

**INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS
TO FOCUS ON UPCOMING SLOVAK ELECTION**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has formed an International Advisory Committee (IAC) of prominent political leaders to monitor preparations for the upcoming parliamentary election in Slovakia.

Committee members include:

Jimmy Carter, former U.S. President
Yegor Gaidar, former Russian Prime Minister
Joseph Clark, former Canadian Prime Minister
John Bruton, former Irish Prime Minister
Otto Graf Lambsdorff, former German Minister of Economic Affairs
Paul Simon, former U.S. Senator
Steny Hoyer, Member of the U.S. Congress
John Porter, Member of the U.S. Congress
Swanee Hunt, former U.S. Ambassador to Austria

The IAC also includes NDI President Kenneth Wollack.

Since gaining independence in 1993, Slovakia has been unable to secure a fully open, transparent political system based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, political tolerance, and other key democratic principles. This election presents an historic opportunity to reclaim the democratic values that guided Slovakia during the Velvet Revolution.

There are, however, serious concerns about the nature of the election process. Recent government amendments to the parliamentary election law, for example, have imposed serious restrictions on independent media coverage of the election process and have removed transparency safeguards by giving administrative responsibilities to governmental bodies rather than multipartisan commissions. The new law also does not provide for international and domestic election observers. In these areas the revised election law falls short of international standards for democratic elections.

The International Advisory Committee will support the efforts of Slovak and foreign organizations working to promote a democratic election process. The IAC will monitor election related developments, including the ability of parties to campaign freely; media access and fair press coverage of the campaign; the voter registration process; relevant legal and administrative frameworks; and the right of foreign and domestic groups to observe all aspects of the campaign, including the voting and tabulation processes. Some members of the IAC may join NDI in election-related missions to Slovakia in September. The parliamentary election is to be held on September 25 and 26.

NDI is currently assessing the election law changes and monitoring the pre-election environment as a whole. The Institute is also providing support to Slovak civic groups that are monitoring media

coverage of the election and deploying election-day observers.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs is a nongovernmental, nonpartisan organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders promoting peaceful political reform and advancing democratic values, practices and institutions.

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