



Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Intramuros, Manila

GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION OF MASS MEDIA ENTITIES, ELECTION OBSERVERS OR MONITORS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONDUCT OF OVERSEAS VOTING FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL ELECTIONS OVERSEAS.

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Promulgated: 06 APRIL 2022

RESOLUTION NO. 10776

WHEREAS, the Commission *En Banc*, through Resolution No. 10739, promulgated the Guidelines for Mass Media Accreditation for the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections;

WHEREAS, the Commission *En Banc*, through Resolution No. 10740, promulgated the Guidelines for the Accreditation of Domestic and International Observers/Monitors for the May 9, 2022 National and Local Elections;

WHEREAS, in both Resolutions, only media coverage and election observation activities within the Philippines were covered and discussed;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), as the sole and primary government agency charged with the conduct of honest, orderly and peaceful elections has a substantial interest in maintaining the orderliness and credibility of elections;

WHEREAS, accreditation shall ensure the integrity of individuals or groups performing media and observer functions during the elections;

WHEREAS, there is a need to increase the efficiency in the recording and monitoring of grants of media and observer accreditation to avoid the proliferation of spurious accreditation papers or media/observer passes;

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, Republic Act No. 9189 as amended by Republic Act No. 10590¹, the Omnibus Election Code², Republic Act No. 7166, and other election laws, the COMELEC has **RESOLVED**, as it hereby **RESOLVES**, to promulgate the following guidelines:

¹ Overseas Voting Act of 2013.

² Batas Bilang 881, as amended.

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - In the interest of transparency, all necessary and practicable measures shall be adopted to allow the representation of national candidates and party-list groups, accredited national political parties, accredited citizens' arms, and non-government organizations to assist, and intervene in appropriate cases, in all stages of the electoral exercise and to prevent any and all forms of fraud and coercion. *[Section 35, Overseas Voting Act of 2013]*

Nonetheless, transparency measures must be balanced with the mandate of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to ensure the orderly conduct of and accurate reporting of the 2022 National Elections overseas, subject only to conditions essential for the protection of the electorate, COMELEC and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) personnel, property, privileged information and integrity of the elections and compliance with the relevant health guidelines of the host countries.

SECTION 2. Scope. - This Resolution shall apply to the following entities:

- 2.1. **Mass Media Entities** - refers to local media, international media, and other media that intend to report on the conduct of the 2022 National Elections overseas. They are further defined in Section 4 of this Resolution.
- 2.2. **Civil Society Partners or Volunteers** - refers to overseas Filipino communities, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, as defined in Section 4 of this Resolution. The COMELEC recognizes the participation of Civil Society Partners or Volunteers in the conduct of voter information campaigns and information dissemination relative to the overseas voting period.
- 2.3. **Election Observers** - refers to those who will be exclusively observing or monitoring the conduct of the 2022 National Elections overseas in the Philippine Foreign Service Posts.

SECTION 3. Exclusion. - This Resolution does not apply to the following:

- 3.1. Poll watchers and counsels representing political parties, national candidates, and party-list organizations that will be participating in the conduct of the 2022 National Elections overseas, as the guidelines for their accreditation are already provided in Article V of COMELEC Resolutions 10750 and 10751, and Article III of Resolutions 10752 and 10753.
- 3.2. Mass media entities that intend to cover the 2022 National and Local Elections in the Philippines, as their accreditation guidelines are already provided for in Resolution No. 10739.
- 3.3. Domestic and international observers/monitors who will be conducting their observation missions of the 09 May 2022 National and Local Elections within the Philippines, as their accreditation guidelines are provided for in Resolution No. 10740.

- 3.4. Personal/Private bloggers who presents personal perspectives on topics and issues.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms. - As used in this Resolution:

4.1 Local Media refers to those who are engaged in news reporting on a local scale in a given country or territory. This includes media which operates in the Philippines and will cover the conduct of the National Election overseas in the Philippine Foreign Service posts.

4.1. International Media refers to those who are engaged in news reporting on an international scale.

4.2. Other Media refers to those engaged in other forms of journalism, including but not limited to:

- a. Opinion Writers
- b. Bloggers employed by media entities
- c. Documentary Film Makers
- d. Feature Film Makers
- e. Novelists, Playwrights, and other Creative Writers
- f. Online Journalists
- g. Community Journalists
- h. Photo Journalists
- i. Print Journalists
- j. Professional Photographers
- k. Professional Videographers
- l. Public Relations Practitioners
- m. Radio Journalists
- n. Screenwriters
- o. Television Journalists
- p. Television Productions

4.3. Freelancers refer to those who do not work full-time for a media company. They may be hired from time to time by different media companies for certain assignments or work independently. They shall qualify for accreditation only under *either* one of the following conditions:

- a. They must be on assignment for a professionally-recognized organization and the request for accreditation is made by that organization. A freelancer may not request for accreditation on behalf of the organization that he or she is representing.
- b. They have previous accomplishments that are highly visible, respected, and widely recognized.

4.4. Overseas Filipino Community refers to a group of Filipinos residing or working abroad whose members are organized due to their common regional, cultural, and historical heritage, interests, occupation or profession, etc.

- 4.5. **Non-Government Organization** refers to a non-profit Philippine organization that is neither part of the Philippine government nor a conventional business establishment.
- 4.6. **Civil Society Group or Coalition** refers to an aggrupation of non-government organizations and institutions that represent the interests of Philippine citizens and is independent of the Philippine government.
- 4.7. **Posts** - refer to the Foreign Service Posts, or the Philippine Embassies and Consulates General worldwide. For the purpose of this Resolution, it shall also include the Manila Economic and Cultural Offices (MECOs) in Taiwan.

SECTION 5. Conditions for Accreditation of Media Entities. - All individuals that fall under the terms defined in Sections 4.1 to 4.4 of this Resolution must:

- 5.1. Abide by the basic code of ethics practiced by professional journalists worldwide.
- 5.2. Be free from conflicts of interests, whether real or perceived, that would interfere with the fair and accurate reporting of news or stories.
- 5.3. Comply with the Rules of Conduct provided in Section 14 of this Resolution.

SECTION 6. Conditions for Accreditation of Election Observers/Monitors. - All individuals seeking accreditation under this Resolution *exclusively as election observers or monitors* must:

- 6.1. Have *bona fide* intention to observe or monitor the electoral activities of the 2022 National Elections overseas;
- 6.2. Be free from any political, economic, or other conflicts of interests that would interfere with the conduct of an impartial election observation mission;
- 6.3. Comply with the Rules of Conduct provided in Section 14 of this Resolution.

SECTION 7. Qualifications for Civil Society Partners or Volunteers. - All individuals who intend to seek accreditation as civil society partners or volunteers of the COMELEC and the DFA in conduct of overseas voting during the 2022 National Elections must be:

- 7.1. Filipino citizens, including dual citizens who have re-acquired their Philippine citizenship under the Citizenship Retention and Re-acquisition Act of 2003 (Republic Act No. 9225).
- 7.2. Strictly non-partisan and impartial during the overseas voting period.
- 7.3. Not supported by or under the influence of any foreign government or any of its agencies and instrumentalities, or any foreigner, whether a natural or juridical person.

- 7.4. Comply with the Rules of Conduct for Civil Society Partners provided under Section 15 of this Resolution.

SECTION 8. General Requirements for Accreditation. - All individuals, entities, groups and organizations subject of this Resolution must submit the following documents to the COMELEC through the Philippine Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over the area/host country where they intend to cover:

- 8.1. Accomplished Accreditation Application Form, using the prescribed form attached to this Resolution as Annex "A";
- 8.2. Two (2) photographs measuring 2 inches by 2 inches or 5 cm. by 5 cm., recently taken in the last six (6) months;
- 8.3. An endorsement letter from the organization they are representing.
- 8.4. For mass media entities, an endorsement from the appropriate officer of the newspaper company, television station, radio station, internet company, broadcast entity, or film distributor which employs the applicant or has committed to air, distribute, or commission the work; and
- 8.5. In the case of freelancers, a valid assignment letter from the *bona fide* media organization for which the freelancer is on assignment or proof of his/her previous accomplishments that are highly visible, respected, and widely-recognized.

Endorsements from any person other than those mentioned above shall not be honored; Provided, that the application of freelancers whose previous accomplishments are highly visible, respected, and widely recognized need not be endorsed.

SECTION 9. Filing and Approval of Applications for Accreditation. - All accreditation applications may be filed personally or electronically through the official email address of the Philippine Embassy or Consulate and other Foreign Establishments with jurisdiction in the area/country where the applicants intend to perform their duties.

The Commission *En Banc* hereby delegates its authority to approve accreditation applications under this Resolution to the Heads of Posts.

SECTION 10. Period for Filing Application for Accreditation. - Posts shall be allowed to continue accepting applications for accreditation until **09 April 2022**.

Media entities, election observers, and civil society partners/volunteers who have not yet been accredited cannot enjoy the privileges granted to them until after their applications for accreditation have been approved by the Heads of Posts.

SECTION 11. Notice of Approved Applications for Accreditation. - For purposes of notifying the public of the duly accredited media entities, election

observers, and volunteers, Posts shall publish on their official websites, the names of the media entities, election observers or monitors, and civil society partners or volunteers they have granted accreditation to, including the names of the organizations they represent. Publication in the official websites of approved application must be made within forty-eight (48) hours from approval.

Within three (3) days from the end of the period for filing applications, the Heads of Posts shall submit the list of accredited media entities, election observers, and civil society partners/volunteers to the COMELEC-OFOV, through the DFA-OVS.

SECTION 12. Issuance of Certificate of Accreditation and Access Passes. - Upon approval of the application, the successful applicant for accreditation shall be issued a Certificate of Accreditation duly signed by the Head of Post. For ease of identification and access to the polling and/or canvassing centers, the accredited applicants shall also be issued an Access Pass with their names, photographs, and role (Media, Observer, or Volunteer). Certificates of Accreditation and Access Passes must be claimed personally or through an authorized representative at the Posts.

The Certificate of Accreditation and Access Pass shall be strictly non-transferable and valid only for the purpose for which it was issued.

Access Passes shall be worn prominently when covering or observing any official election activity that is open to the public, especially in places designated as polling/voting centers and canvassing centers.

Improper use of the Certificate of Accreditation and Access Pass or any use thereof not in accordance with these guidelines, shall be considered abuse of the accreditation and carries the penalty of summary revocation.

SECTION 13. Opposition to Approved Accreditations. - Any interested party may file a *written opposition* to the approved accreditations within five (5) days from the publication of the notice made by Posts pursuant to Section 11 of this Resolution. Written oppositions must cite any of the following grounds and be duly substantiated with supporting documents:

- 13.1. Applicant has a previous derogatory record;
- 13.2. Applicant does not meet any of the conditions and qualifications provided under Sections 5 to 7 of this Resolution;
- 13.3. Applicant misrepresented his/her credentials and qualifications;
- 13.4. Applicant submitted spurious or falsified documents to support his/her application for accreditation; or
- 13.5. Applicant provided false information in his/her application form.

Oppositions shall be filed with the Posts and shall be transmitted to the Office for Overseas Voting (OFOV) through the DFA-OVS. Oppositions may be filed directly to the Office for Overseas Voting via email to ofov.legal@comelec.gov.ph.

Oppositions received by the OFOV shall be immediately transmitted to the OFOV-Commissioner-In-Charge for resolution/decision. For this purpose, the OFOV-CIC has the sole power to grant or deny an accreditation based on the above-stated grounds.

The OFOV-CIC's resolution of the written opposition shall be transmitted by the OFOV through the DFA-OVS to the concerned Posts as soon as possible.

SECTION 14. Rules of Conduct for Media Entities and Election Observers/Monitors. - All accredited media entities and election observers/monitors shall observe the following rules of conduct:

- 14.1. Respect the authority of the COMELEC-deputized personnel at Posts designated to serve as members of the special electoral boards, including Posts' personnel who are tasked to maintain the safety and security of the areas designated as polling/voting and canvassing centers.
- 14.2. Immediately identify themselves by prominently displaying the issued Access Pass at all times while covering or observing election activities and events.
- 14.3. Strictly comply with the public health and safety protocols required in the polling/voting/canvassing centers.
- 14.4. Uphold the ballot secrecy rule at all times. Videos or photos of voters accomplishing their ballots in such a manner that would reveal their votes are strictly prohibited.
- 14.5. Respect the privacy of the electorate. Consent of voters in any photographs or videos wherein voters are clearly identifiable must be secured before the photographs or videos are publicly broadcasted, aired, or printed.
- 14.6. Maintain professionalism, impartiality, and objectivity in the fulfillment of their objectives. The accreditation of media entities and election observers shall be summarily revoked and their access passes confiscated if they have been found to have engaged or participated in the following unlawful activities:
 - a. Any behavior deemed obstructive, disruptive of the conduct of voting, counting, or canvassing, such as, but not limited to, conducting interviews inside the polling place or canvassing centers, doing live social media streams inside the polling place or canvassing centers, and other similar activities.
 - b. Engaging in partisan political activities, which refers to acts designed to promote the election or defeat of a particular candidate or candidates. This includes any behavior intended to unduly influence the choice of voters. Examples of these activities or behaviors include the distribution of campaign materials, swaying or influencing voters to speak for or against any candidate, and other similar actions.

- c. Refusal to submit to the authority of the special electoral board members of the voting centers or canvassing centers where the electoral activities are being conducted.
- 14.7. Media entities and election observers must strive to ensure that any public exchange of information must be accurate, fair, and thorough. Those found to be responsible for spreading disinformation or fake news shall have their accreditation summarily revoked.
- 14.8. Election observers/monitors may submit to the COMELEC, through the Posts and the DFA-OVS, with a copy of their election observation report.

SECTION 15. Rules of Conduct for Civil Society Partners or Volunteers. - All accredited civil society partners or volunteers shall:

- 15.1. Be under the supervision and control of the COMELEC or the COMELEC-deputized officers and personnel at Posts performing election-related duties.
- 15.2. Assist in organizing, managing, or operating the voting/polling centers including field and mobile voting activities under the supervision and direction of the members of the special election boards;
- 15.3. Coordinate the activities of other NGOs and private organizations for the purpose of ensuring free, honest, orderly, fair, and safe conduct of the elections;
- 15.4. Assist the COMELEC and the Posts in voter education campaigns to inform registered overseas voters on where and how to cast their votes and other voter education campaigns.
- 15.5. Strictly be non-partisan and impartial during the overseas voting period.
- 15.6. Maintain professionalism at all times in the performance of their volunteer duties.

SECTION 16. Summary Revocation of Accreditation - All accreditations granted by Posts under this Resolution must be summarily revoked and the corresponding Access Passes confiscated by the Electoral or Canvassing Board Chairperson in case of:

- 16.1. Any violation of the Rules of Conduct as stated in Sections 14 and 15 of this Resolution.
- 16.2. Any disruptive behavior exhibited by the holder of the Access Pass.
- 16.3. Any misconduct which may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Breach or attempt to breach the secrecy of the ballot.
 - b. Knowingly obstructing electoral proceedings.

- c. Asking the electorate about their voting preferences under the guise of conducting a survey.
- d. Engaging in partisan political activities.

The summary revocation of the accreditation, confiscation of access passes, and removal of the individuals concerned from the voting or canvassing center shall be noted in the Minutes of Voting or Canvassing, including the grounds for summary revocation.

SECTION 17. Privileges of Accredited Media Entities and Election Observers. - Duly accredited media entities and election observers shall be allowed to observe the conduct of National Elections Overseas subject to such conditions as may be necessary for the protection of the electoral boards, property, privileged information, integrity of the elections, and compliance with the health and safety guidelines imposed by the host countries.

In case of limitations in space of the voting or canvassing center, Posts may limit the number of media entities and election observers in the premises. Posts should allow at least two (2) media entities and two (2) election observers at the minimum to avoid the impression or perception that a specific media entity or election observer is given exclusive and sole access to the polling or canvassing center.

SECTION 18. Validity of the Accreditation for Media Entities, Election Observers or Monitors and Civil Society Partners or Volunteers. - The accreditation granted to media entities, election observers or monitors and civil society partners or volunteers under this Resolution shall be valid from the date of approval of the application by the Heads of Posts until the end of the overseas election period.

SECTION 19. Effectivity. - This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its posting in the COMELEC website and in two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

SECTION 20. Dissemination and publication. - The OFOV shall furnish a copy of this Resolution to the Office of the President, the Office of the Press Secretary, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Information Agency, accredited citizens' arms, and other parties that have expressed interest in accreditation for overseas voting.

The DFA - Overseas Voting Secretariat shall furnish copies thereof to all Philippine Foreign Service Posts, including the MECOs in Taiwan.

The COMELEC Education and Information Department shall furnish a copy of this Resolution to mass media entities with overseas correspondents or operations and shall also cause the publication of this Resolution.

SO ORDERED.

SAIDAMEN BALT PANGARUNGAN
Chairman

SOCORRO B. INTING
Commissioner

MARLON S. CASQUEJO
Commissioner

AIMEE P. FEROLINO
Commissioner

REY E. BULAY
Commissioner

AIMEE TORREFRANCA-NERI
Commissioner

GEORGE ERWIN M. GARCIA
Commissioner

CERTIFICATION

APPROVED by the Commission *En Banc* during its regular meeting on **06 April 2022**, pursuant to COMELEC Resolution No. 10671, "Supplemental Resolution No. 9936 promulgated 25 March 2013, Rule on the Enactment and Promulgation of Executive or Administrative Resolutions providing for other formats of meetings to include online meetings applicable in times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of Community Quarantines and similar emergency situations."


ATTY. CONSUELO B. DIOLA
CO00110259
Acting COMELEC Secretary