



STATEMENTS BY THE SPOKESPERSON

Statement by the Spokesperson on the general elections in Cambodia

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The 29 July general election in Cambodia took place in a highly restrictive political climate. Over the past year, the Cambodian authorities have used the country's judicial system and other forms of pressure to restrict the space for political opposition, for criticism and dissent, including by civil society. This culminated in the enforced dissolution of the main opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), the arrest and prolonged detention of the CNRP's leader, Kem Sokha, and the banning from political activity for five years of 118 senior CNRP members. Free and independent media have been severely restricted.

In its Conclusions of 26 February 2018, the EU Foreign Affairs Council underlined that an electoral process from which the main opposition party has been arbitrarily excluded is not legitimate.

In this context, the EU had declined to observe the 29 July election and suspended its financial assistance to the Cambodian National Election Committee.

The lack of genuine electoral competition and the absence of an inclusive political process mean that the 29 July election is not representative of the democratic will of the Cambodian electorate, and therefore its outcome lacks credibility.

The European Union expects the Cambodian authorities to restore democracy, to engage in dialogue with the opposition, and to create conditions conducive to free political debate and competition, in which the media and civil society, including human

rights and labour rights defenders, can freely exercise their rights without undue restrictions. The EU stands ready to actively contribute to this endeavour.

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