

second round of elections. The two leading pairs of candidates were, on the one hand, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) with his running mate M. Jusuf Kalla, nominated by Democratic Party, PBB and PKPI, who won 39,838,184 votes (33.57%) in the first round. The second was of course incumbent President Megawati Soekarnoputri with her running mate K.H. Hasyim Muzadi, who were nominated by PDI-P, and also supported by the Golkar Party, PDS, PPP and PBR, who won 31,569,104 votes, (26.61 %).

For the second round election, held last month, there were 155,048,803 registered voters, with 116,662,705 actually casting ballots in 574,945 polling stations. SBY and J. Kalla won a victory with 69,266,350 votes (60.92%) while their opponents gained only 44,990,704 votes (39.38%).

The 2004 elections in my country were the culmination of six years of transition to democracy. Step by step, Indonesians walked the long path to freedom. We did so with commitment and we did so with great optimism for the future.

Our elections were the star in our democratic firmament, with the direct vote for the President the first in our 59 year history. Our three elections were open, transparent and a signal to the international community that our vast archipelago of 17,508 islands and over 500 ethnic groups is united in the bright light of a new century.

Indonesians are steadfast in their resolve to build a better place at home for all of our talented people. Our new Muslim democracy now stands as a beacon of hope for all those who struggle for freedom and who face all the challenges commensurate with enormous transition. Indonesians have fought the good fight, have borne all the challenges, and have not only survived but been empowered as never before.

Minister Pettigrew voiced the sentiments of many in the global community on October 4th when he said "Canada congratulates Indonesia and its people on the successful completion of their historic first-ever direct presidential elections. As the world's largest Muslim democracy, Indonesia is a model for many countries. This success is an indication that the Indonesian democratic process is strong".

Yes, it is strong. It is unflinchable. Our spirit is resolute as never before. And while my country faces many challenges ahead, our confidence is restored and invigorated, our nation united as never before. Our hunger for freedom is unabated, our appetite for civil liberties grows. Our thirst for a true civil society is unquenchable.