into a proposal titled--A DECLARATION/REGIONAL INSTRUMENT TITLED--BANGKOK DECLARATION ON DEMOCRACY, FREE & FAIR ELECTIONS.

In fact discussion regarding the need for putting together an instrument that addresses specific concerns and also recognizes the cultural and customary practices in Asia has been ongoing for the last two years or more between ANFREL-Foundation and its members in Asia and also international partners.

Key objectives:

- Promotion of Free and Fair elections as a regional agenda (all steps of the electoral cycle that makes up the electoral process)
- The declaration would be a key instrument in promoting democracy and human rights in Asia. The signatories to the declaration would be invited to commit to supporting democracy in all its forms, and consider upholding cultural, traditional and customary practices while using laws and regulations (as prescribed by the electoral or constitutional laws) to manage the election process as one of the key instruments to achieve this goal.
- It would also stress on the need for recognizing election observation as one of the key instruments to achieve free and fair elections and smooth transition towards democratization.
- It would underscore the importance of deployment of international/regional observers to promote and consolidate shared universal (and Asian in this case) values, such as respect for human rights and open government.
- The declaration would be a way to promote a better understanding, by respecting human rights, of inviting observers in elections held across the Asian continent. It would aim to highlight the fact that election observation provides a mechanism to reinforce democracy



1st Asian Charter Forum holding among ANFREL members in Pattaya, Thailand

and that countries which invite election observers demonstrate that they are open to constructive criticism.

- The declaration proposes to engage the Election management Bodies (EMBs), Governments, Electoral assistance and democracy support initiatives in order for these institutions to take more account of election observer recommendations.

The Declaration of Asian Charter will be announced by Representatives of all Asian Election Stakeholders in the middle of 2012