Mini Report following Round Table Discussion on “Recommendations for Promoting Women’s Participation and Representation in Politics in Cambodia” held in Phnom Penh on 29 April 2013

Executive Summary
This mini report summarizes the issues raised during the Round Table Discussion (the “RTD”) entitled “Recommendations for Promoting Women’s Participation and Representation in Politics in Cambodia” held on 29 April 2013 in Phnom Penh. The event was organized by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) under the Project to Promote Women’s Political Representation in Cambodia.

The objective of the RTD was to highlight and discuss issues raised and recommendations given by participants during the previous five RTDs, and to develop a thorough and comprehensive set of final recommendations for use during future advocacy activities. A total of 28 participants representing 26 non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) attended the event, thereof four male.

Introduction
The previous five RTDs organized by CCHR resulted in a variety of recommendations on how to combat the underrepresentation of women in Cambodian politics. The participants of this RTD combined, amended and completed those recommendations, to use them as constructive tool for advocacy of women’s rights. The RTD comprised of a presentation session, in which participants set out the results of their respective RTDs, and a short debate, reviewing those results.

Final Recommendations
The following recommendations were agreed on by the participants:

- The RGC should incorporate a quota system in the election law, which would legally require parties to allocate 30% seats on their lists to women, and allow for sanctions against parties which do not adhere to the quota requirements. The Zipper-system, which requires political

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1. 1st RTD on 30 April 2012, “The Role of Women in Political Participation at the Commune Level”
2. 2nd RTD on 11 July 2012, “Successes and Challenges of Women on the Results of Commune/Sangkat Council Election in Cambodia”
3. 3rd RTD on 7 February 2013, “The Role of Women in Political Participation at the National Level”
4. 4th RTD on 21 February 2013, “Women’s Participation and Land Rights”
5. 5th RTD on 28 March 2013, “Mechanisms to Promote Women’s Participation and Representation in Politics at the National Level”

The importance of mentioning sanctions for political parties that do not implement the gender quota was debated, since punishment would be automatically guaranteed, when the quota is adopted to the law on election.
parties to alternate the names of male and female candidates on electoral lists, needs to be applied, to ensure equal opportunities for men and women.

- In order to enable fair and democratic competition, the RGC must respect and guarantee freedom of expression of all political parties. All political parties shall have equal opportunity for expression in public and the media.
- Programs discussing reform of the electoral system – such as an amendment to allow voters to vote for individual candidates on a list – should be prioritized.
- The National Election Committee (“NEC”) should guarantee that political parties cannot change the list rank numbers after registering their candidates’ lists, or after the election.
- Women themselves should commit to advocate for their rights to fully participate in politics by building networks among female politicians within their party, women in other parties and female voters.
- Female politicians should work together to push for the further promotion of women in politics. NGOs and other advocates for women’s rights should target the new wave of elected women, asking them to advocate for more focused commitment from the RGC on increasing female representation.
- Programs that work towards building women’s confidence and capabilities as political representatives should be implemented and institutionalized. CSOs, NGOs and political parties need to employ strategies that provide female candidates and elected women with ongoing political capacity-training and possible methods for income generation, before and after the election.
- Increased investment in women’s education is required. Women need to be informed about their rights, in order to protect them.
- Regarding budget constraints, the RGC should provide more funding and resources to support female candidates from all political parties and their families.³
- Female candidates should be exempted from financial contribution to their parties and political parties should create a foundation to support women financially.
- The media should be encouraged to champion the cause of greater female representation in politics by advocating for quotas for candidate lists, equal opportunities and promotion on merit.
- All stakeholders, including CSOs, the RGC and the media, should support awareness-raising initiatives aimed at changing negative traditional perceptions of the role of women in politics.
- Citizens, and civil servants and men in particular, should be trained by CSOs and NGOs to understand about women rights and their importance, in order to build trust in women’s leadership abilities.
- CSOs and political parties should advocate to abolish the culture of impunity that exists in Cambodia and encourage an independent justice system that promotes freedom of expression and equal political participation.
- To prevent the lack of self-confidence and fear of women regarding political participation, based on discrimination and economic pressures, the National Assembly should pass a law

³ As stated in Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (“CEDAW”) convention § 14 - Rural Women (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm)
to protect women from discrimination in politics. A stronger legal framework can empower women to be political representatives and protect them from injustice.

- Political parties should encourage recent female university graduates to become politically involved by, for example, volunteering at the commune/sangkat level to gain experience.

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Annex

The following organizations attended the Round Table Discussion:

- Cambodian Human Right and Development (ADHOC),
- Advocacy and Policy Institute (API),
- Banteaysrey organization,
- Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL),
- Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC),
- Cambodia’s Leading Independent Development Policy Research Institute (CDRI),
- Cambodian League Confederation (CLC),
- Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP),
- Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC),
- Cambodian Women for Peace & Development Association (CWPD),
- Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC),
- Indradevi Association (IDA),
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES),
- Khemara Organization
- Khmer Youth Association (KYA)
- Paz Y Desarroll (PYD) Spanish International,
- Open Institute (OI),
- Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW),
- Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NICFEC),
- People Center for Development and Peace (PDP Centre),
- Strey Khmer (SKO),
- Urban Poor Women Development (UPWD),
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women),
- Women Pace Maker (WPM),
- Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC),
- Youth for Pace (YFP).