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September 22, 1998

The Honorable Vladimir Meciar
Premier
Slovak Republic
Bratislava, Slovakia

Dear Prime Minister Meciar:

As members of the International Advisory Committee, formed by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) to monitor the Slovak election process, we are writing to express our concern regarding developments in advance of Slovakia's parliamentary elections later this month.

Democratic elections are characterized by an open and transparent process in which political parties campaign freely and on an equal basis; media, both public and private, are free to cover the election period under clear and reasonable regulations; and the electorate casts ballots with the confidence that the process has been fair and that the vote will be respected.

Based on NDI's observations of the pre-election period in Slovakia and on similar findings by other reputable, informed, and nonpartisan organizations, we are troubled by the degree of unfairness and the high level of polarization characterizing Slovakia's political climate as the elections approach. Recent statements by government figures and state-owned media against legitimate attempts by independent civic groups and media to participate in the election process, as well as uninvestigated acts of violence perpetrated against independent journalists, have created a climate of anxiety. Biases in state television news coverage during the pre-election period that favor governing parties, as well as changes in the election law intended to disfavor opposition forces, have undermined the principle of fairness. Imprecise regulations concerning independent media's coverage of the election campaign have caused unnecessary confusion and self-censorship.

Finally, the unwillingness of the Central Election Commission to accredit trained, organized, and nonpartisan domestic election monitors further erodes domestic and international confidence in the prospect of an open election process. Election monitoring by domestic, nonpartisan groups of trained and organized citizens has become a standard practice in democratic countries around the world. It is viewed as a principal means to build public confidence and to promote political stability as it provides citizens with a nonpartisan source of information on the election process. Along with election monitoring by international observers, domestic election monitoring is enshrined as an accepted practice by member-states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in Article 8 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document (1990).

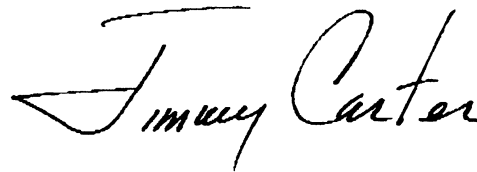
It is not logical that a country should invite foreign election observers while denying the same invitation to its own citizens, especially when, as in the case of one Slovak organization--the Association for Fair Elections (AFE)--the domestic observers requesting credentials are well-trained, organized, and strictly nonpartisan in action and motivation. Accordingly, the Central Election Commission should reverse its recent decision on the matter of domestic election observers.

As you are no doubt aware, the conduct of these elections and the local elections to follow in November will be watched by political and governmental leaders who strongly hope that Slovakia is able to take its rightful place in the new Europe and in the community of democratic nations.

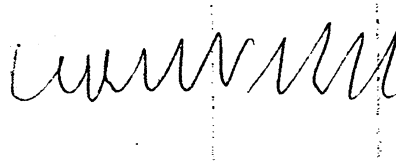
It is our fervent hope that you will apply your authority toward ensuring, as much as is possible in the time remaining, a democratic election process, prior to, during, and after election day.

Sincerely,

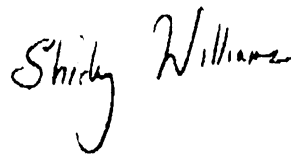
Jimmy Carter
Former U.S. President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter".

Otto Graf Lambsdorff
Former German Minister of
Economic Affairs

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otto Graf Lambsdorff".

Shirley Williams
Member of the British House of Lords

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley Williams".

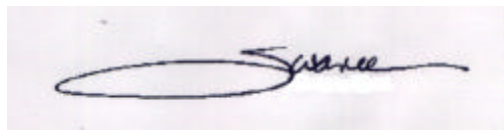
Steny Hoyer
Member of the U.S. Congress

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steny Hoyer".

John Porter
Member of the U.S. Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a tall vertical stroke on the left, a horizontal stroke at the bottom, and a large, stylized 'P' shape on the right.

Swanee Hunt
Former U.S. Ambassador to Austria

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, circular loop on the left and a series of connected, cursive-like strokes on the right.

cc: Slovakia Central Election Commission