

MAY 18, 1990 PRESS STATEMENT

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL
OBSERVER DELEGATION

Ladies and gentlemen, I am Senator Joseph Lieberman. I am pleased to introduce the international observer delegation that is here in Romania to observe the May 20 presidential and legislative elections. This delegation has been organized by the National Democratic and the National Republican Institutes for International Affairs - NDI and NRIIA, respectively. Affiliated with the two political parties of the United States, the institutes conduct international programs to support democratic development around the world and have frequently cosponsored election observation missions such as this one.

Before we explain the purpose of our visit here, allow me to introduce the co-leaders of this delegation. To my right is Roy Hattersley, Deputy Labour Leader in Great Britain, and to my left is former U.S. Senator and Apollo astronaut, Harrison Schmitt. I would also like to mention that this 60-member delegation includes parliamentarians, political party leaders, election administrators and other elections experts from 20 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere. Many of the individuals here have participated in previous missions that the institutes have organized in other countries.

This delegation is in Romania by invitation to observe the developments of the electoral process. The revolution of December 1989 that captured so much of the world's attention set in motion a series of events that, with considerable effort, can lead to the development and consolidation of a fully democratic society in Romania. In two days, Romanians will have the opportunity to cast their ballots in the first multi party elections here in nearly half a century.

While there has been debate in Romania about aspects of these elections, virtually all sectors of the population appear to be participating in the process. Although only a short time has passed

since the December revolution, these elections are an important opportunity to demonstrate that a new political era -- one offering the prospect of democratic government and respect for human rights -- has begun in Romania.

It is important to remember that the purpose of these elections is the formation of a transitional government whose primary purpose is the drafting of a new constitution, and then new elections will be held.

Given the historic nature of these elections and their significance for the future of Romania, it is not surprising that the elections have attracted significant international attention. Romanians have welcomed this attention and expressed appreciation that this (and other) delegations are present for these elections.

We have two purposes during our stay in Romania. First, we wish to demonstrate international support for free and fair election and for a democratic system in Romania. We also are here to learn from the people of Romania about the nature of the electoral process and its implications for Romania's future as a democratic country.

We have already met today with a broad spectrum of Romanians to obtain their views on the electoral process. Tomorrow the delegation will divide into small teams that will visit eleven regions of the country. We will speak with Romanians involved in the electoral process in each of these areas and, on Sunday, we will observe the balloting and counting processes.

The two sponsoring organizations have been monitoring the electoral process over the past three months and the delegation will now assess three distinct elements of the process. First with respect to the election campaign, delegates will seek to ascertain whether the political environment and the electoral laws and regulations allowed all participants in the process the opportunity to make their views known to the electorate.

Second, regarding the procedures on election day, we will analyze whether the voters were able to cast their ballots in secret and without fear or intimidation. And third in analyzing the counting

process, we will attempt to determine whether the ballots have been counted accurately.

The delegation will regroup in Bucharest on Monday for a debriefing session for the preparation of a final statement. We will report our observations to the international community at a press conference in this hotel. Our observations of this process will, we expect, reflect those of the Romanian people themselves.

We wish to reiterate our support for the people of Romania who, as they go to the polls on May 20, are taking an historic step toward the development of a new and democratic Romania in which political pluralism will flourish, individual and collective liberties will be protected, human rights will be respected, and the rule of law will be institutionalized.