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NDI DELEGATION ENJOINS THE MILITARY TO TURN OVER FULL POWERS TO A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AND ENCOURAGES PAKISTANI VOTERS TO GO TO THE POLLS TO REINFORCE MANDATE OF CIVILIAN REPRESENTATIVES' DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY

Washington, D.C... A multinational, bipartisan delegation of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) recently returned from a weeklong assessment of Pakistan's current political situation. In its statement, the delegation expressed deep concerns about the very limited transfer of power to civilians contained in recent constitutional changes promulgated by Pakistan's military government. These changes will effectively extend military rule beyond the upcoming elections. Nonetheless, the delegation encouraged voters to go to the polls on October 10 to reinforce the mandate of elected civilian representatives in their demand for civilian governance after the elections.

The delegation stated, "The upcoming polls could provide a way to establish a peaceful transition to democratic civilian governance, if the election process is deemed credible by the people of Pakistan and if there are immediate steps following the election to transfer full powers to Parliament and a democratically mandated government."

The team's report further noted, "The delegation hopes that the people will participate in the election process, that their will is respected and that the military transfers power immediately after the elections. Should this be the case, the October 10 voting may well come to be noted as a referendum on democracy. Should these developments not take place, however, the upcoming elections will have been a hollow exercise."

The delegation visited Pakistan from September 3-9, holding meetings with government and electoral officials, leaders from a broad spectrum of political parties and leaders from an array of civil society organizations. The delegation drew upon months of NDI's recent work in Pakistan, and its more than a decade of monitoring of political developments in the country.

The delegation emphasized the need for civilian political leaders to take the necessary steps to root out corruption, and to demonstrate to the population that they are prepared to learn from the past and establish accountable and democratic parties and governmental institutions.

The delegation concluded that "the people of Pakistan desire and deserve democracy, and the delegation hopes that the country's leaders, both military and civilian, are prepared to take the necessary measures in the period ahead to ensure that this fundamental right is realized."

The full text of the delegation's statement is available on the NDI web site at www.ndi.org