

**Remarks of Lord John Alderdice
NDI 25th Anniversary Dinner Celebration
Washington, DC, May 10, 2010**

I was asked about why I was here this evening, given that there was a post general election negotiation for coalition in the United Kingdom. Apart from the fact that I was able to have some very useful discussions with Prime Minister Tsvangirai about the challenges of establishing and running coalitions, I felt entirely happy to leave it in the hands of my colleague Nick Clegg, because although he could do that, I couldn't say something about my appreciation of NDI in any other way than by being with you this evening, and it's a tremendous delight to be here.

I think it's really important to understand that when you are in a situation of difficulty and conflict you can get very caught into it. You're whole world can be taken up with it, and with the games of survival. It's only if you've got relationships with friends and colleagues outside who can help to support you, to guide you, to encourage you, to help you to think and work through things – it's only if you've got that possibility that you can really survive and work your way through.

When we were in the middle of all our difficulties, and even before the peace process started in Northern Ireland, we had friends from NDI who came and helped to start us on the way, but did more than that; helped us then over the, not years, but decades of negotiations that came and went, that built up and broke down, until finally we've now come to the point just in the last few weeks, where the final pieces of the jigsaw are coming together - where policing and justice are devolved, where people are coming together with a confidence that this can last.

The really exciting thing about that over the last few years is that we've got to the point where people in Ireland now want to make their contribution to others around the world. That's really the secret of NDI's success. It's not just about the organization, though that's extremely important – the people and resources that you have devoted to this work around the world, its very important – but its something much more than that.

It's about the relationships that you help to build between people and between peoples who are in conflict with each other. It's not just about the work that you do in democracy building, in political party organizations, in devising constitutions, in supervising elections – all of these things are tremendously important and without them it would be difficult to make progress. But it's the relationships that you help to build and sustain.

I find that many other organizations and groups come in and they're there for the crisis but they're not necessarily there for the continuation. Once you reach a peace agreement everybody says, "Great, that's absolutely marvelous we'll have a celebration," and then they're away to the next important issue. But most peace processes break down because of a lack of continuity and support.

We've been really fortunate in our part of the world because we've had that continuity and support. And because we've begun to feel not just part of the solution to our own

problems, but part of a wider network of people all around the world: organizations that link and work with one another, a network that right at the heart and all throughout the fabric is NDI and NDI people. People who come in and work for a while, and go out to do other things but still carry the spirit of NDI, who establish these relationships in all sorts of different political organizations and find a way of helping to carry it through.

All around the world there are now many, many people, young and old, of all colors, genders, attitudes, creeds, associations, who now are committed to the same values that you and I share around this marvelous room this evening. In NDI offices and other political parties and NGOs all around the world; in these difficult and challenging times, for all of us who come from areas of conflict, it is a profound reassurance, a tremendous encouragement, something that gives you a good and positive feeling when all around you might make you feel very different indeed. For that reason, and for that gift of collegiality, friendship and support, I simply had to be here to say thank you. Thank you NDI for the last 25 years, and for what we all know we can with confidence look forward to in the next 25. Thank you.