

Appendix V

Pre-Election Statement

**INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION TO THE
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN PARAGUAY**

May 24, 1991
Asunción, Paraguay

I am Al Graham, a Senator in the Canadian Parliament. I am pleased to once again co-lead an international observer delegation to elections in Paraguay. It is my privilege to introduce my colleagues on this delegation, which is present to observe the May 26 municipal elections.

This delegation is being organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a democratic development institute in Washington, D.C. that conducts nonpartisan programs around the world. NDI has organized election observer delegations in more than a dozen countries in Europe, Asia and throughout Latin America. It has gained a worldwide reputation for its expertise and neutrality in electoral matters.

Because these are the first elections since the 1989 national elections and the first time mayors will be elected in Paraguayan history, they may provide an indicator of Paraguay's democratic progress.

The 16 delegates — who are legislators, leaders of political parties, election experts and civic leaders — come from Canada, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States; the U.S. component of the delegation is bipartisan. Several delegation members have experience observing elections in other countries as members of NDI delegations or other organizations.

Before explaining the purpose of our presence in Paraguay, I will introduce the co-leaders of the delegation. Andrés Pastrana is a former mayor of Bogota, Colombia. Bruce Morrison, who will arrive tomorrow, is a former member of the United States Congress who has long been interested in the Paraguayan political and human rights situation. Congressman Morrison and I co-led the NDI-

sponsored international delegation to the May 1989 Paraguayan national elections.

We are not here to arbitrate or interfere in the internal affairs of Paraguay. We do not presume to judge the election process; Paraguay is a sovereign and proud nation. We are here to demonstrate international support for the democratic process and to report our impressions to the international community.

As observers, we have taken no position regarding the outcome of the elections. The members of our delegation are representative of the democratic spectrum and are here because they have demonstrated in their careers a strong commitment to democracy. We are all interested in learning from the Paraguayans regarding the nature of the electoral process and its implications for Paraguay's consolidation of democracy. We hope to learn a great deal that we can take home to our own countries.

This approach is consistent with the practice of international election observing, a practice that is now widely accepted within the democratic community of nations. Given the historic nature of these elections and their significance for the future of Paraguay, it is not surprising that they have attracted considerable attention. Paraguayans from across the political spectrum have welcomed this attention and have expressed appreciation that this and other international observer delegations will be present for the elections. The Paraguayan government itself has encouraged our presence here, and the Central Electoral Board has provided us with credentials.

To fulfill the objectives set forth for the delegation by NDI, we met today with a broad spectrum of political leaders, candidates, as well as members of the Central Electoral Board and Central Electoral Tribunal, military officials and civic leaders. Tomorrow the delegation will divide into six teams to observe the voting and counting in cities throughout the country. While in the regions, team members will meet with local election and government officials, as well as candidates and party representatives. On Sunday the teams will observe the balloting and counting. The delegation is particularly interested in hearing the opinions of Paraguayans as they assess the campaign, the procedures on election day and the results.

This is the first time NDI is observing exclusively a municipal election process. We will focus on five electoral contests in different regions of the country. These contests will involve both heavily-

populated municipalities and some municipalities that are less populated. The focus will be on evaluating individual contests, rather than relying principally on the picture as presented by party representatives based in Asunción.

The delegation will regroup in Asunción on Monday to exchange impressions. We expect to report our views to the international community at a press conference on Monday at 5 p.m. Our appraisal of the process, we hope, will reflect that of the Paraguayan people.

The determination of Paraguay's municipal governments rests, as it should, in the hands of people freely elected by the people of Paraguay. We share their hopes for peaceful elections and for the continued development of its democracy.

Thank you.