



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**IMMEDIATE AND CONCERTED STEPS NEEDED TO INCREASE VOTER  
CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, NDI DELEGATION FINDS**

KYIV, UKRAINE -- Noting a disturbingly low level of public confidence in political institutions, a National Democratic Institute (NDI) pre-election assessment delegation urged immediate and concerted measures to address problems, real and perceived, that threaten to undermine the integrity of October 28 parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

In a statement issued at a news conference here today, the delegation said, "Ukraine has experienced a number of impressive democratic achievements over the past decade." But following several years of democratic setbacks, it continued, "political will and extraordinary efforts will be required to return to elections that are seen to reflect the will of the voters." Challenges related to the legal framework, district boundaries, election commissions, the voter registry, intimidation of voters, abuse of administrative resources, procedures for complaints and adjudication, web cameras in polling stations, the media and campaign environments, women's participation and election observation need urgent attention before election day, the statement said.

NDI said it welcomed President Yanukovich's pledge that "the election must be perfect, in full accordance with international standards." According to the delegation's statement, "Ukrainians have the skills and capacity to meet the goals expressed by the president." In light of the issue of selective prosecution of political leaders, however, the government faces a high threshold for regaining public trust. When serious doubts are raised about the fairness of an election, additional safeguards must be introduced, the NDI delegation said.

The delegation noted that much is at stake in these elections. "If the citizens accept the results as reflecting their will, the legitimacy of the parliament and government would be enhanced in the eyes of Ukrainians and the international community," the statement said. "It would enhance Ukraine's leadership as it prepares to chair the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] in 2013. It would also help Ukraine tackle the domestic issues that its citizens care most about, including economic reforms and anti-corruption efforts. Further, these elections will set the stage for a presidential election in 2015, which will generate even greater scrutiny."

The statement provided recommendations on concrete measures, some of which should be undertaken in the coming days and weeks, in time to impact the October balloting. Recommendations on additional changes that should be pursued soon after the elections were also provided.

The purposes of the September 10 to 17 mission were to accurately and impartially assess electoral preparedness in advance of the parliamentary elections; review the broader political environment; examine factors that could affect the integrity of the electoral process; and offer recommendations that could increase the prospect for credible elections and promote public confidence in the process.

The NDI delegation included Christine Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey and former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Fuat Keyman, director of the Istanbul Policy Center; David McGuinty, Canadian member of parliament; Mátyás Eörsi, former Hungarian member of parliament; Laura Jewett, NDI regional director for Eurasia; and Kristina Wilfore, NDI Ukraine country director.

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*The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*

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