

*— Preliminary Côte d'Ivoire Election Statement —*



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE  
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE



PRESS RELEASE

The international observer delegation sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the African-American Institute (AAI) is pleased to offer this preliminary statement on the November 26, 1995, legislative elections in Côte d'Ivoire. The delegation was invited and welcomed by the government of Côte d'Ivoire, Ivorian electoral authorities, political parties and civic groups.

NDI and AAI organized the delegation to demonstrate the international community's interest in and support for the democratic process in Côte d'Ivoire. The delegation comprised 43 observers from North America, Europe and Africa. These included election officials, political organizers, academics and members of professional and civic organizations. Since 1985, NDI and AAI have had an established reputation in this field for professionalism and impartiality. The two institutions have organized more than 30 election observation missions and have conducted election-related programs in over 60 countries. Both NDI and AAI have followed closely events in Côte d'Ivoire, and have maintained field offices in Abidjan over several years.

Our delegation came to witness these elections. We did not seek to supervise the elections or to certify them. Ultimately, it is the Ivorian people who will determine the legitimacy of the elections. We sought to learn from the Ivorian people about the nature of their electoral process and its implications for the further development of Côte d'Ivoire's democratic institutions.

Before the November 26 elections, NDI and AAI evaluated the pre-electoral environment, met with political party leaders, civic organizations and government officials in the capital and in the regions where delegates were deployed. On November 24, the delegation was deployed to 20 different sites in all 10 regions of the country where they subsequently observed the voting process at 451 polling stations.

The delegation's mandate included the examination of three aspects of the election process -- the pre-electoral environment, election day proceedings and the tabulation of results. This statement is a preliminary assessment of these issues. We note that the tabulation of results and the resolution of any electoral complaints have yet to be completed. NDI and AAI will continue to monitor post-election developments and will issue a more detailed report in the near future.

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that for the first time members of Ivorian civic groups were authorized as domestic election observers. This increased the involvement of Ivorian civil society in the political process and brought the country into the mainstream of international election practices regarding domestic election observers.

- The voters who participated were, for the most part, serious about voting and knowledgeable about the choice of candidates they had before them.
- The presence of party representatives throughout the voting and tabulation processes, as well as the public announcement of results, served to increase public confidence in election day activities. In addition, the delegation was impressed that ballot boxes and results were transported in the company of party representatives, even though this was not required by law.

Notwithstanding these positive observations, the delegation also noted some areas of concern in election day processes, including the following:

- There were discrepancies in the application of procedures by polling officials. While some of the polling officials clearly understood their responsibilities, delegation members observed officials who did not fully understand the rules.
- There were numerous problems reported concerning indelible ink that could affect the ability to detect attempts at multiple voting by the same person. In some cases, the availability and quality of the ink was questioned by voters and party representatives. In other instances, ink was improperly used.
- There was no uniformity in the disposal of unused ballot papers. This reflected the absence of specific instructions on the subject.
- The presence of law enforcement personnel, while perhaps intended to insure a peaceful and secure process, could have been perceived as intimidating. In some cases, personnel stood close to the polling sites and in others they entered the building where voting was taking place.

The delegation wishes to stress that it offers this statement in the spirit of international cooperation and in recognition that it is the people of Côte d'Ivoire who must judge their election process. The delegation expresses its appreciation to the people of Côte d'Ivoire for their warm welcome and expresses its gratitude to the government of Côte d'Ivoire, Ivorian electoral authorities, political parties and civic organizations for their hospitality and cooperation.

### ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT

Prior to the November 26 elections many Ivorian citizens expressed questions about the character of the election process. In such circumstances it is necessary for governmental authorities to take extra steps to build public confidence. In Côte d'Ivoire the political contestants reached an accord on November 6, 1995, that secured the participation of all political parties in the legislative elections. The political environment that resulted from successful negotiations amongst political parties prior to the electoral period, allowed for the organization of more open and competitive elections than transpired in October 1995. However, implementation of the accord appears to have been incomplete. Three major problems in this respect emerged in the pre-election environment that cause serious concerns for the delegation.

- Voters and party representatives complained about the accuracy of the electoral lists.
- There were problems with the distribution of voter cards. The delegation was concerned by the number of non-distributed voter cards left uncollected at the closing of the polls.
- Inconsistencies and delays in the implementation of the court order procedure reduced the opportunity to vote for some of the eligible voters whose names did not appear on the electoral lists.

It is important to assure the public that these problems will be addressed before future elections. It is recommended that further analysis and corrective steps be taken to improve the Ivorian election process in the future in order to enhance the confidence of the public. NDI and AAI will continue to monitor these problems and will address these points more fully in the final report.

### ELECTION DAY EVENTS

On election day, the delegation observed many positive aspects of the election process, including the following:

- The voting took place in a calm, orderly and peaceful manner. Polling officials and political party representatives generally worked well together and sought consensus in resolving issues that arose in the individual polling stations on election day.
- While the process of accrediting domestic election observers was delayed, and only 100 Ivorian observers received credentials to carry out this task, it is important to note