



September 24, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROBUST AND PUBLIC REVIEW NEEDED FOR AFGHAN ELECTORAL REFORM

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) welcomes the conclusion of the 2014 presidential electoral process and the political agreement that enables the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. The establishment of the national unity government provides a critical framework for political leaders to work in tandem to address the country's political, economic and security challenges.

NDI also commends the new government's plan to form a special commission on electoral reform. The commission should examine the root causes of serious flaws in the electoral process and offer recommendations for reforms that, if adopted, could promote Afghan confidence in the country's electoral and political institutions. Such reforms could include constitutional, legislative, operational and institutional aspects as well as accountability mechanisms. Political will must be exercised and adequate resources allocated to implement such reforms.

In addition to the appraisal of reforms needed to prevent the recurrence of abuses in future elections, the Afghan people deserve a full and public account of the 2014 electoral process, including timely release of all data related to the runoff audit. While electoral fraud as well as certain problems in the audit process make it impossible for any official results to precisely reflect the votes cast, evidence was not unveiled that would cause the outcome to be reversed. The review of the 2014 electoral process should include a thorough inquiry into the vulnerabilities that allowed high levels of fraud to take place, and the identification and prosecution of those responsible for it.

NDI's election assessment mission fielded 100 Afghan staff observers in 26 provinces for the April first round elections and the June presidential runoff. The Institute mobilized 25 international and 25 Afghan observers to monitor the presidential runoff audit. The NDI mission was informed by a pre-election assessment the Institute conducted in December 2013. NDI supported the efforts of multiple domestic monitoring groups that mobilized thousands of citizen monitors for the two elections and the comprehensive audit. The Institute will issue a final report on the 2014 elections, including recommendations to strengthen the electoral process, in the near future.