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**NGO Report on Mongolia for the 143rd Session of the Human Rights
Committee / Rapport des ONG sur la Mongolie pour la 143^{ème} session du
Comité des droits de l'homme**

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Introduction

1. The Centre for Voters Initiative & Action presents this report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee ahead of the 143rd Session for the review of Mongolia. The Centre is a non-governmental organisation based in the Americas with an international focus. The Centre acknowledges there can be no secure tomorrow without ensuring civil societies have knowledge to vote, participate, and engage with the democratic processes.

2. The Centre works with multiple international mechanisms to convey dialogue, conduct research, and bring awareness to the thematic issues of electoral engagement around the world. We closely follow and participate in the United Nations human rights mechanisms in Geneva and abroad, including the Human Rights Committee, to promote civil society participation in the public affairs process.
3. The Centre submits this ahead of the seventh periodic review of Mongolia under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. Recognising the complex nature of the recent challenge Mongolia faces, the Centre hopes to provide valuable information to the Committee regarding the State's compliance with issues exacerbating in compliance under Article 25. Indeed, this report is focused on the scope of Article 25, and we encourage Committee members to understand the nature of civic education as a tool to combat this contemporary turmoil; hopefully, the Committee will find this report valuable.
4. The Centre has submitted this petition to the Committee to focus on three specific violations: (1) weak human rights implementation for marginalised groups, especially women; (2) systemic barriers to civic education and participatory access; and (3) a lack of accountability exacerbating corruption.

Gender Inequality Preventing Equal Political Participation

According to a report: “Of all the countries in Central, South, Southeast, or North Asia, only Nepal, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam are currently above the 30 percent mark. The trans-regional average for women’s representation in Asian legislatures is just 21.4 percent. Mongolia lags even further behind, at just 17.1 percent.”

In May 2023, the parliament of Mongolia passed a constitutional reform amendment which largened the size of its legislative branch from 76 to 126 persons. Indeed, the enlargement of Mongolia's legislative branch open the door for increased female representation. Already, major political parties such as the Democratic Party and the Mongolian's People Party, as well as smaller groups (e.g. the Khun Party) have been actively engaging youth in politics.

However, despite the increased size of Parliament, these Constitutional reforms may not have enough power in shifting the role of women in Mongolia's democracy. Indeed, there is currently a quota system in place in Mongolia to apportion 30% of Parliamentary seats for women; however, these aims have not been achieved. According to the Global Data on National Parliaments, Mongolia ranked 135th as of 2020, given their lack of female representation (13 females of 76 seats).¹

Position	Percentage of Women	Quota
Parliamentary Seats	17%	40%
Senior Government Positions	15%	N/A

¹ Refer to <https://data.ipu.org/content/mongolia/>.

In 2008, Mongolia's government made a strategic decision to repeal the 30 percent female candidate quota in the 2008 election, which "imposed additional obstacles for women to win a parliamentary seat in the next elections". Recently, a proposed constitutional reform called for the quota to be increased to 40% in the 2028 election. The Centre recognises the meaningful efforts of Mongolia to engage women, yet also must note the appearance of tokenism towards women equality.

Indeed, whilst these quotas are being implemented and increased, there is no tangible evidence to suggest that meaningful efforts are being changed to truly reform the demographic of female representation in Mongolian democracy. It is unlikely, given Mongolia's history and contemporary situation, that these quotas will be effective in achieving their aims.²

We urge the Committee to press Mongolia on what measures are being taken to increase the participation of women in the political processes. In particular, the Committee should enquire on the status of implementation for gender quotas, as well as acknowledge Mongolia's history of "flip-flopping" on gender equality, as per reports.

Systemic Barriers to Civic Education and Participatory Access

Limited Resources and Infrastructure

5. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack adequate resources, including qualified teachers, updated textbooks, and technology.³ This can affect the quality of education and limit students' exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills. The lack of adequate funding for education also means that teaching materials and school buildings may not be fully renovated, further impacting the quality of education, especially for disadvantaged students.⁴
6. For example, the Educational Evaluation Report 2012 released by the Educational Evaluation Centre of Mongolia suggests that the level of quality assessment was different in urban and rural areas and that the national performance average was lower than the international average performance. This disparity in quality assessments highlights the need for increased investment in resources and infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, to ensure equitable access to quality education.

² All information within this section can be attributed to Bolor Lkhaajav, "Can Recent Constitutional Reforms Augment Women's Role in Mongolia's Democracy?", *The Diplomat*, 14 July 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/07/can-recent-constitutional-reforms-augment-womens-role-in-mongolias-democracy/>.

³ Sansarmaa Khurelbaatar, "Experience of the Mongolian Education Reform and Main Issues", *Review of Socio-Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 5 Issue 4, pp. 121-140, December 2020, <https://reviewsep.com/index.php/rsep/article/download/90/176/346>.

⁴ Ibid.

Lack of Inclusive Education

7. Children with disabilities often face significant barriers to accessing mainstream education, hindering their participation in civic life.⁵ Whilst Mongolia has a legal framework for inclusive education, implementation and capacity remain lagging, resulting in limited opportunities for children with disabilities to develop their civic knowledge and skills. For instance, deaf students are not fully integrated into the general education scheme and struggle to secure necessary resources.
8. Although Mongolia has developed a strong legal and policy framework for inclusive education aligned with international best practice, implementation and capacity are lagging. This lack of implementation and capacity hinders the full inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, limiting their access to civic education and opportunities for active citizenship.

Curriculum Gaps

9. A key challenge in Mongolia's civic education is the disconnect between theoretical frameworks and practical application. For example, in Nalaikh district, research indicates that while youth understand the importance of democracy and equal rights, they struggle to connect these concepts to concrete actions like voting.⁶ This disconnect may stem from curricula gaps, which, according to teachers, needs to be more comprehensively addressed to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
10. While a new civic education curriculum was introduced in 2018, its implementation has been inconsistent. Civic education is taught from grade six to nine, but it is not a core subject, and its delivery depends on individual schools, teachers, and available resources. This inconsistency further contributes to the curriculum gaps and hinders the effective development of civic knowledge and skills among students.⁷

In light of this information, the Committee should press Mongolia on the importance for civic education programmes. In particular, the Committee should take note of Mongolia's efforts for civic education for all children, regardless of personal background or disabilities.

We urge the Committee to adopt recommendations aimed at increasing civic education for all Mongolian youth to foster a strong sense of civic participation and healthy democracy, as well as the government reforming its civic education curriculum and access through education institutions.

⁵ "In Mongolia, Project Citizen Empowers High Schoolers to Change Their Communities", *World Learning*, 11 December 2018, <https://www.worldlearning.org/story/in-mongolia-project-citizen-empowers-high-schoolers-to-change-their-communities/>.

⁶ "Strategies for Increasing Youth Civic Engagement in Nalaikh", *MPPGA Global Policy Project*, 20 April 2020, <https://sppga.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/03/MON-Policy-Report-FINAL-Reduced.pdf>.

⁷ "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mongolia", *United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/mongolia/>.

Lack of Strong Legal Frameworks Undermining Fundamental Political Participatory Rights

Restrictions on Freedom of Expression, Assembly, and Association

11. Despite the legal framework protecting political participation, concerns remain about restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly. In one instance, five activists associated with the groups "No War" and "No Double Standard" were convicted and sentenced to confinement for resisting a law enforcement officer during a peaceful demonstration in 2021.⁸ This case raises concerns about potential limitations on the right to peaceful assembly and the authorities' response to dissent.
12. Furthermore, reports indicate restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly of LGBTI people.⁹ This suggests potential discrimination based on sexual orientation, which would violate Article 2 of the Covenant and, consistency raises concerns about accountability and the potential for impunity, which by extension, Article 25, which prohibits distinctions based on Article 2.
13. In addition to restrictions on assembly, there are concerns about limitations on civic space more broadly. The 2024 Civil Society Report by Transparency International Mongolia notes restrictions on civic space, including reduced access to budget documents and limited public engagement in legislative processes.¹⁰ These restrictions can hinder citizens' ability to hold the government accountable and participate meaningfully in public affairs.

Concerns Regarding Independence of the Judiciary and Pressure on Journalists

14. An independent judiciary and a free press are crucial for upholding political rights and ensuring free and fair elections. However, concerns have been raised about the independence of the judiciary in Mongolia and the pressure faced by journalists.¹¹ If judges are subject to undue influence or journalists are unable to report freely on political matters, it can undermine the integrity of the electoral process and limit citizens' ability to participate in public affairs effectively.
15. Adding to these concerns, a 2025 poll by the International Republican Institute (IRI) found that many Mongolians hold negative views on media freedom in the country.¹² More than half of the respondents believe that the media lacks the freedom to independently report on any issue.¹³ This perception of limited media

⁸ Kindly refer to <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/east-asia/mongolia/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Mongolia ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report", *Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*, 28 June 2024, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/c/583375_1.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "IRI Mongolia Poll Shows Economic Concerns, Negative Views on Media Freedom, Strong Desire for Democracy", 16 January 2025, <https://www.iri.org/news/iri-mongolia-poll-shows-economic-concerns-negative-views-on-media-freedom-strong-desire-for-democracy/>.

¹³ Kindly refer to footnote 8.

freedom further underscores the potential challenges to citizens' access to information and their ability to engage in informed political participation.

16. Moreover, reports indicate that government efforts to punish officials who committed human rights abuses have been inconsistent.¹⁴ This issue can further erode public trust in the justice system and discourage citizens from exercising their political rights.

Potential Barriers to Candidacy and Electoral Processes

17. Mongolian law imposes certain restrictions on candidacy, which could potentially limit voters' choices and the diversity of candidates. For example, a party or coalition must obtain approval from the State Audit Office to be eligible to run. This requirement may create an administrative hurdle for smaller parties or independent candidates, potentially limiting their ability to participate in the electoral process.¹⁵
18. Furthermore, there are concerns about a practice of parties securing donation pledges from candidates in exchange for ballot access. This practice may create a financial barrier for some individuals and reduce the diversity of candidates, favouring those with greater access to resources.
19. International observers of the 2024 parliamentary elections noted concerns about the lack of a level playing field and the ruling party's advantage.¹⁶ These concerns contrast with the Mongolian government's claims about the fairness of the elections.¹⁷ The observers highlighted issues such as a series of pay rises and social benefit increases in the run-up to the elections, which may have given an unfair advantage to the incumbent party.

The Centre kindly requests the Committee take note of the barriers for civil society to participate in the electoral process in candidacy, and further press the Mongolian delegation on steps they are taking to ensure civil society can easily run for office without systemic legal barriers.

In light of this information, the Committee should also press for the Mongolian government for campaign procedural reform laws to be developed which eliminate unreasonable barriers to candidacy.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kindly refer to footnote 13.

¹⁶ "Mongolia's parliamentary elections well run but marked by ruling party advantage and several fundamental rights limitations: international observers", *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 29 June 2024, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/571801/>.

¹⁷ Ken Moritsugu and Aniruddha Ghosal. "Mongolia's governing party wins only a slim majority in parliamentary election, early results show", *Associated Press*, 28 June 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/mongolia-parliament-election-democracy-bdf3852aed557d710570f1331b2998a4/>.

Conclusion

20. In conclusion, the human rights situation in Mongolia as it concerns civics participation is concerning. The Centre hopes the Committee has found this information useful and will centre its concluding observations on the as outlined in this report, the Centre strongly advocates for comprehensive reforms focused on ensuring equal voting rights, enhancing public awareness, and strengthening civic engagement.
21. In particular, the Committee should concentrate their dialogue with Mongolia considering the diminished state of civic education and its lack of accessibility, the lack of reform for women to participate in government despite quotas and efforts made otherwise, and the prevention of Mongolians to seek office as a result of legal barriers stifling candidacy efforts. These three issues ultimately undermine the core of the Article 25 rights for Mongolian civil society and are critical to the future of democracy. We hope they will be addressed to guarantee a secure tomorrow.
22. This submission may be published on the OHCHR website or any other places necessary. For any enquiries regarding this submission, please contact primary contributors Mr. Silas WASHINGTON (swashington@cvia.ch), Ms. Iren Neeranzona KHAN (ikhan@cvia.ch) and Mr. Samad QURAIISHI (squraishi@cvia.ch).