



Press Statement

29 April 2010

ON THE COMELEC'S REJECTION OF THE 100% MANUAL COUNT

We are deeply disappointed in the Commission on Elections for their outright rejection of our proposal to count just three positions in all the ballots cast on May 10, as a way to validate the count of the PCOS machines and make the historic 2010 election credible.

Since the PCOS machines have not been pilot-tested before in an actual election as mandated by law, the risk of the machines making mistakes at a rate higher than that provided for (1 mistake out of 20,000), is quite high. We are gravely concerned that without such a verification of the accuracy of these machines, the election may not be accepted by the people as the true reflection of their will.

In March last year, we expressed our concerns about the limited time left to implement the automated election system. But when the national leadership decided to push ahead with full automation, we embraced the project and cooperated with the Comelec in making its implementation successful. However, there were several slip-pages along the way, which only confirmed our worst fears that the risk of failure of automation was going to be high.

As early as November 2009, the recommendation for a manual count was made to Comelec officials in various fora with the business and legal communities. The proposals were not formalized so as not to discourage the Comelec, which continued to assert there was enough time to deliver the system as specified. But they missed even their own new deadlines resulting in compromises made, including the disabling of several security features.

In January 2010, former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban proposed a manual count in an article he wrote in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. For him, the risk of failure of automation is unacceptable.

Our proposal of a manual count was deliberately confined to only three positions in order to keep the process simple and doable, given the limited time left before the election. After all, the purpose of the manual count is to verify that the PCOS machines count correctly, which is the interest of the Comelec as well as of the whole country. If the Comelec's objection is the time it takes to count three positions, then they could count just one position, which would take less than one hour. But it should count all the ballots.

The country cannot afford an election that is done with speed but without accuracy. We believe a 100% manual audit of the position of president will make the 2010 election credible.

Ultimately it is the vigilance of the Filipino people that will best protect the integrity of the elections. We call for highly intensified and sustained vigilance on May 10th.

###