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PRESS RELEASE

National Democratic Institute and Carter Center Commend 2001 Peruvian Elections and Recommend Reforms to Strengthen Democratic Institutions

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In a report on the 2001 election process released today in Lima, a post-election assessment mission of the National Democratic Institute and The Carter Center called Peru's 2001 elections an "extraordinary accomplishment in the process of returning Peru to the world community of democracies." The peaceful and well-administered elections were a dramatic contrast to the fraudulent and illegitimate process of 2000, among the worst ever observed in this hemisphere by the two institutes.

"We commend the remarkable resolve demonstrated by the citizens of Peru throughout a protracted political crisis in their country, the leadership of the transitional government under President Valentin Paniagua and Prime Minister Javier Perez de Cuellar, the Congress, the electoral authorities, and the role of civic organizations such as *Transparencia* in raising confidence in this year's elections," said delegation leader Rodrigo Carazo, former president of Costa Rica.

Long-term recommendations made by the post-election delegation cover four areas: 1) Electoral and Governmental Systems, 2) Election Administration and Election Procedures, 3) Mass Communications Media, and 4) Ensuring Integrity of Public Institutions. Specific recommendations made by the two institutes include:

- Broad political dialogue should be held before making major changes to electoral systems and governance institutions, such as proportional representation versus single-member districts, unicameral versus bicameral legislature, and decentralization of national government authority.
- The Congress should enact legislation to help strengthen political parties, which are among the weakest of the democratic institutions in Peru. Such legislation should establish requirements for internal party democracy, financial accountability, and promotion of women and youth in political processes.

- The public interest should be protected by laws and regulations to limit the corrupting influence of money in politics. Authorities should consider partial public funding for political parties and electoral campaigns, more stringent disclosure requirements for campaign finance, and restrictions on paid political advertisements to reduce the need to raise large amounts of money for electoral campaigns.
- Peruvians should consider streamlining the election authorities and clarifying institutional roles to reduce duplication and other inefficiencies. Study of other election administration bodies could help provide ideas for the most appropriate structure, taking into account Peruvian political culture and experience.
- State-controlled media should be required to provide politically impartial news coverage, and Peruvian electoral authorities should expand free air time privileges (*franja electoral*) for candidates to local news media during election campaigns.
- The Congress should legislate statutory controls to guarantee transparency, access to information, and accountability in all government programs and agencies, including the armed forces and intelligence services.

International experience demonstrates that broad consensus-building leads to much more sustainable political solutions than do high-level, closed negotiations. NDI and The Carter Center hope that the high level of collaboration and consultation established for the 2001 elections continues in the months and years ahead. At this critical juncture in the consolidation of its democracy, Peru has the opportunity to take advantage of comparative international experiences and to improve on existing practices, serving as an example for the community of democratic nations.

Lima, July 11, 2001