

POST-ELECTION STATEMENT
COUNCIL OF FREELY-ELECTED
HEADS OF GOVERNMENT
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

Port-au-Prince, Haiti
December 17, 1990

This statement reflects the preliminary conclusions of a 33-member international and bipartisan delegation on the historic December 16, 1990 Haitian elections. The delegation was sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government. The sponsoring organizations collaborated on a series of pre-election missions to Haiti, and will publish a comprehensive report on the Haitian electoral process in early 1991.

In observing this election, the delegation was aware that an election process involves not only what happens on election day, but also the pre-election campaign and the post-election transition. With respect to the campaign, the candidates indicated that they had no serious complaints and that the campaign period afforded them an opportunity to communicate their respective messages to the public through rallies, the media, posters and other activities. Most important, while there was some tension that existed and one serious incident of violence, the campaign was conducted in a remarkably peaceful manner.

Regarding the balloting process, the delegation observed hundreds of polling sites in all nine of Haiti's departments. In most polling places visited, the process worked impressively well in providing voters an opportunity to cast their ballots in a peaceful environment. There were delays in opening the polls, but most sites opened by 7 a.m. The pace of processing voters which was slow at the outset, quickened as polling officials became familiar with the

process. There were few delays in closing the polls, even where the polls opened late, and the counting at the polling site level was meticulously conducted.

The Provisional Electoral Council is now receiving tally sheets from around the country. It will release the results as they are tabulated. The observations of this delegation around the country lead us to expect that there will be a definitive result from the presidential election.

There were some problems observed at the polling sites, although most of them had been resolved by the end of the day. Most notably, in certain areas ballots and other materials did not arrive on time; this delayed the start of the balloting process in some instances until 2 p.m., preventing many people who wanted to vote from having an opportunity to do so. The source of these problems should be investigated so as to be certain that they do not happen in future elections.

The delegation, however, wishes to emphasize that the problems affected a very small percentage of polling sites, and contrast with the remarkable panorama of a very impressive process. A number of individuals and institutions deserve credit for this impressive success.

The delegation compliments President Trouillot, who under difficult circumstances maintained a commitment to the election process and to ensuring that the government remained neutral regarding the process. Among other initiatives, President Trouillot invited the United Nations and the Organization of American States to observe these elections, and the presence of these organizations contributed greatly in providing confidence to the electorate. This delegation appreciated the opportunity of working closely with the UN and OAS in this effort.

This election posed enormous administrative challenges. The Provisional Electoral Council had to register voters, prepare and distribute ballots and other paraphernalia for five elections, designate and train polling officials responsible for administering more than 14,000 polling sites, and make several delicate political decisions as mandated by the constitution. Despite the problems noted above, the

Council and all of the election officials involved in the process are to be congratulated for their successful and courageous efforts in ensuring that the people of Haiti had an opportunity to participate in a meaningful election process.

General Abraham and the armed forces deserve the congratulations of the international community for assuring a peaceful campaign. The role of the armed forces on election day was truly exceptional, providing a model of civil-military relations in a democratic society, and also providing hope that the military will continue its constructive, constitutional role in the days ahead.

The candidates who participated in the elections at all levels deserve our admiration and respect. They have displayed tremendous courage. The winners should be congratulated on their victories and deserve the support of those committed to a democratic Haiti. At the same time those who were defeated also have a very important role to play if democracy in Haiti is to succeed.

Finally, the delegation wishes to compliment the people of Haiti, who have waited so long to participate in a meaningful election. They overcame what for many were quite real fears of violence to cast their ballots. For them, the dream of a democratic Haiti and a better life can now begin to be realized.

Yesterday's successful elections signal the beginning of the process of solving Haiti's many problems. The country's new leaders will require the cooperation and assistance of many people within and outside Haiti.

The members of this delegation, who came from 12 countries and from diverse political backgrounds, will encourage their respective governments and the international development banks to provide assistance to the new government. In response to requests from the new government, this assistance should be designed to improve the standard of living in the country and to strengthen the political institutions established by the 1987 Constitution.

The election is an historic moment for Haiti, but it is not the end of the road for Haitian democracy. In fact, it is just the first crucial step toward building a democratic system. Of great significance is

that the forces of popular change have a unique opportunity to improve the lives of all Haitians within a constitutional system, but these improvements may take some time. What will count is that within a democratic system, such changes will endure.