



**2007 MAURITANIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION  
AN ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT**

**Prepared by NDI  
May 2007**

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This publication was made possible through the support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development.



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## List of Acronyms

Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change	CFCD
European Union	EU
High Authority for the Press and Audiovisual	HAPA
Mauritanian Party for Unity and Change	HATEM
Military Council for Justice and Democracy	CMJD
Ministry of the Interior, Postal Services and Telecommunications	MIPT
National Independent Electoral Commission	CENI
National Democratic Institute	NDI
Non-Governmental Organization	NGO
Popular Progressive Alliance	APP
Rally of Democratic Forces	RFD
Republican Party for Democracy and Renewal	PRDR
Union of Progressive Forces	UFP
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

From March 21 to March 27, 2007, an international delegation of electoral experts sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) traveled to Mauritania for the second round of the presidential election scheduled for March 25. The purpose of the delegation's visit was to assess the political environment during the inter-election period, on election day and during the vote counting and validation period. Through this assessment, the delegation hoped to identify any potential weaknesses in the electoral framework that need to be addressed by the next democratically-elected civilian government. By its presence, the delegation also sought to demonstrate the international community's interest and support for a peaceful, transparent and fair electoral process.

During its stay, the delegation met with a range of actors. In Nouakchott, these included government officials, leaders and representatives of the two run-off candidates, the president and members of the National Independent Election Commission (CENI), the president and members of the High Authority for the Press and Audiovisual (HAPA), leaders of the main domestic observation organizations, senior officials at the U.S. Embassy and representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Two-member teams were deployed to several regions of the country, including Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Atar, Rosso, Boghé, Kaédi, Kiffa and Aioun. During their stay in these areas, delegation members also met with regional representatives of the candidates and CENI, local administrative officials and European Union (EU) long-term observation teams. On Election Day, NDI delegates also visited more than 150 polling stations in both urban and rural centers to witness first hand electoral operations and citizen participation in the presidential election including voting, ballot counting and vote tallying at the prefecture level. On March 26, the co-leaders of the delegation met with President Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, Chairman of the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (CMJD) to share their first impressions of the election. The next day, delegation members reconvened in Nouakchott for a comprehensive debriefing session to synthesize findings and formulate recommendations to various Mauritanian political actors for improved electoral practices.

Overall, the delegation found the second round of the presidential election to be remarkably well run, open and peaceful. Apart from one particular set of edicts on the vote counting process that was later rescinded, the CMJD remained relatively neutral in the lead up to the polls as demonstrated by the unobtrusive performance of the Ministry of the Interior, Postal Services and Telecommunications (MIPT). The CENI and its regional and district-level representatives also performed satisfactorily by overseeing and advising MIPT officials in the administration of the polls. The NDI delegation also noted that both candidates and their respective electoral organizations promptly accepted the results of the polls, with the losing candidate—Ahmed Ould Daddah—congratulating his

opponent on his victory and declaring his intention to fulfill his role as the opposition leader after the transition.

There were, however, a number of weaknesses in the electoral process identified, including problems with voting procedures; the legal prohibition on official campaigning during the two rounds of election (notwithstanding a televised presidential debate that marked the first of its kind in the Arab world); and the lack of an intermediary body to adjudicate electoral disputes below the level of the Constitutional Council or Supreme Court. Other concrete measures need to be put into place to empower the CENI and guarantee the neutrality of the next civilian government that will be in charge of organizing the next electoral consultations. The fact that the decree establishing the CENI outlined its legal dissolution as a formal body after election day and its subordination to the MIPT represent particularly serious flaws for the longer term sustainability of a fair and transparent electoral process.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The Mauritanian political transition followed the electoral calendar released by the CMJD at the beginning of May 2006, which outlined a four-stage electoral process. A constitutional referendum addressing executive powers was held in June 2006; joint legislative and municipal elections took place in November and December 2006; and indirect senatorial elections concluded in January 2007. The presidential election on March 11 and March 25, 2007, which saw the victory of Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, concluded the electoral cycle. The inauguration of the newly-elected civilian president took place on April 19. Throughout the transition, the CMJD demonstrated a relatively inclusive decision making process that engaged political parties and civil society to ensure the completion of the democratic transition.

Even with technically sound elections and other political and social reforms, the sustainability of Mauritania's emerging democracy will hinge on the next government's ability to deal with crucial issues that have divided Mauritians during the past 15 years. This includes addressing a national reconciliation process, clarifying the role of the military in a multi-party democracy and alleviating poverty through equitable economic development. With a newly elected National Assembly made up of mostly first-time officeholders and a system that puts the balance of power in the hands of the executive, the presidential election was particularly critical.

Given the sensitive nature of these matters, many observers had feared that elements within the ruling CMJD or other powerful actors might undermine the electoral process and facilitate the victory of a candidate who would defend their interests. For the CMJD and their allies, election results held the potential to disrupt the decades-old distribution of power in which the minority white Moors have dominated the political and economic spheres. The armed forces, led by white Moors, also stood to lose their favored position after a 30-year pattern of military coups.

While voting in the legislative and municipal elections transpired peacefully and was generally judged to be genuine and transparent by international and domestic observers, events leading up to the polls raised doubts among political parties about the CMJD's intentions and neutrality. In September, in anticipation of the deadline for submission of municipal candidate lists, key provincial leaders from the former ruling PRDR, the Rally of Democratic Forces (RFD) and other parties were pressured by the CMJD to resign from their parties and establish independent lists in an effort to weaken the National Assembly and sideline the role of political parties.

Political parties and coalitions reacted by forming the nonpartisan National Framework for the Defense of Democracy (RNDD) to defend party interests, and the CENI, charged with supervising the electoral process, expressed its concerns to the government. Consultations among the political actors averted mass boycotts by parties, and the elections passed without serious incidents. Parties were able to secure 67 percent of seats in the National Assembly and 63 percent of municipal posts, easing some of their concerns about the role they can play in steering the country's political future.

Prior to the presidential campaign, rumors of tacit support by the CMJD for independent presidential candidates, and the possible prolongation of the transition period and thus the Military Council's term of office, soured the political climate. In a move that further heightened tensions, President Ely Ould Mohamed Vall declared that blank ballots would be counted in the total vote count and that an absolute majority of that count would be required for a winner to be announced in the first or second round of elections. Without any absolute majority by a candidate, the CMJD would continue to remain in power until new elections could be scheduled.

Political parties reacted strongly with press conferences and demonstrations. At the end of January, 15 presidential candidates from across the political spectrum announced an agreement on a common vision for ensuring a transparent electoral process and national unity. The agreement restated the need for neutrality by the government in the election and continuation of the framework initially presented by the CMJD. Soon thereafter, Vall declared unequivocally that he would not seek to extend his rule regardless of the election outcomes. The CMJD then formally issued a decree stipulating that neutral ballots would not be counted in tabulations and that only a relative majority would be required for the second round.

On January 30, the Constitutional Council approved 20 of the 21 candidacies that were submitted for the presidential election. The day after the list was published, however, Chbih Ould Cheikh Melanine, head of the Popular Front party, pulled his name from the list of candidates and called on his supporters to back former president Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla. Among the remaining 19 candidates were 9 heads of political parties and 10 independents, setting the stage for an intense and spirited campaign period. Among them was Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, a former minister under presidents Moctar Ould Daddah and Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya who received the official backing of *El Mithaq* (the Charter), a coalition of 18 political parties and movements that includes the former ruling PRDR and the National Rally of Independents (RNI). Other notable

independent candidates were Zeine Ould Zeidane, the former governor of Mauritania's Central Bank, and former president Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla. In light of the uncertainties surrounding the tabulation process, the powerful Coalition of Forces for Democratic Change (CFCD) broke from its original agreement to field a single candidate and pursued a strategy of running candidates from four separate member parties: Ahmed Ould Daddah, of the Rally of Democratic Forces (RFD), Mohamed Ould Maouloud of the Union of Progressive Forces (UFP), Messaoud Boulkheir of the Popular Progressive Alliance (APP), and Saleh Ould Hanena, a former coup leader from the Mauritanian Party for Unity and Change (HATEM).

Voting in the first round took place on March 11 in 2,378 polling stations across the country, with an impressive turnout rate of 70 percent. Domestic and international observers declared that the voting unfolded in a free and peaceful atmosphere. Observers stated that they did not witness any serious incidents that could have affected the electoral outcome and noted that the voting process had improved considerably since the legislative and municipal elections in fall 2006. Presidential candidates agreed with the findings and attested to the CMJD's neutrality during the campaigning and voting. However, positive news surrounding the first round polls were dampened by the announcement that a security guard was killed and another wounded by gunfire outside a polling center in Kaédi during the vote count. As of this report, no further information about the incident is available. The two candidates who received the most votes, Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi and Ahmed Ould Daddah with 24 percent and 20 percent of the votes respectively, were then set to face each other in a run-off election.

While the inter-election period did not allow for official campaigning, candidates who lost in the first round of the presidential election threw their support behind one of the two front-runners. Predictably, Zeine Ould Zeidane, who won 15 percent of the vote, officially endorsed Sidi Mohammed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi. On the other hand, UFP leader Mohamed Ould Maouloud and Saleh Ould Hanena of HATEM announced their support for Ahmed Ould Daddah, a natural ally. Likewise, Ibrahima Sarr, the popular Afro-Mauritanian candidate, decided to endorse Daddah, who also won support from the Rally for Mauritania (RPM), Democratic Renewal (RD) and the FP. More surprisingly, however, Messaoud Ould Boulkheir of the APP decided to break the CFCD's electoral agreement by endorsing Abdallahi for the second round.

Meanwhile, the CMJD held a meeting on March 24 to formally pass a decree institutionalizing the role of the democratic opposition in parliament. Unique in the Arab world, the law bestows on the opposition unparalleled vetting powers and access to government information regarding legislation. It also confers to the opposition leader the right to consult directly with the president of the Republic, the prime minister and the president of the National Assembly on any piece of legislation upon request. If implemented properly, the measure could help Mauritanian political leaders consolidate their nascent multi-party democracy, notably by providing channels for participation to opposition groups who would otherwise be completely excluded from the political process.



## ***Presidential Debate***

A presidential debate took place on March 22 and was broadcast live by TVM and *Radio Mauritanie*. The event was also diffused on Arab satellite television by the pan-Arab news channel, *Al-Jazeera*. During the two-hour event, each candidate answered questions given by the moderators in both Arabic and French. These questions dealt specifically with six pre-selected themes proposed by NDI with the candidates' agreement. The themes encompassed: national unity; poverty reduction; governance; education; economic and regional disparities; and international relations. While the debate format did not adopt a confrontational approach, it allowed candidates ample opportunity to present their respective platforms in detail and respond to each other's remarks indirectly. In addition, both candidates were given limited time for an introduction and a final appeal to rally supporters and undecided voters.

The day following the broadcast's debate, TVM announced it had achieved its highest viewership in station history. The debate was analyzed and discussed in numerous articles and commentaries in independent print and electronic media. As a result, it served as an essential medium to mobilize voters during an otherwise restrained inter-election period where official campaigning had been limited by government decree.

## ***Second Round Electoral Results***

The two presidential front runners, independent candidate Abdallahi and Daddah of the RFD, faced each other in a second round vote on March 25. Once again voter turnout was relatively high, reaching 67 percent, inspired in part by the region's first-ever televised debate. Official tallies announced by the MIPT on March 26 and confirmed by the Constitutional Council declared Abdellahi the victor with 53 percent of the vote, which was supported by reports from various domestic and international observer groups. In a move that further enhanced public confidence in the results, Daddah released a statement accepting defeat and congratulating his opponent on the victory. The inauguration took place on April 19, 2007.

### **Summary Statistics: Second-Round Presidential Vote**

<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>1,132,176</b>	
<b>Number of voters</b>	<b>764,045</b>	
<b>Invalid ballots</b>	<b>30,848</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Neutral ballots</b>	<b>26,494</b>	<b>3.47%</b>
<b>Number of valid ballots</b>	<b>706,703</b>	
<b>Participation rate</b>	<b>67.48%</b>	
<b>Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi</b>	<b>373,519</b>	<b>52.85%</b>
<b>Ahmed Ould Daddah</b>	<b>333,184</b>	<b>47.15%</b>

### III. FINDINGS

Mauritania's presidential election capped a relatively successful transition period that spanned 19 months. Through meetings with Mauritanian political actors and witnessing second-round polling in eight provinces, the NDI delegation found that the elections were conducted in a fair and transparent manner despite some problems seen during the voting process. While most of the noted errors and administrative oversights were technical in nature and did not call into question the outcome of the election, they will need to be addressed at the procedural level by the next administration to sustain public confidence in the electoral process.

The findings outlined below are solely based on what delegates observed at their deployment sites and do not necessarily reflect broader trends across the country.

#### *National Independent Electoral Commission*

The CENI is composed of 15 national independent members appointed by the government and approved by political parties; and is comprised of 97 regional and local commissions (13 regional commissions, 53 district-level commissions and 31 communal commissions). Its mission, limited to the duration of the transition, consists of:

- Verifying that the government, political parties and other political actors comply with the electoral laws;
- Verifying that the rights of political parties, candidates and other actors are protected according to the law; and
- Coordinating a national voter education program for each election.

Considering its limited mandate, the NDI delegation found that the CENI was able to fulfill its role during the presidential election as the supervisor of the electoral process administered by the MIPT. It helped ensure the dispatching of election materials and ballots to polling stations across the country in due time; completed a relatively successful national voter education program entitled *Caravane de l'Espoir* with the support of the U.S. Embassy; and successfully completed a parallel vote tabulation on election day that confirmed preliminary results announced by the MIPT on March 26.

The prerogatives of a re-instated CENI, however, will need to be expanded for the next electoral cycle to ensure credible elections under an elected civilian government. Under the leadership of the CMJD and transitional government, the CENI's credibility often hinged upon the government's willingness to heed its advice and criticisms. When faced with arbitrary decisions from the government, the CENI is generally ill-equipped to force a change of direction. The June 2006 referendum on the amendments to Mauritania's 1991 constitution is a case in point: when the MIPT refused to accredit civil society organizations seeking to observe the polls, the CENI resorted to making public appeals, but these had no impact on the decision.

### ***Appeals Process***

NDI team members were surprised to find that presidential candidates—in both the first and second round of presidential election—refrained from soliciting the Constitutional Council to resolve electoral disputes. Instead, NDI learned that the CENI managed to informally mitigate conflict between candidates and the local authorities at the prefecture and regional level. In meetings with the Institute, CENI members boasted that their facilitating skills had helped resolved numerous contentions among candidates before they could ever reach the Constitutional Council, particularly in the aftermath of the legislative and municipal elections. This informal arbitrator role conferred to the CENI during elections is not part of its official terms of reference and, therefore, could be legally suppressed by the administrative authorities at any time.

Apathy among a number of presidential candidates and a general lack of knowledge about available legal recourse could also explain the very low number of complaints brought to the courts over the 12-month period encompassing the referendum, the legislative and municipal elections, the senatorial elections and the presidential polls.

### ***Campaigning***

Notwithstanding the televised presidential debate organized on March 22 with NDI's technical support, the transitional government's failure to allow for an official campaign period between the two rounds of the presidential election hampered needed discussion across the country focusing on the two surviving candidates' platforms.

While Abdallahi and Daddah's campaign organizations were able to express their ideas and rally support through informal public rallies and press releases, more vigorous campaign activities were needed to inform the majority of the electorate who had voted for dropped candidates and to help galvanize voter support and participation in the second round. At 67 percent, the voter turn out in the second round was three points lower than in the first round.

### ***Voter Education***

The lack of official campaigning also negatively affected voter education during the inter-election period. NDI delegates found that sample ballots for the second round of the presidential election were not as readily available as they had been for the first round and for the legislative and municipal elections.

The lack of sample ballots also hampered candidates' efforts to educate their supporters and the electorate in general on basic voting procedures for the second round.

### ***Candidate Pollwatchers***

NDI delegates found that candidate pollwatchers representing the Abdallahi and Daddah campaigns were present in all polling stations visited. In most cases, pollwatchers seemed

prepared and concentrated on their tasks, with the exception of Boghé where NDI delegates found that experienced poll watchers were replaced by less prepared representatives.

The widespread presence and implication of candidate poll watchers across the country compensated, in part, for the general absence of domestic observers on election day.

### ***Domestic Observers***

The NDI delegation met with three of the leading domestic observation organizations and coalitions—National Observatory for Elections (ONE), Cyber Forum and Research Group on the Democratic, Economic and Social Development of Africa (GERDDES)—during the inter-election period and found that they were relatively ineffective and unable to recruit, train and deploy observers to a sufficient number of polling stations across the country to draw valid conclusions for public statements on the electoral outcome. There were also questions about the neutrality of some groups, dependent as they were on government funding.

These organizations were generally impeded by inadequate resources, the MIPT's inability and/or unwillingness to deliver accreditations in a timely manner, and the confusion reigning over the role and responsibility of the ONE in coordinating the efforts of domestic observers.

The ONE was created in October 2006—three weeks before the legislative and municipal elections—by a group of civil society leaders representing human rights, civic and religious groups, as well as professional associations. The initiative was criticized by civic and political leaders from its inception due to the involvement of the MIPT in creating and framing the ONE's stated mission and objectives. Observers also noted that the transitional government influenced the composition of the ONE's executive committee and backed the nomination of a religious leader close to the former Taya regime as ONE's executive director.

### ***Voting Procedures***

The nine teams comprising NDI's assessment mission noted that voting procedures observed in the eight provinces were followed with sufficient consistency to ensure the credibility of the election results. There were, however, some minor technical difficulties and outright violations at various stages of the electoral process in most of the polling stations visited. These included:

- Presence of security personnel inside polling stations;
- Failure to check voters' fingers for traces of ink before issuing them a ballot;
- Failure in some cases to adequately secure ballot boxes during lunch time and/or prayers;
- Failure to follow proper procedures during the vote count as described in the official guidebook; and

- Lack of established procedures to determine whether a voter is handicapped and warrants outside help.

The lack of uniform procedures for securing ballot boxes during lunch time and times of prayer was particularly troubling for the delegation. In several instances, poll workers would either lock the polling station and leave the premises with no one inside or lock themselves in the station to eat or pray and prevent would-be voters from entering the station. In one instance, an NDI delegate was left inside a polling station in Kiffa by himself while poll workers went on a lunch break.

In various cases, notably in the Arafat district in Nouakchott, vote count procedures were not followed. Poll workers working in two polling stations observed by NDI failed to reconcile the number of ballots inside the ballot boxes with the total number of ballots given to voters throughout the day. Instead, they proceeded to count ballots directly and tally the number of votes for each candidate.

### ***Voter Cards***

The NDI assessment team found that a significant number of voter cards had not been retrieved by registered voters in time for election day, which caused delays in a number of polling stations observed.

The transitional government required that new voter cards be produced for the presidential election, thereby cancelling the cards used during the legislative and municipal polls. This directive unnecessarily undermined election readiness just three months before the end of the transition and further unsettled many voters already confused by voting procedures.

On Election Day, voters without cards could still vote with their national identification card provided they could find their place on the electoral lists posted outside polling stations.

### ***National Identification Cards and Duplicates***

The national identification (ID) card is the fundamental document that each voter must present in order to vote. Registered voters who had lost or damaged their ID card could replace it with a government-issued duplicate, which was acceptable for voting. However, NDI found that a number of voters were turned away on election day because the serial number on their duplicate ID card did not match the number inscribed on the original card, which was recorded on the electoral list.

These discrepancies, which are the sole responsibility of the administrative authorities, caused the unnecessary disenfranchisement of an undetermined number of registered voters.

### ***Vote Tally and Election Returns***

Delegation members were able to observe the vote tally and the election returns, which took place in the prefect's office at the district level. NDI teams attested that the committees in charge of the vote tally (*Comité de Recensement Electoral*) were functioning openly and with relative efficiency in the offices visited. In most observed offices, election returns were announced by midnight on election day and subsequently forwarded to the Constitutional Council as prescribed by law. One exception to this relative order among observed offices was the one located in the El Mina district in Nouakchott, where the vote tally appeared disorganized and confused.

Delegation members welcomed the independence of the committees in charge of the vote tally compared to earlier committees—set up for the legislative and municipal elections—which were headed by provincial governors and therefore possibly subject to influence by the administration.

While committees in charge of the vote tally at the district level operated in the prefect's office, they are headed by a magistrate and other independent personalities, including a CENI representative. Prefects are not members of the committees and their role was limited to observing the tallying process. All results compiled by the committee are directly transmitted to the Constitutional Council, therefore by-passing the administrative authorities.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are intended to address both future elections in Mauritania and the long-term goal of consolidating democratic gains achieved during the transition period.

### ***National Independent Electoral Commission***

- The CENI should be established on a permanent basis and be conferred decision-making powers for the organization of all elections.
- Members of the electoral commission should seek on-going assistance from international and local experts to help define the organization's terms of reference and its relationship with the MIPT in the future.
- The CENI should be legally empowered to adjudicate first-instance election appeals at the district and regional level before forwarding unresolved cases to the Constitutional Council or Supreme Court, as appropriate by law for particular elections.
- Inside polling stations, CENI representatives should act and be perceived as distinct agents from the government.

### ***Election Campaigning***

- Election campaigning should be permitted in the inter-election period for legislative and presidential elections. Election campaign regulations should be developed and implemented by an empowered CENI in cooperation with the HAPA.

### ***Electoral Code***

- A comprehensive electoral code should be elaborated by a parliamentary commission with input from political parties and civil society organizations. The commission could review all decrees and ordinances issued during the transition period to harmonize and centralize them in a comprehensive code that would be used as a reference by all political actors involved in the electoral process.

### ***Role of the Military***

- The authority of a polling station president over security guards and military personnel should be further reinforced in the official guidebook on voting procedures.
- Military, *gendarme* and police personnel should undergo more rigorous training prior to elections to increase their understanding of their role and its limitations.

### ***Election Day Procedures***

- The CENI needs to develop a protocol to elaborate a schedule and guidelines for prayer and meal breaks.

### ***Voter Cards***

- For the next election cycle, voter cards should be produced and distributed to registered voters before election days. The same voter cards should be used throughout the election cycle to avoid added stress on the electoral process and unnecessary delays on election days.

### ***National Identification Card Duplicates***

- The MIPT should ensure that the serial number of national identification card duplicates issued by prefectures across the country match the number inscribed on the original ID card. This measure will ensure that voters with government-issued duplicates will not be turned away from polling stations during the next electoral cycle.

### ***Poll workers***

- Poll workers should undergo further training to acquire a greater understanding of the electoral laws and better knowledge of voting procedures, particularly the vote count. This training should be designed and organized by an empowered CENI.

### ***Domestic Observers***

- The ONE should cease being a quasi-governmental organization and be reconstituted with complete independence from the MIPT. Its executive committee should be comprised of respected leaders, independent from the government in office.
- An independent ONE should be responsible for collecting and evaluating applications from domestic observations, as well as making the final decision for the attribution of accreditations.
- The ONE should be empowered to organize trainings for domestic observers.

### ***Candidate and Party Pollwatchers***

- NDI—or other organizations committed to political development in Mauritania—should continue helping political parties and coalitions recruit, train and deploy pollwatchers in advance of elections. More visible and qualified pollwatchers would continue enhancing public confidence in future elections and improve the electoral organization of political parties on polling days.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The Mauritanian presidential election capped a 19-month transition that may transform the *coup*-prone North African nation into an emerging multi-party democracy. Elections throughout the transition proved to be competitive races where parties campaigned vigorously, received balanced media coverage and addressed policy issues publicly, including during the region's first-ever live televised presidential candidate debate. This democratic breakthrough constitutes a model for both the Arab and African worlds and offers President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and newly-elected parliamentarians a rare opportunity to consolidate recent gains.

However, to ensure its credibility and meet the expectations of its citizens, Mauritanian political and civic leaders must urgently address some of the country's most enduring social and political problems, such as the persistence of forms of slavery and the repatriation of Afro-Mauritanian refugees. Moreover, the incoming government should take the necessary steps to correct remaining flaws in the electoral process and voting procedures, and encourage the formation of a permanent electoral commission with a more robust mandate, including powers to adjudicate electoral disputes. Attention should also be paid to upgrading the historic, albeit nascent, gains made during the transition into mature, sustainable democratic processes. This is particularly significant for the areas of



political party and campaign finance and the development of professional proficiency of the media, including a more robust set of regulations and norms.

Strong political will and leadership from Mauritania's political leaders, as well as sustained support from the international community, will be necessary to strengthen and protect the country's emerging democratic institutions against the threat of *coups* that has dominated Mauritania's history since independence. While the *coup* of August 2005 itself was a fundamental breach of the democratic process, the situation provided Mauritania with an opportunity to move from a closed and highly controlled political system to one that provides for multiparty politics and an engaged citizenry. The elections were marked by real competition among candidates and discussion of policy issues that required candidates to stake out clear positions. Similarly, the transitional process offered Mauritania the prospect of demonstrating how a Muslim society divided among Arab and African communities and facing tremendous poverty can move forward democratic principles collaboratively and peacefully.

Significantly throughout its transition process, Mauritania has welcomed and actively sought outside technical assistance in developing its new political system and implementing the transition plan. NDI worked closely with Mauritanian partners and was able to assist Mauritanian political leaders during this historical transition. The Institute thanks the authorities and CENI for welcoming NDI's electoral assessment mission in advance of the second round of presidential election. NDI anticipates and looks forward to remaining engaged in Mauritania, notably by helping newly elected parliamentarians fulfill their oversight role and pledges to the Mauritanian people and assisting civil society organizations channel citizen interests during a national reconciliation process.

*Annex A*

**SECOND-ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION  
NDI ELECTORAL ASSESSMENT DELEGATION  
BRIEFING AGENDA**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21**

**ORIENTATION**

- 8:30**                      **Pick-up from *Mercure Marhaba* Hotel**
- 09:00 – 09:30**            **Breakfast**  
Location: Palais des Congrès, room 301
- 9:30 – 11:00**            **NDI Briefing: Political Context**  
Led by: Jacques Veilleux, Country Director, and Gregory Houel,  
Senior Program Officer, NDI-Mauritania  
Location: Palais des Congres, room 301
- 11:00 – 12:00**           **Meeting:** Mohameden Sidi Ould Badna, Director of Legislative  
Affairs, Ministry of the Interior
- 12:00 – 1:30**            **Group Lunch**  
Location: Soixante-Quatre
- 14:00 – 15:30**           **Meeting:** U.S. Embassy in Mauritania  
Led by: Ambassador Charles Twining, *Charges d’Affaires*, Joshua  
Morris, Political Officer, and Stephen Koutsis, Deputy Chief of  
Mission (TBC)  
Location: Palais des Congrès, room 301
- 15:30 – 16:30**           **Meeting:** Activities of the UN Basket Fund and Evaluation of the  
CENI  
Led by: Mathieu Bile, Senior Technical Advisor to S.A.E. (UNDP)  
Location: Palais des Congrès, room 301
- 17:00 – 18:30**           **Meeting:** National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI)  
Led by: Secretary General, CENI members  
Location: CENI Headquarters

**THURSDAY, MARCH 22**

**ORIENTATION**

- 9:30**                      **Pick-up from *Mercure Marhaba* and *Appartements Teizent***
- 10:00**                    **Meeting : Haute Autorité de la Presse et de l’Audiovisuel  
(HAPA)**  
Location: HAPA Headquarters

**14:00**                    **Meeting: Domestic Observation Organizations: GERDDES  
Mauritanie, Observatoire National des Elections (ONE), Cyber  
Forum**

Location: Palais des Congres, room 301

**17:00**                    **NDI Briefing: Deployment**

Location: Palais des Congrès, room 301

Led by: Jacques Veilleux, Gregory Houel, Ali Amar

**21:00 – 23:00**        **Televised Presidential Debate**

Location TBC

**FRIDAY, MARCH 23**

**REGIONAL DEPLOYMENT**

*Deployment to Regional Capitals*

Meetings with Regional Actors:

- EU long term observers
- Provincial governors
- Candidate representatives
- CENI representatives

**SATURDAY, MARCH 24**

**REGIONAL ORIENTATION**

Meetings with Regional Actors (continued)

Identification of Polling Stations

**SUNDAY, MARCH 25**

**ELECTION DAY**

Visits to Regional Polling Stations:

- Station opening
- Voting procedures
- Vote count and reporting

**MONDAY, MARCH 26**

**RETURN TO NOUAKCHOTT**

*Return from Regional Capitals*

**14:30**                    Meeting by delegation co-leaders with President Ely Mohamed  
Vall, Chairman of the Military Council for Justice and Democracy  
(CMJD)

**TUESDAY, MARCH 27**

**DEBRIEFING**

**8:30**                      **Pick-up at *Mercure Marhaba Hotel and Appartements Teizent***

**9:00 – 9:30**              **Breakfast**  
Location: Palais des Congres, room 301

**9:30 – 14:00**            **Debriefing, Analysis and Findings**  
Led by: Paul Adams and Francesca Binda, Delegation Co-leaders  
Location: Palais des Congres, room 301

## ***Annex B***

### **NDI DELEGATES BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

#### **Paul Adams (Delegation Co-Leader)**

Mr. Adams is the former director of NDI's programs in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He is currently Executive Director for Strategic Communications and Media Relations at EKOS Research Associates in Ottawa, Canada and a faculty member of the Carleton University School of Journalism. He served previously as a correspondent for CBC television's *The National* and later as Parliamentary Bureau Chief for CBC Radio. In 1999, he joined the *Globe and Mail* as senior parliamentary correspondent and later served as the newspaper's Middle East correspondent. He has participated in electoral observation missions and reported on elections throughout the Middle East, including as Chief Observer for the Canadian Observer Mission to the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006.

#### **S. Sameera Ali**

Ms. Ali has worked on and consulted for Democratic campaigns in Virginia, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota. She served as the Midwest Political Director for Joe Lieberman's 2004 Presidential Campaign. In 2006, Ms. Ali served as political director for NDI's Kazakhstan programs, where she oversaw the training of political party members and activists. She has most recently served with NDI in Dhaka, Bangladesh as a long-term Parliamentary Election Observer and liaison between political parties, government and NGOs.

#### **Ali O. Amar**

Mr. Amar is the managing Director of PRM Consulting, Alexandria, Virginia. Mr. Amar has over 15 years of experience in international development, legal reform, institutional strengthening and strategic advice. He has designed, implemented and managed USAID-funded projects in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and worked as a strategic advisor for NGOs throughout the MENA region. He has also led trainings for Moroccan political parties, including the Justice and Development Party (PJD) and the Socialist Union for Popular Forces (USFP). In Morocco, he was the senior consultant for the IFES program "Strengthening the Rule of Law." Mr. Amar was vice-chairman of "New Americans for Kaine", the ethnic outreach of Tim Kaine's successful campaign for governor of Virginia 2006. Mr. Amar regularly provides consulting and facilitation services for programs organized by NDI, the State Department, the World Bank and other organizations.

#### **Andre Bédard**

Mr. Bédard has extensive experience as a consultant on media strategy for politicians, candidates and governments. Most recently, he has worked as an NDI consultant on communications and debate strategy with presidential candidates and campaign teams in Mauritania. He has coordinated, trained and produced debates during major elections in

Niger, Benin and Mali. He also participated as an OSCE observer during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. Previously, Mr. Bédard has consulted on election activities with NDI in Jordan, the Liberty Network in Haiti and Elections Canada.

**Francesca Binda (Delegation Co-Leader)**

Ms. Binda is NDI's resident director in Egypt, having earlier held similar posts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). She has also worked for the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) where she was senior advisor for political parties. From 2000-2002, she directed the Elections/Implementation Department for the OSCE Mission to BiH. Ms. Binda spent many years in Ottawa, Canada working for the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the Canadian House of Commons. She is a recipient of the Canada Peacekeeping Medal.

**Asma Chaabi**

Ms. Chaabi currently serves as the mayor of Essouaira in Morocco and is the first and only woman elected as a mayor in the history of the country. She is a member of the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) and was elected to the party's political bureau in 2005. That same year, Ms. Chaabi was invited to monitor the presidential elections in Egypt. She has been active with Morocco NGOs that work on poverty, children and women's issues and was chosen by Princess Lalla Amina in 1991 to serve as the president of the Moroccan League for the Protection of Children.

**Jennifer Collins-Foley**

Ms. Collins-Foley has 17 years professional experience developing and managing democratic governance, training and voter registration and outreach programs. She has served as a consultant on democracy and governance with organizations such as the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the Election Center. Previously, she served for eight years in election administration, legislative analysis and voter registration and outreach with the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Earlier, Ms. Collins-Foley directed NDI programs in Russia, as well as working on economic development programs in the former Soviet Union and South Africa with the United Nations. Ms. Collins-Foley currently serves as president of The Pollworker Institute, a non-profit, non-partisan organizations, offering an integrated approach to the conduct of elections. She has observed elections in Azerbaijan, Russia and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as hundreds of elections across the U.S.

**Abdelkrim Dahmen**

Mr. Dahmen is a two-term Member of Parliament for the Movement for a Peaceful Society (MSP) party in the Popular National Assembly in Algeria. He is a member of the national leadership of the MSP and is currently National Secretary in Charge of External Relations, the Algerian Community Abroad and Trainings with International Organizations. Mr. Dahmen has been a leader in democratic and election reform and participated in numerous training activities and exchange experiences, including participating as an international observer in the NDI delegation to the 2003 Yemeni parliamentary elections. He previously served as the president of the Committee of

Housing Equipment. Before entering parliament, Mr. Dahmen was an architect and a lecturer at Blida University in Algeria.

**Adama Tiemoko Diarra**

Mr. Diarra serves as Executive Vice President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) of Mali. In this position, he conducts trainings, organizes study missions and supervises elections. He is also Executive Secretary for the Associated Movements of the African Party for Solidarity and Justice (ADEMA-PASJ). Mr. Diarra is professor at the National Engineering School (ENI) in Bamako, where he focuses on hydrology.

**Kennie Lee Miller Gill**

Ms. Gill recently retired after nearly 28 years of service on the staff of the United States Senate. Most recently, Ms. Gill served as the Democratic Staff Director and Chief Counsel to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, overseeing all aspects of U.S. federal elections and election laws, including contested elections. She was the chief Senate staff negotiator and drafter of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, landmark legislation enacted following the 2000 presidential elections which for the first time established minimum requirements for all federal elections in the United States. Ms. Gill also directed the Committee's policy oversight of all administrative aspects of the Senate and Congress. Ms. Gill began her career in the Senate in 1978 as a staff member to Senator Wendell H. Ford (retired), serving as his Legislative Assistant and Legislative Counsel responsible for overseeing a variety of issues, including trade and tax policy, health and welfare, mine safety and the federal budget process.

**Badié Hima**

Mr. Hima has served as a principal member of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) of Niger, which organized the 2004 local and presidential elections. He is currently Vice President of the Nigerien Association for Defense of Human Rights (ANDDH-Niger) and coordinator of the Human Rights Network (CODDHD-Niger). As an expert with the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH), he participated in an assessment mission to Liberia before the last elections. Mr. Hima also acted as a key trainer preparing national NGOs for the 2005 presidential elections in Togo.

**Donald Myles**

Mr. Myles has decades of experience in marketing and sales and product management with major Canadian and multi-national businesses. He has participated on Election Day teams in multiple elections in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec Province with the Liberal Party, including managing candidate pollwatchers. He has also worked in the fields of skills training, sales supervision and customer service management.

**Marcel Parent**

Mr. Parent was elected as a city councilor for the Montreal-Nord district of Montreal during the 2001 elections. He currently serves as president of the Montreal City Council. He is a longtime member of the Liberal Party and has held parliamentary positions with

the Ministry of Education in Quebec. Mr. Parent has participated on numerous observation missions to Africa, including in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

**Bishop Abraham Djamba Samba wa Shako**

Bishop Djamba is the National Coordinator for the Network of IFES Partner Organizations (ROPI). In this position, he participated in the observation of the constitutional referendum in the DRC and worked with NDI to train domestic observers for other major elections and polls. He was also the chief coordinator and editor of the 2006 *Guide to Training Elections Observers*. Bishop Djamba has extensive experience with electoral monitoring, observation and training in Africa, including participation as an international observer for the 2004 elections in South African.

**Christopher Wyrod**

Mr. Wyrod is program officer for Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a private nonprofit foundation created in 1983 to strengthen democratic institutions around the world. He manages NED programs in 13 West African countries and oversees more than 80 partner organizations. In this capacity, he has been closely involved with NDI programs in Mauritania and elsewhere in the Africa region. Prior to joining NED, Mr. Wyrod researched Africa governance at the United States Institute of Peace. He also conducted research for the United States Committee for Refugees and published reports on displacement in Africa in the *World Refugee Survey*.



## Annex C

### NDI PROGRAMMING IN MAURITANIA

NDI has conducted programs in Mauritania since 2003, when it organized an assessment mission during the presidential elections. Following the assessment mission, NDI launched a modest civil society program in April 2005 in response to a series of positive changes made by the Taya regime, including initiation of a national dialogue and welcoming various human rights organizations into the country. The purpose of this program was to enhance dialogue between civil society and local political leaders. The initiative included trainings for national women's organizations on how to engage leaders in dialogue, as well as a town-hall-style meeting in the northern city of Atar between civil society and local leaders. It was during preparations for the town hall meeting had concluded that the *coup* of August 2005 occurred. NDI sent a three-member team to Mauritania from September 19 to 27, 2005, to assess the post-*coup* political environment, provide recommended benchmarks for a meaningful democratic transition, make recommendations for possible democratic assistance programs and meet with key actors in Mauritania.

Recognizing the need for a more permanent presence, the Institute opened an office in spring 2006 to be able to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to the evolving political context. The office included a resource facility offering Mauritanian political parties a neutral venue where they can share information, network, access resources and participate in Institute-sponsored trainings. The center also includes a resource room providing party activists with access to computers equipped with high-speed Internet access, printing equipment and photocopying services to support organizing efforts such as designing outreach materials and researching campaign strategies. A library provides party manuals and other related reference and news materials in French and Arabic.

Throughout the transition, NDI programs have focused on several key themes:

*Enhancing Dialogue:* High levels of mistrust after nearly thirty years of military and dictatorial rule have left Mauritania ill-prepared to restructure itself after the August coup and have greatly exacerbated ethnic tensions within the country. By facilitating discussion and debate, NDI has helped to promote dialogue and trust. NDI has conducted workshops, sponsored town hall meetings with representatives from national NGOs, local civil society groups, elected officials and representatives of the central administration, engaged and fostered youth participation, and conducted a variety of activities to promote women's political participation during the transition period.

*Learning from Regional Experiences:* NDI has worked to expose key political actors in Mauritania to other successful political transitions that took place in the region. Following the *coup*, eight party heads met with their political counterparts in Mali, Senegal and Niger to discuss technical issues related to the transition process. Delegates then returned to Mauritania where they participated in a series of roundtables and consultations to further address specific issues and apply lessons learned to the

Mauritanian context. In addition to regional missions such as these, NDI also continually employs the services of consultants, trainers and experts from the region for smaller, more targeted initiatives such as party pollwatching trainings, political party debates, and seminars on electoral campaign management. These initiatives and others like them have engaged trainers including a former Senegalese member of parliament, the head of the gender outreach program of the Agency for the Communal Management of Natural Resources in Senegal, a Moroccan legislator and party pollwatching experts from Benin and Burkina Faso.

*Strengthening Political Parties:* NDI continually provides technical assistance to political parties to enhance their organizational capacity and competitiveness, as well as to build their capacity to advocate on the role of parties in a vibrant and healthy democracy. Institute representatives hold consultations with parties, conduct roundtables on topics such as women's quotas, models of electoral systems and coalition development, and provide technical assistance on platform development and outreach efforts. This assistance has fostered of a two-track approach to assisting political parties: (1) increase the capacity of political parties to influence electoral processes; and (2) help parties campaign and participate effectively in elections while also enhancing women's involvement as candidates.

*Promoting Transparency:* NDI conducted trainings for political party pollwatchers throughout the pre-election-cycle period to help ensure that each election proceeded freely and fairly, starting with the November 19 legislative election and continuing through both rounds of the presidential election in March 2007. Overall, NDI directly trained more than 1,000 pollwatcher trainers across the country and distributed more than 6,000 copies of its practical guide to further help those trained prepare their colleagues for each Election Day. During the elections, representatives of each political party were present in each of the voting stations, helping to engender the transparency and calmness for which this election was lauded by international observers. With the second round of the presidential vote, more than 3,500 pollwatchers had been trained and were present in every polling station in the country.