



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **INTERNATIONAL FORUM TO EXAMINE ROLE OF CITIZEN ELECTION OBSERVATION IN REDUCING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE**

ABIDJAN – Spurred by the recent political crisis in Cote d’Ivoire and the prospect of upcoming legislative elections, experts are convening at the Hotel Tiama here tomorrow to discuss the role that domestic election observation can play in diminishing the potential for political violence.

Sponsored by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) and the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON), the Aug. 10-12 conference will bring together Ivorian civil society leaders and international experts to discuss comparative experiences monitoring and mitigating electoral violence.

More than 3,000 people died and one million were displaced in fighting that broke out in Cote d’Ivoire after President Laurent Gbagbo refused to transfer power after losing last November’s presidential election. Those problems followed a civil war and several years of political stalemate, creating an urgent need for national reconciliation to heal deep divisions within Ivorian society.

Citizen election monitors have an important role to play in that effort by reporting accurate and timely data to combat uncertainty and misinformation that can lead to violence. With legislative elections scheduled by the end of this year, there is an urgent need for robust and focused election monitoring, conference organizers said.

Conflict mitigation and election expert Makram Ouaiss will facilitate the discussion with conflict experts D.M. Dissanayake of the Committee for Monitoring Election Violence of Sri Lanka and Stephen Kirimi of Peacenet Kenya. WAEON will also provide regional expertise with the participation of Mashood Erubami, president of WAEON and chairman of the Transition Monitoring Group of Nigeria, Dansa Kourouma of Reseau Afrique Jeunesse (RAJ—Gui) of Guinea and a representative from the Center for Democratic Development in Ghana.

These experts will present case studies from their countries and lead exercises on innovations in violence monitoring techniques. The gathering will provide a venue to share best practices and innovative approaches on how civil society in Côte d'Ivoire can build on its years of experience to contribute to conflict mitigation efforts, particularly surrounding the 2011 legislative elections.

The opening session on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. and the closing session on Friday at 4 p.m. are open to members of the press.

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*NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at <http://www.ndi.org>.*

*The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) seeks to advance fact-based election monitoring and nonpartisan election monitoring organizations through the sharing of knowledge and interactive communications. More information is available at <http://gndem.org/>.*

*WAEON is an independent network of election observation organizations working to strengthen and support nonpartisan citizen election observation and monitoring, electoral reform advocacy, and the exchange of best practices in West Africa. More information is available at <http://www.waeon.org/>.*