STATEMENT BY NDI PRESIDENT KENNETH WOLLACK
ON SUSPENSION OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN ZAMBIA
JUNE 17, 1996

Since early 1991, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
has been working to assist Zambian efforts to promote and then consolidate
democratic institutions in the country. This effort has been a concrete expression of
the international community’s interest in and support for democracy and human rights
in Zambia. The Institute is proud of its association with courageous democrats from
across the political spectrum who have struggled against tremendous odds to establish
a political system that reflects the hopes and aspirations of the Zambian people.

Five years ago, the citizens of Zambia made a historic turn in their call for multiparty
democracy. In fact, the 1991 elections were a watershed event that influenced
positively democratic elections throughout the region. Zambia’s political transition
was a model of democratic change for other states on the continent and beyond.

However, we are deeply concerned that the political environment leading up to this
year’s elections threatens to undermine these achievements. Actions that have
curtailed electoral competition and participation, political discourse and freedom of
expression raise serious questions about the prospects for meaningful elections.

Under such circumstances, and in the absence of genuine interparty dialogue, NDI is
not able to effectively carry out programs that are designed to help ensure an open
and fair electoral process. Therefore, once our funding from the U. S. Agency for
International Development (AID) expires on June 30, NDI plans to suspend its
election-support program and withdraw its Lusaka-based staff.

Given NDI’s longstanding presence in Zambia and our commitment to the
democratization process, this decision was a difficult one for us to make. At the same
time, our activities to support the upcoming elections were becoming incompatible
with political developments that hinder the ability of Zambians to participate fully and
freely in the civic and political life of the country.

NDI remains committed to those civic and political leaders who are seeking peaceful
ways to restore the integrity of the electoral process. We will continue to monitor the
situation and if these efforts succeed, the Institute would hope to resume its program
activities in Zambia.