

**Electoral Reform Coordination Body (ERCB)**  
**Press Release**  
**March 4, 2017**

For immediate release

---

**Electoral Reform Coordination Body (ERCB) concerned about low awareness of this year's by-elections and potential low turnout on Election Day**

In preparation for the April 1 by-elections to fill 19 vacant constituencies, the Union Election Commission (UEC) released an election calendar approximately six months in advance, made public the full list and locations of polling stations, coordinated with CSOs on voter education, and amended some regulations and procedures in response to recommendations from domestic and international observers. ERCB recognizes the UEC's efforts to make these more transparent, inclusive and accountable.

To contribute to the success of the by-elections, local CSOs are also conducting voter education activities and preparing to observe the by-elections in all 22 participating townships. However, in spite of official and civic voter education campaigns, both the UEC and some local CSOs found that only a small fraction of eligible voters verified their information during the public display of the voter list conducted in February. They also found that the public awareness of the by-elections is relatively low. Given the lower level of public interest, the ERCB is concerned about a potentially lower turnout during the April 1 by-elections.

To increase voter awareness interest and engagement in the by-elections, ERCB would like to recommend the following measures to be taken by different stakeholders.

**To the Union Election Commission - UEC**

- While continuing to use traditional ways to reach out to voters, such as TV, radio, SMS, and advertisement in newspapers/journals, the UEC should find more creative and vibrant means to attract voters. Examples could include town hall/roundtable meetings, voter mobilization campaigns, local festivals, and concerts.
- The UEC should develop vibrant communication mechanisms such as assigning a focal person in UEC and regular meeting, to allow local CSOs will have necessary and updated information with enough time to be able to share with citizens.

**To political parties that will compete in the by-elections**

- During the campaign period, political parties should add voter information/education and encourage citizens to vote.
- Political parties should follow the UEC's code of conduct during the campaign to avoid turning citizens away from the electoral process.

**To international organizations and donor agencies**

- Support local CSOs technically and financially, not only to contribute to this election process, but also to promote long-term electoral reform.
- Provide this assistance, both financial and technical, in a way that enables all recipient organizations to be more independent and sustainable in the long-term.

- To make sure that all the programs and projects meet local needs, the international community should create a regular communication mechanism where local CSOs can share their concerns and challenges.

**Member Organizations of the Electoral Reform Coordination Body - ERCB**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. MYNFREL                                      | 8. Myanmar Youth Capacity Building Networks (MYCBN)             |
| 2. Rainmaker                                    | 9. People’s Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE)              |
| 3. Peace and Justice Myanmar (PJM)              | 10. Yaung Chi Thit (YCT)  |
| 4. Charity Oriented Myanmar (COM)               | 11. Civil Authorize Negotiate Organization (C.A.N organization) |
| 5. Pandita Development Institute (PANDITA)      | 12. Hornbill Organization                                       |
| 6. Creative Home                                |   |
| 7. Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI) |   |

Brief profile of ERCB

The Electoral Reform Coordination Body (ERCB) is a mechanism for information sharing, collaboration and coordination among its members to make their collective voice stronger for electoral reform and to promote reforms towards more free and fair elections in Myanmar. Founded in 2016, its current members include 12 local civil society organizations working together to promote reforms to Myanmar’s electoral legal framework.

**For more information:**

Shwe Yee Win, (Executive Director, Peace and Justice Myanmar - PJM)

M: 09 979 037 087, E: shweyee@peaceandjusticemm.org

ChamTha Kyaw (Executive Director, Pandita Development Institute - PANDITA)

M: 09 785 087 234, E: ChamThaKyaw@pandita.asia

