

Eighth National Conference, 5-6 May 2012, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

The Eighth National Conference on Electoral & Political Reforms, inaugurated by the Election Commissioner Shri H.S.Brahma, concluded today. This two-day conference was attended by Election Watch groups of more than 22 States, various NGOs and activists, eminent citizens, media personalities, Representatives of all major Political Parties and Other Stakeholders from all over the country.

Discussions took place on various aspects of the Electoral and Political issues, particularly the issues concerning financial transparency and inner-party democracy of the political parties. Concerns were also expressed the increasing role of media in electoral mal-practices and its impact on news coverage.

The Conference unanimously resolved:

- Candidates with Criminal antecedents should be debarred from contesting elections.
- There is an urgent need for a comprehensive Bill to regulate the functioning of Political Parties to ensure inner party democracy and financial transparency within the political parties.
- The internal elections for the offices of political parties should be done using secret ballot and the culture of unanimous selection of the office bearers must stop.
- The ticket distribution process of the political parties should be made transparent and should be decided by the registered members of political parties.
- The accounts of the political parties should be audited by the CAG appointed auditors.
- The Political Parties should be declared as Public Authorities so that their functioning could be transparent and be made more accountable.
- Strict Laws should be passed to punish candidates involved in Electoral malpractices, particularly for buying of votes.
- Implement ceiling on expenses of Political Parties during election period.
- Strict Action against candidates who fail to file their election expenses.
- There should be a cooling off period of of 5 years before which beauracrats or people who have changed their parties are allowed to contest elections on tickets of a political party.
- The requirement for winning election should be “50% + 1 of the registered votes cast.
- Voting machines should have the option of “None of the above”. If the election in a constituency results in “None of the above” getting the maximum number of votes, there

should be a re-poll and the candidates who contested should not be allowed to re-contest in that election.

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