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ARRIVAL STATEMENT OF
HONORABLE JIMMY CARTER AND
HONORABLE BELISARIO BETANCUR

On Behalf of a Joint Delegation of the
Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government/Carter Center
and the
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
April 24, 1996

President Jimmy Carter: On behalf of my friend and colleague, President Belisario Betancur of Colombia and the rest of our delegation, I would like to say how pleased we are to be in Santo Domingo today on a pre-election observation mission.

We are here because we were invited to observe the election by the Presidential candidates of the three major political parties and by the Central Elections Board (Junta Central Electoral). We were so impressed by the invitations and the wide support of the Dominican people that we altered our plans to come here, to listen to Dominican leaders, and to assess the state of the electoral climate and procedures.

We are here representing two organizations - the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, based at The Carter Center and composed of 26 current and former Presidents and Prime Ministers. Our two groups have monitored more than 50 elections throughout the world, including those in the Dominican Republic in 1990 and 1994.

Let me ask President Betancur to introduce the members of our delegation and make some remarks and then I would like to offer a comment.

President Belisario Betancur: Thank you, President Carter. I am pleased to be working with you again. In December 1994, President Carter and I co-chaired a conference of political parties in Panama that helped them to develop a national consensus on some difficult but critical issues. This was intended to lay the foundation for a more effective democracy. It was a great success.

We are here for a similar reason. We care about democracy everywhere in the Americas. Dominican democracy can only be built by the citizens of this great country, but we are here to reinforce your aspirations.

Let me introduce our colleagues: Dr. Robert Pastor is Executive Secretary of the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, and he is also a professor at Emory University and a Fellow at The Carter Center. Mr. Santiago Canton is NDI's Director of Latin America and the Caribbean. Jose Octavio Bordon was a Senator in Argentina and a presidential candidate. Curt Cutter is a Senior Consultant of NDI and an expert with extensive experience in the region. Becky Castle is the Program Coordinator for The Carter Center's Latin American and Caribbean Program; and Kate

Kelsch is the NDI program officer for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today and tomorrow, we will have a very full schedule. We will meet with President Balaguer; the Presidential candidates of the three major political parties; the Central Elections Board; local election monitoring groups; leaders from business, the church, the press and labor; and others. We hope to learn a lot.

In the new hemisphere of democracies, democrats of all countries have an obligation to be helpful to each other. It is with this spirit that we have come here today to assess the preparation for the Presidential election, consult and learn from leaders of this country, and offer our comments.

President Jimmy Carter: We do not represent any government. Our group today comes from three nations, and the Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government is an independent and bipartisan group composed of leaders from 17 countries in the Americas.

The Council and NDI have had experience with the last two Presidential elections in the Dominican Republic. In both instances, we were not shy to raise our voices when we found problems, but the parties and the people of the Dominican Republic - not us - provided the evidence to judge the election.

We believe the election on May 16 could be a pivotal one for this country. We hope that it will be the one in which questions about the fairness of past elections will finally be answered in the affirmative, and that all Dominicans - whether they win or lose - will accept the process and the results and will join together to celebrate their democracy.