

STATEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER DELEGATION

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The international delegation sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs congratulates the people of Pakistan for a peaceful and thus far, successful electoral process. What happened Wednesday and yesterday at polling places all over the country should be a source of national pride for Pakistan.

Our 22 delegates covered six major cities in each of the nation's provinces for both the elections for the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies, although we concentrated on the former. We visited approximately 400 polling places. In addition, prior to the elections as well as on the election days, we talked with representatives of the major political parties, election officials and independent groups monitoring the process. While there were some minor disputes -- indeed, some ongoing challenges may be the subject of adjudication -- our impression is that the Pakistan people believe, based on their experiences, that the process was generally free and fair. They have been afforded an opportunity to express their vote and they have done so.

The delegation attempted to examine any and all allegations of misconduct and we will continue to do so over the next few days.

As we indicated in our pre-election statement, the delegation believed that fraud in the polling and counting phases could be detected if present. Candidates' polling agents were at all the polling places we observed and we understand that they were present throughout the counting phase. We were impressed by the willingness of the party agents to work together

and the cooperation they received from the election officials. They carefully checked voting rolls and were present at the polling places for the counting.

If there are any disputes over counting, we believe that the party representatives should be able to produce results for each ballot box and polling station. This should permit expeditious adjudication of any counting disputes. In addition, we note the independence of the judiciary, as demonstrated during the last few months, heightens our perception that election disputes will be resolved in an acceptable manner.

Although the final turnout percentage is not yet determined, it appears that it will exceed 50 percent. Thus, on the surface, the turnout does not indicate a massive disenfranchisement of voters from a particular party and in no way invalidates the national results. Whether disenfranchisement in a particular constituency was a major factor in the outcome is a matter to be looked into and we will do so.

We also wish to compliment the military and police forces for providing excellent security for the elections. We saw no evidence of intimidation by security forces. On the contrary, we believe that the presence of police and military personnel contributed greatly to a sense that voters could cast their ballots in peaceful conditions.

In summation, we believe the electoral process succeeded in allowing people in Pakistan to express their will. The November 16 and 19 elections, which followed a free and open campaign, represent an historic event. Based on what our delegation witnessed, we believe this should lead to an historic institutionalization of democracy in Pakistan. The president, the judiciary, the election officials, the political parties and the voters all deserve great credit for the success of this event.

We leave Pakistan with confidence that the completion of the process will go as smoothly as the beginning. We have witnessed a spirit of goodwill and compromise that should prevail when the government is formed within the prescribed time. The rule of law and the principle of representative

democracy have prevailed in a society where it had been previously suspended. There are no real losers in this election because the people have won the right to choose their government.