

Appendix IV

Preliminary Post-Election Statement

International Observer Delegation Cameroon Presidential Election

Yaoundé, Cameroon
October 14, 1992

We are pleased to offer a statement on behalf of the international observer delegation sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), which has observed elections throughout the world since 1985. This delegation, consisting of 13 members from nine countries, witnessed Cameroon's first multiparty presidential election on October 11. It was organized in cooperation with the Study Group for Research on Democracy and Economic Development in Africa (GERDDES-Afrique), a nonpartisan regional democratic development organization.

In September 1991, at the invitation of the Cameroonian government, NDI organized a delegation of international election experts that independently and impartially assessed the country's democratic transition. The delegation's report was widely disseminated in Cameroon and addressed issues relevant to the subsequent legislative and presidential elections.

Prior to the presidential elections, NDI and GERDDES conducted an election monitoring training seminar in Yaoundé on October 2-4 for approximately 175 participants from both the ruling and opposition political parties as well as civic organizations. The Yaoundé seminar was designed to train participants in election monitoring techniques. During the week prior to the election, the trainers conducted additional seminars throughout Cameroon. Seminar participants also shared information gained at the seminar within their organizations and publicly prior to the October 11 vote.

By election day, observers were present in nine of Cameroon's 10 provinces. In five provinces, delegation observers had been present for approximately one week. In these areas, meetings were held before the election with local and regional officials and members

of political parties and civic organizations to assess preparations for the election.

Cameroonians are to be congratulated for embarking upon the transition to multiparty democracy, of which the October 11 presidential election represents a significant event. Since the legalization of political parties in December 1990, the country has grappled with a series of complex issues associated with the democratic transition.

At this date, three days after the election, our views about the election can only be preliminary, as the vote tabulation process is still underway. A full report will be sent to the government, political party leaders and the media within six weeks. NDI hopes to receive additional information on the post-election day process as it prepares its report. With that understanding, the delegation offers the following initial assessments.

There were many positive aspects about the October 11 presidential election, the first multiparty presidential election in the nation's history. One president of a polling place put it best. He told us on the day of the vote that these were the first presidential elections to have real meaning in the 20 years he had presided over his polling place.

Voting was generally peaceful and orderly. Furthermore, before the election the authorities took the important step of authorizing signed copies of polling-place reports for each political party polling-place representative, a vital means of increasing confidence in the results. The secrecy of the ballot, a fundamental element of a legitimate electoral exercise, appears to have been respected throughout the country.

There were, however, a number of serious problems regarding the conduct of the election process. Given the ongoing vote counting process, we are unable to assess the extent to which these problems may affect the final results. We hope that a detailed breakdown of the complete results, based upon certified polling-place reports, will be made public and widely disseminated by the proper authorities as quickly as possible, in order to help ensure public confidence in the process.

Several pre-election day issues must be noted. A significant number of voters were not registered, due to the electoral code that stipulates that in most cases voters cannot register for elections in a

calendar year after April 30. We recognize that the authorities were within the legal right not to have re-opened the electoral registers. In the spirit of democracy, however, which encourages the greatest amount of popular participation in the political process, the delegation regrets that voter registers were not re-opened to accommodate the fact that an early presidential election was called. Further, the lack of readily available public access to voter registers led to considerable confusion at a large number of polling stations.

The imbalance of media coverage of the candidates was clearly evident. For example, the delegation notes that apart from the *Expression Directe* political party campaign broadcasts, television air time heavily favored the ruling party. As an illustration, on October 7 coverage during the evening news and political news segments totalled approximately 142 minutes for the ruling party candidate and 12 minutes for all opposition candidates.

Less than a week before the election, the government implemented "administrative reform" measures. Although the stated purpose was to further decentralize government functions, the immediate effect was to create confusion in voters' minds about electoral operations and polling-place sites.

On election day, the delegation witnessed a number of serious problems. It should be emphasized that the delegation cannot at this point evaluate the extent to which these problems may affect the final vote count. The problems include: a lack of posted information about polling-place sites eight days prior to the vote, as required by Section 78 of the electoral code; loose controls over voter registration cards; an insufficient supply of ballots at some local polling stations; and the absence on registration lists of the names of individuals holding voter cards. There was also substantial evidence of the existence of voting cards of doubtful validity. In addition, election procedures lacked uniformity, with individual polling-place presidents making decisions about what documentation was necessary for individuals to vote. Some of these problems undoubtedly resulted from the actions of overzealous officials at the local level, administrative confusion, lack of experience, and inadequate knowledge of electoral procedures.

It is always a privilege to be a guest in another country. We were impressed by the thousands of people who demonstrated their commitment and dedication to democratic principles. While we deeply regret that several members of the delegation were denied

visas into the country, we are sincerely grateful for the open and generous manner in which we were received by the Cameroonian people. We also wish to thank the Cameroon government for having provided accreditation to permit observers to circulate freely in carrying out their duties for the election of October 11.

The delegation wishes to acknowledge its profound respect for the way in which the Cameroonian people fulfilled their civic duty on October 11. This land is blessed with tremendous human and physical resources. We are confident that Cameroon will continue to build a democracy, through which the country's considerable potential will be fully realized.