

Initially there was not a great deal of optimism in the group. There was a diversity of views of where the pressure points should be to give credibility to the election process. One participant suggested that "Cambodia is a failed state in a pre-democratic mode, that Canada needs to learn from the lessons of Burma and identify how to re-legitimize the government and support the people of the country". Most participants agreed that Canada needs to take a tough line with Cambodia, and particularly with Hun Sen and decide what levels of support should be channeled through NGOs, bilateral or multilateral institutions.

It was also agreed Canada shouldn't abandon the process, step back or disengage from Cambodia. Canada should pick and choose where it can be helpful and effective, and not spread itself too thin in its engagement. The election will take place, so preparing people is crucial. However, most participants felt that the election was not the event to plan for, and that, events during the electoral process should be seen as part of a larger and on-going developmental process.

## 3.1

**Pre-Election Recommendations:**

**What can realistically be done in four months?**

*Canada's position prior to the election* Canada supports free and fair elections and deplores corruption and human rights abuses in Cambodia. Therefore, Canada should go on record now. Minister Axworthy should make a statement four or five days before the upcoming New York meeting of the Friends of Cambodia. Ambassador Longmuir should urge the group to make a more public statement supporting free and fair elections and democratic development in Cambodia.

*Election Monitors* A strong foreign presence will assist with order during the elections. Canada should send a large group of monitors from Canada, including NGO representatives, to monitor the election procedures and monitor whether NGOs are being suppressed prior and during the election process. Canada should ensure media election coverage is part of the monitoring process. Accompaniers for civil society groups, particularly NGOs, should be in place to ensure their safety and support at this time. Their presence would reduce risks to civil society groups.

*Media* While the media is largely dominated by political factions it can potentially play an important role, particularly in the rural areas. Focus on training of journalists should be on radio and television broadcast media, which are politically controlled and the key sources of information. Some journalists