

*Appendix VI*

**Interim Report  
International Delegation to the  
Presidential Elections in Cameroon**

October 28, 1992

This interim report, issued by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), evaluates the October 11 election in Cameroon, the country's first multiparty contest for president. The significance of the October 11 election cannot be overestimated. The polling was designed to further Cameroon's transition to a multiparty democracy. Moreover, under the Cameroon constitution, the president of the country exercises unusually strong powers.

This report is based on NDI's work in Cameroon since September 1991, when an NDI-sponsored international team of election experts undertook, at the request of the country's major political parties, an evaluation of the Cameroonian electoral law. NDI's effort in Cameroon also included an extensive training program for more than 175 political party pollwatchers and a 13-member international observer delegation for the October 11 election. The delegation included nationals of Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Hungary, Mexico, and the United States. NDI's training program and observer delegation in Cameroon were carried out in cooperation with GERDDES-Afrique, a regional nonpartisan democratic development organization.

On election day, the NDI observer delegation visited polling sites in nine of Cameroon's 10 provinces. On October 14, three days after the election, the delegation issued a preliminary statement, which highlighted problems in the electoral process. However, the delegation withheld a final assessment of the process, pending release of the final results and an evaluation of the election-related complaints filed by various political parties.

Due to the close nature of the contest, the slow counting of the ballots, and the serious allegations of fraud and manipulation presented by opposition parties, delegation co leader and former Maine Attorney General James Tierney remained in Cameroon for 11

days after the election. On October 23, the Supreme Court announced the official results, in which incumbent President Paul Biya was declared the winner of the October 11 election. During the period between the release of the delegation's preliminary assessment and the announcement of the official results, Mr. Tierney met with representatives of the political parties and the election commission and other knowledgeable Cameroonians. Mr. Tierney also sought to investigate specific complaints presented by representatives of several political parties.

NDI notes several positive features of the election. In particular, these include a strong sense of civic duty on the part of the Cameroonian people on election day, and the dedication of the many election officials and political party representatives who, under difficult circumstances, sought to conduct an open and fair election.

Nevertheless, NDI concludes that widespread irregularities during the pre-election period, on election day and in the tabulation of results must seriously call into question, by any fair observer, the validity of the outcome. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that this election system was designed to fail.

While several parties were responsible for election irregularities, the overwhelming weight of responsibility for this failed process lies with the government and President Biya.

The evidence supporting this conclusion includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The election was scheduled hastily by President Biya, before the adoption of an election law. Once enacted, the law provided for a 30-day period prior to the polling — a period that proved impossible given the date already set for the election.
- The election system provided civil administration officials responsible to President Biya — including the Minister of Territorial Administration, divisional officers and sub-divisional officers — with excessive discretion in matters of voter registration and ballot tabulation, which many officials abused to further the political interests of the incumbent president.

Tabulation of votes was conducted under the authority of the Minister of Territorial Administration, whose partisan support for President Biya was unmistakable. In violation of the electoral law, the Ministry of Territorial Administration had

originally decided to prohibit political party representatives from obtaining tally sheets of election results at the polling sites. While this decision was ultimately reversed, the electoral law did not provide an opportunity for party representatives to monitor the transfer of tally sheets to the divisional supervisory election commissions.

NDI has received direct testimony to the effect that, prior to the election, high level government officials were told that their performance would be rated on the number of votes President Biya garnered in their respective areas. They were given a goal of 60 percent and told that this figure should be achieved by whatever means was necessary.

- The National Commission for the Final Counting of Votes, which was appointed only days before the election, failed to inspire public confidence in the integrity of the tabulation process. The commission did not represent a geographic, ethnic, regional or political balance.
- Voter registration was needlessly restricted, as the registration process was not reopened following the announcement of the election date. This decision, in effect, disenfranchised the many Cameroonians who had boycotted the March 11 legislative election.
- Little control was exercised over the distribution of voter registration cards, thus creating an opportunity for multiple voting and underage voting. Handfuls of cards were repeatedly offered to the observers as proof of a lively market in voter card trafficking. In Maroua, a recently arrived subdivisional officer signed what, by some accounts, were 6,000 voter registration cards that were back-dated to appear to have been issued during the legally permitted registration period earlier in the year. Observers witnessed the distribution of these cards by opposition parties as well as supporters of President Biya.

In addition, voter registries were not published before election day, precluding the possibility that parties or voters could review the lists to ensure their accuracy. The NDI delegation observed or received complaints regarding numerous examples of voters whose names had been on the electoral list but who were not allowed to vote. In a number of provinces, would-be voters showed observers voter cards that had been stamped at the time

of the March legislative elections to demonstrate that they had been permitted to vote at that time.

- The election campaign was marred by the extremely partisan use of the government-controlled television and radio in favor of the incumbent president. The observer delegation's preliminary statement made reference to this biased news coverage. The statement cited the television news broadcast on October 7 in which the government received 142 minutes of coverage, while only 12 minutes were allotted to the opposition.
- On election day, rules regarding voter eligibility were not uniformly applied. Throughout the country, the names of eligible voters were improperly crossed off the register.
- Polling sites were arbitrarily moved in some areas prior to election day in an apparent effort to sow confusion and reduce voter turnout in specific regions. Observers documented this problem in Yaoundé, Maroua, Douala, Garoua and Ebolowa.
- Political party pollwatchers were prevented from entering polling sites and, in one case, were barred from entering the entire territory of Rey Bouba in the district of Mayo-Rey, which was controlled by a traditional leader, who supported Biya. The observer delegation noted other highly partisan acts by polling site officials in Yaoundé and Maroua.
- "Ghost" precincts, i.e., precincts that did not exist on the official list distributed by the election commission prior to the election, reported overwhelming vote totals in favor of President Biya, contrasting dramatically with the results from other polling sites in the area. In Foubot in the Noun Division in the West Province, for example, 10 polling places that did not exist on the official list of polling places were cited in a compilation of results forwarded by the subdivisional officer to the divisional supervisory commission. The results from these polling places provided overwhelming, and similar, vote totals in favor of President Biya, while the remainder of the area voted largely in favor of another candidate.
- Statistically anomalous results were reported from several polling sites — one particularly egregious example involved a polling site from the Mvila Division in the Ebolowa area, which reported 100 percent turnout of 5,856 voters and 100 percent support for

President Biya. Similar, although slightly less extreme, examples were recorded in neighboring polling places.

Undue delays in the release of the official results provided the opportunity for wholesale manipulation, while the failure to publish polling-site-by-polling-site results precludes the possibility of a credible, independent review of the overall election results.

NDI has an obligation to evaluate the election process in Cameroon using the same objective standards that it has employed in observing more than 40 elections throughout the world. In the case of Cameroon, the seriousness of the irregularities has been underscored by the chief justice of the Supreme Court when he announced the official results, and by the minister of justice in an interview with a Cameroonian newspaper.

In conclusion, NDI urges all Cameroonian political parties to pursue a peaceful resolution to the problems confronting the country. The divisions that have emerged as a result of the presidential election should not be allowed to reverse the progress that has occurred in Cameroon during the past two years.

NDI recognizes that the people of Cameroon are the ultimate judges of their electoral process. This interim report is a reflection of a growing consensus in Cameroon. NDI hopes that the views expressed herein will contribute to a better understanding of what occurred during this electoral process both inside Cameroon and around the world.

NDI urges all sides to come together in peaceful dialogue and to reach agreement on a course of action that will resolve the current impasse. A violent reaction by any of the parties or the government will tend to influence negatively the views of the international community toward the perpetrators. It is time for reflection, dialogue and negotiation among all Cameroonians.