



Stockholm, 9 October 2020

Dear signatories of the open letter,

I thank you for your letter signed today, raising very legitimate questions about the voter education tool mVoter2020, made available by Myanmar's Union Election Commission (UEC).

Ever since the application was launched, International IDEA has understood and shared the same concerns that many domestic and international actors as well as civil society groups have expressed.

International IDEA has relayed these concerns to Myanmar's UEC and requested that information on candidates' ethnicity and religion should be eliminated from the application.

The UEC's stated position is that they do not have discretion on changing the data which candidates must submit as per the current election legislation. Nonetheless, as a result of the criticism, the UEC decided that the candidates may withdraw their profiles from the application if they so wish to.

We acknowledge the seriousness of this matter. However, we would like to clarify that International IDEA does not have editorial control over the app's content, defined by the UEC in accordance to the law of Myanmar. We did not develop the app, nor are its legal owners. Moreover, no funding through projects administered by International IDEA has been directly used to develop it. Our participation is limited to supporting the UEC to digitize the candidate nomination database—an activity that is separate from the app and instrumental to holding the election—and spending a modest sum (6,414 EUR) in the activities surrounding the app's launch.

It has become clear that the original purpose of these efforts, namely to increase the information available to voters and bring additional transparency to the electoral process, has been overshadowed by the real concerns about some of the information required from candidates by Myanmar's electoral law.

International IDEA understands well the sensitivities related to categories of ethnicity and religion in Myanmar. Hence, we had already decided to withdraw our association with the mVoter2020 application and refrain from promoting it given its potential to infringe on human rights and adversely affect election security and integrity. We communicated our decision to the UEC earlier this week.

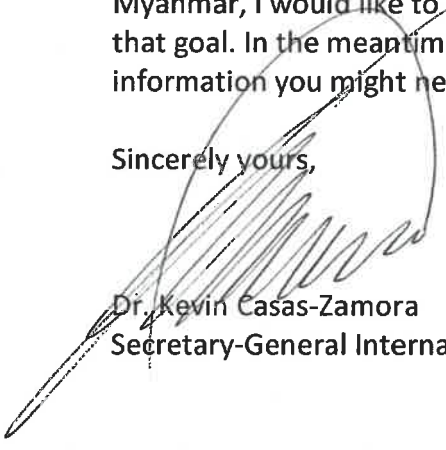
International IDEA exists to advance the cause of democracy. As such, it often operates in difficult contexts, where conditions for democracy to thrive are less than optimal. As a



publicly funded inter-governmental organization we are always open to the criticism from civil society that our operations may entail. We welcome this criticism and try to learn from it. In Myanmar's case, International IDEA will continue to advocate for reforming the relevant provisions and work with all stakeholders, including the signatories of this letter, towards inclusive elections in line with international human rights and democracy standards.

As I believe that we share a common intention to support and strengthen democracy in Myanmar, I would like to invite you all to discuss how we can best collaborate to achieve that goal. In the meantime, both my colleagues and I stand ready to provide any additional information you might need.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Kevin Casas-Zamora  
Secretary-General International IDEA