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JOBS REMAIN TOP ISSUE AS ELECTIONS APPROACH, NDI SURVEY FINDS

TBILISI – A survey of public opinion in Georgia, released today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), shows that jobs, territorial integrity and affordable healthcare are the top three priority issues for Georgian citizens, while concern about rising prices and inflation has dropped. In the survey, 63 percent mentioned jobs, 36 percent mentioned territorial integrity and 31 percent mentioned affordable healthcare as among their top three priority issues.

Speaking at a press briefing, Luis Navarro, NDI's country director in Georgia, said, "Georgians are optimistic about the direction of the country and the government is seen as being able to make changes that matter to citizens."

Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated they are likely to vote if parliamentary elections, anticipated for October 2012, were held tomorrow. This represents a 13 percent increase since NDI's last poll in September 2011.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents were aware that Bidzina Ivanishvili had been stripped of his Georgian citizenship and 70 percent believe his citizenship should be reinstated compared with eight percent who do not.

While 70 percent of Georgians support the goal of joining NATO, 88 percent disapprove of Georgia's current relationship with Russia.

Asked whether Georgia is a democracy now, 49 percent of respondents said yes compared to 34 percent who said no. These figures represent a slight increase from NDI's September survey when 45 percent said yes and 39 percent said no.

The results reflect data collected February 22 – March 5 in face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of 3,161 Georgians. The survey looks at issues of public importance, perceptions of democracy and attitudes toward reforms, as well as various domestic and foreign policy issues.

NDI's survey work is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC).

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NDI is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.