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PRESS RELEASE

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NDI RECOGNIZED FOR PIONEERING USE OF CELL PHONE TECHNOLOGY IN ELECTION MONITORING

Institute Shares Distinction with Innovative Election Partners Around the World

WASHINGTON, DC – With its development of technology to use cell phone text messaging in election monitoring, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has been recognized as a pioneer in the use of the Internet to change politics.

NDI was named one of "The Top 10 Who Are Changing the World of the Internet and Politics" by PoliticsOnline and the World E-Gov Forum, based on votes from online activists and Internet users worldwide.

“While NDI is identified by name, we proudly share this distinction with our domestic election monitoring partners in Indonesia, Montenegro, Albania, Sierra Leone and other places,” said NDI President Kenneth Wollack.

“In developing countries, cell phones are a primary source of information and communication for the majority of the population, and they possess tremendous potential for popular political participation,” he said. “Use of SMS text-messaging technology helps to safeguard the integrity of elections and enhance public confidence in the results.”

NDI’s involvement in the use of SMS technology for election observation began in Montenegro in May 2006. Montenegro’s Center for Democratic Transition, with technical assistance from NDI, was the first organization ever to use text messaging as its main tool for election reporting.

Since then, NDI has developed tools and techniques to help election monitoring organizations better use SMS text-messaging to help safeguard their elections. The technology has been used by NDI partner organizations for a host of election-related functions, such as collecting and reporting vote counts, providing hourly turnout information, assessing the conduct of elections, and alerting authorities to problems in time to be remedied.

Major supporters of NDI’s information technology programs have included the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the National Endowment for Democracy, the United Nations Development Programme, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Department of State’s Middle East Partnership Initiative.

“By combining an SMS-based reporting system with rigorous observation methodology, these groups achieved unprecedented levels of oversight of elections,” Wollack said. “In contentious and politically tense situations, such as Montenegro's Referendum on Independence and the recent elections in Sierra Leone, the ability to quickly comment on the conduct of elections contributed to stabilizing a potentially volatile post-election environment.”

The National Democratic Institute is a non-profit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government.

For more information about NDI visit our website at www.ndi.org. A list of others cited in the Top 10 can be found at http://politicsonline.com/content/main/specialreports/2007/top10_2007/.

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