

United Nations, but fell short in its bid to become the 10th member of ASEAN by the end of 1998. Chea Sim, said to be his main power rival within the CPP, has been placated by the decision to form a second parliamentary chamber.

Pragmatists, while acknowledging the highly irregular nature of setting up the senate to placate one man, say it is worth it if it brings peace. It will clearly take time to debate and agree on its functions and composition – and how members will be appointed – but the danger remains that it could prove to be counter-productive.

Cambodia needs a parliament that works regularly and efficiently – so much important legislation was held up because of the squabble between FUNCINPEC and the CPP. But if the senate – which should review bills before they become law -- is handled wrongly and gathers partisan groups it could end up obstructing legislature.

3. The International Community

The international community, weary after years of political machinations and instability in Cambodia, was quick to give the electoral process a stamp of approval though critics have said most countries failed to place the polls in context and were not prepared to make a candid re-evaluation when doubts later emerged.

Overseas governments focussed on getting the rivals – particularly the CPP and FUNCINPEC – together to form a coalition. Their priority seemed to be to secure stability and work on developing democracy later.

Nevertheless, the international community's message was that the formation of any new government should reflect the election result and Cambodia's status in the international community would depend in part on that being achieved.

Donors became increasingly frustrated at the lack of movement, which threatened to negate the enormous financial and human resources they had invested in bringing peace to Cambodia. Some began to see the stay-away opposition leaders as responsible for the deadlock and stepped up ultimately successful efforts to persuade them to return home and pressure the government to provide security guarantees.

The international community welcomed the establishment of the coalition. For example the European Union, the biggest financial backer of the July elections, issued a statement on 19 November 1998 saying it would consider full resumption of aid when the government was installed.