

**PRESS RELEASE: NDI PRE-ELECTION DELEGATION ISSUES  
STATEMENT ON TOGO'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

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An international pre-election delegation organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) issued its statement today on Togo's June 21 presidential election. The delegation visited Togo from June 4 through June 11, 1998. The purposes of the delegation were to express the interest of the international community in the political and electoral processes in Togo and to examine conditions leading to the presidential election scheduled for June 21, 1998.

NDI works to support democratic institutions and processes worldwide. The Institute has conducted more than 40 international election observer delegations and more than 60 pre-election delegations, and it has established a reputation for independence, impartiality and professionalism in conducting electoral assessments. The pre-election delegation included election experts and political and civic leaders from Africa, Europe and North America. Delegation members have participated in numerous election assessments and international election observer delegations in West Africa and throughout the world.

The delegation included: Maria Leissner (Sweden), former President of the Swedish Liberal Party and former Member of Parliament; Patrick Merloe (United States), Senior Associate at NDI and Director of NDI Programs on Election and Political Processes; Bernadette Kapet-Blini (Côte d'Ivoire), Secretary General of the Mouvement International des Femmes Démocrates; and Timothy S. McCoy (United States), NDI Senior Program Officer for West Africa. The delegation conducted its work in accordance with international standards for democratic elections and in accordance with Togolese law. The delegation did not seek to interfere with or to certify the election process, and it recognized that ultimately it will be the people of Togo who judge the genuineness of the election.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The delegation noted a number of positive aspects of the political process leading to the upcoming presidential election and certain improvements over the process that led to the 1993 presidential election; however, the delegation found that sufficient conditions do not yet exist to ensure a transparent and fair election on June 21. A number of immediate steps could be taken that would contribute to greater transparency and increase the prospects for a democratic election. The delegation offered several recommendations in its Statement that could be implemented to improve the process in the time remaining, within Togolese law and with the limited resources that may be available. The steps could help set the stage for an

establish confidence in the election process.

The delegation reached its observations and findings based upon: NDI's past experiences in Togo, including the Institute's election-related work in 1992-1993; continuing analysis of the situation in the country by NDI staff; NDI's 1997 program with members of Togo's National Assembly; review of reports by other organizations involved with the political and election processes in Togo; analysis of Togo's constitution, election code and press code; and analysis of information presented to the delegation during its meetings in the country. A list of the delegation's meetings is available from NDI.

With these points in mind and in the spirit of international cooperation, the delegation offered the following recommendations.

1) Nonpartisan Togolese Election Observers: Approximately 500 volunteers from four Togolese civic groups have been trained in nonpartisan election observation with assistance from the European Union. These observers should be accredited immediately to observe all voting, counting and tabulation processes leading to the announcement of the final election result. Because Article 73 of the Electoral Code recognizes national observers, accreditation can be accomplished by communique to the four civic groups. These groups could then submit a list of their observers and the electoral districts in which they will observe. The accreditation process could also include each group submitting a pledge of impartiality and non-interference in the workings of electoral officials, which would be in accordance with Article 58 of the Electoral Code.

2) Political Balance of Polling Station Officials: The Electoral Code does not require political parity between the ruling party and the opposition in selecting polling station officials. These officials may already have been selected and trained. The National Election Commission (CEN), however, has the legal competency to appoint the president of the polling stations. The CEN should apply the principle of political parity used to appoint it and the Local Election Commissions (CEL), when selecting presidents of the polling stations; this would better ensure impartiality of electoral officials and improve public confidence. If a substitution is required for any polling station official, the principle of political parity should be applied. This can be accomplished as a communique that supplements training materials for polling station officials.

3) Voter Lists: Voter lists are now available for most polling stations. An immediate review should be conducted by the CEN and the Ministry of Interior and Security (within their respective jurisdictions), as well as by election observers, to determine whether the public is being provided the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the lists. The review should also determine whether prospective voters will have an adequate opportunity to exercise their legal right to seek correction of mistakes in the voter lists. An expedited process should be devised to eliminate multiple entries and other mistakes in the lists and to add those persons whose names should be on the lists but are omitted. That a person was improperly omitted could be established by the person producing documentation or witnesses. This process should be expanded to include persons who turned 18 years of age since the registration of 1994, if they prove their eligibility through two witnesses or proper documentation.

discovered on the voter lists, the corresponding cards should be removed from the cards being distributed to voters. A record should be made of the extra cards, and they should be sent back immediately to the CEN, where a verification should be done before election day to account for the extra cards.

5) Other Matters of Electoral Administration: A review should be conducted immediately to determine whether the consequences of missed deadlines can be adequately rectified in the days remaining before election day. This should address, among other matters, voter lists. The review should also address distribution of voter cards, public announcement of the complete list of polling stations and their officials, and allowance of adequate time for candidates and their parties to ensure the printing and distribution of their ballots (bulletins de vote). If adequate time to effectively administer the election is not available by seven days before election day, a reasonable postponement should be set to implement measures that would ensure the integrity of election-day administration. It appears to the delegation that this could be done, while remaining within constitutional requirements concerning timing of the election. Failure to effectively administer the election could exacerbate political tensions.

6) Media: State media behavior towards all candidates for president should be brought immediately into conformance with the Electoral Code. This is particularly important in light of the serious problems with media coverage documented by Reporters sans Frontières.

7) Public Assurances: Given the atmosphere of distrust and polarization, the political parties, all of the candidates, the government and the CEN could increase public confidence by making public assurances that they will take steps to ensure a peaceful election and that the will of the people expressed through a democratic election will be respected. The candidates and parties should take actions to ensure that their supporters respect the law and the rights of others to campaign for popular support. The government should reiterate its commitment to the provision of the Togolese constitution that members of the armed forces should remain politically neutral, including throughout the election period. Such assurances can play a positive role and can encourage participation in the election process.

*The delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to the candidates, party representatives, government and electoral officials, members of the media, other political and civic leaders and representatives of the international community with whom it met. Had not these individuals taken time at this important moment to meet, provide information and share their views, the delegation could not have completed its work.*