

For Immediate Release
June 20, 2000

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**STATEMENT ON REFUSAL BY THE GOVERNMENT OF
ZIMBABWE TO ACCREDIT NDI AND OTHERS TO
OBSERVE THE JUNE 24-25 ELECTIONS**

Fundamental Flaws in Election Process Cited

Washington, DC, June 20, 2000

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) commented today on the refusal of the government of Zimbabwe to accredit NDI, the International Republican Institute and other nongovernmental organizations as observers of the June 24-25 parliamentary elections. The government has also refused to accept observers from the United Kingdom and selected observers from other countries, including those from Kenya and possibly Nigeria.

NDI President Kenneth Wollack said: **"The refusal to accredit certain observers violates international standards for democratic elections and is counter to the practice of Zimbabwe's neighbors and virtually all democratic countries."** Wollack pointed out that, from NDI's experience, this is only the second time in the past decade that a country has refused to accredit observers from recognized international nongovernmental organizations and is the first time that a country has attempted to prohibit observers of specific nationalities. "These negative practices isolate Zimbabwe from other countries in the region and beyond," he said.

Wollack added: **"Regrettably, with just four days remaining before voting begins, the conditions for credible democratic elections still do not exist in Zimbabwe. Irreparable damage has been done to the electoral process, particularly as a result of politically motivated violence. The lack of effective government action against such violence has created an air of impunity that further harms the election environment - an environment that is marred by anxiety and fear."** He also pointed to a failure to provide a level playing field for electoral competition and to serious flaws in the legal framework for the elections.

Despite these fundamental flaws in the electoral process, political parties and candidates are contesting the elections. "Zimbabwean citizens are courageously mobilizing in large numbers to act as election monitors, and the outcomes of the elections are uncertain," said Wollack. "It is therefore important that international and domestic observation of the elections be as comprehensive as possible."

The National Democratic Institute is a nongovernmental organization based in the United States that supports democracy worldwide and has conducted impartial international election observation in more than 50 countries in Africa and around the globe. NDI organized a pre-election delegation to Zimbabwe in May. The delegation was led

by the Hon. Alex Ekwueme, Vice President of Nigeria from 1979-83, and included current and former parliamentary leaders from Mozambique, Namibia, Kenya and Canada, as well as NDI's director of election programs. The delegation received technical advice from the Chief Electoral Officer of South Africa, NDI's Southern Africa regional director and NDI's Zimbabwe-based staff.

At a press conference in Harare on May 22, the delegation released its 17-page statement, which found that: "The conditions for credible democratic elections do not exist in Zimbabwe at this time." The statement contained a series of recommendations on improving the election process that, unfortunately, were not implemented. Since May 22, NDI has continued to carefully analyze political developments and electoral conditions in Zimbabwe. Prior to the requirement of accrediting pre-election observers, NDI teams traveled to all of Zimbabwe's 10 provinces. Those teams departed the country last week.

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