



THE CARTER CENTER



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CONTACT:

For NDI: Sidi Diawara +231 0656 1657, sdiawara@ndi.org

Jean Freedberg +1 202 728-5527, jfreedberg@ndi.org

For Carter Center: Jon Moor +1 404 420 5107, jmoor@emory.edu

Ashley Barr +231 0645 2022 jashleybarr@gmail.com

**NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE / CARTER CENTER ISSUE PRELIMINARY
STATEMENT ON 2005 LIBERIA ELECTIONS**

“The election process thus far demonstrates that the country is poised to turn an historic corner towards sustainable peace and democratic development,” says delegation

MONROVIA, LIBERIA October 13, 2005...A joint National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Carter Center delegation today issued its preliminary statement on the October 11 presidential and legislative elections in Liberia. The 40-member multinational delegation was co-led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former President of Benin, Nicephore Soglo. It included elected officials, electoral and human rights experts, regional specialists and political and civic leaders from 14 nations in Africa, Europe and North America.

The delegation stressed the preliminary nature of its statement, since at time of writing the tabulation of results was still underway, and any election complaints and challenges that may be lodged would take some time to address.

The delegation summarized its findings:

“Liberians went to the polls in massive numbers on October 11 and demonstrated their strong desire for peace and democratic governance. The election process thus far underscores that the country is poised to turn an historic corner towards sustainable peace and democratic progress. Should this be accomplished, there would be important benefits for stability and development here and in the sub-region.

Liberia’s 2005 elections offer the opportunity to break with a history of armed conflict, authoritarian rule and the politics of exclusion. Following a remarkably peaceful and highly competitive electoral campaign, voting across the country was virtually violence free, orderly and well administered in most of the areas that this delegation was able to observe.

The crucial vote tabulation process remains to be completed, and any formal electoral complaints that may be lodged must be processed fairly and expeditiously. Patience as well as vigilance to ensure confidence in the results therefore are needed.

Should a runoff be required, massive voter education must be conducted. That campaign should address the reasons for a runoff as well as voting procedures and the nature of the political choice being presented. A major problem identified in the October 11 poll was the widespread need for voter assistance due to the lack of understanding of voting procedures and in many cases a lack of understanding concerning the nature of the choice among the candidates.

It is critically important that all of the stakeholders – government and electoral officials, candidates and

political, religious and civic leaders – act responsibly in the days immediately ahead to ensure that the process remains on track. There are serious challenges to face in meeting this goal, and the international community should do everything possible to provide its continued assistance.

As the process unfolds, those who appear to be the winners of these elections should be magnanimous, while those who do not win the right to advance to the potential presidential runoff or to seats in the legislature should be gracious in accepting credible results. At the same time, all sectors of Liberian society should join in embracing the difficult national challenge of establishing inclusive, democratic governance. This is all the more important because some of the factors that contributed to conflict and frailty of the Liberian state still exist and will continue to challenge society as it moves beyond the elections.”

The delegation reviewed numerous aspects of the electoral process, including the electoral framework, the administration of the elections, voter education efforts, the campaign, domestic monitoring and international observation, election day, and tabulation and electoral complaint resolution.

In addition, the delegation issued 16 recommendations, divided between the immediate post-election circumstances and the possibility of a run off election. The recommendations were directed to the National Elections Commission, political parties and contestants, civil society, and the international community.

In preparation for these elections, NDI and The Carter Center conducted a pre-election assessment mission in September 2005 and participated in the May 2005 IRI pre-election delegation. Reports from this mission, along with NDI/Carter Center’s periodic updates on the election process, can be found on NDI’s web site at www.ndi.org and The Carter Center web site www.cartercenter.org. The joint election observation mission, including the present delegation, is supported by a grant from USAID.

NDI is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and to promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

In Liberia, the Institute is providing assistance to civil society organizations to conduct voter education and election monitoring activities across the country. These programs are supported by USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy.

The Carter Center is a not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, committed to advancing peace and health worldwide.

The Carter Center began working in Liberia in 1990, observed the 1997 Special Elections, and supported local human rights, rule of law, and press organizations from 1998-2000. The Carter Center’s separate long-term election observation project is supported by the Government of Ireland. In addition, the Carter Centre UK is implementing an electoral assistance program along with the Electoral Reform International Services, supported by the European Commission.

For more information and for the full text of the delegation’s statement visit the NDI web site at www.ndi.org and the Carter Center web site at www.cartercenter.org