



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2009

Contact: Jane Hurtig, jhurtig@ndi.org, +222 602 5073

Kathy Gest, kgest@ndi.org, 202-728-5535

NDI SPEAKS OUT ON MINIMUM CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL MAURITANIAN ELECTIONS

NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA – For a return to a democratic path and to meet international standards, Mauritania’s June elections need to be inclusive, representative and competitive, Les Campbell, NDI regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, said here today.

Campbell, in Mauritania March 17-20, held discussions with political leaders, civil society representatives and representatives of the international community about the prospect of elections in June, the first since a *coup d’etat* last August. Along with other international organizations committed to democracy, NDI viewed the coup as a serious set back and has advocated for an immediate return to constitutional order.

“While there are several possible options that could pave the way for a return to a democratic path in Mauritania,” Campbell noted, “elections held without a consensus among all the major political movements and without the full participation of Mauritanian society would further hinder political and economic development.”

The junta-led government, the High State Council (HSC), has indicated plans to hold elections in June. Campbell said, “It is important to acknowledge, however, that even if elections were organized in a sound technical manner, an electoral process that is unilateral and not perceived as fair, representative or competitive would not likely meet international standards.”

NDI has been assisting Mauritians in their democratic transition since 2005. Since then, transparent and credible legislative, municipal and presidential elections have taken place, accompanied by constitutional amendments and the passage of new legislation designed to guarantee the legitimacy of the electoral process. With these developments, and before the coup, Mauritians began a new era of democracy and became a model for peaceful transition of power in the region.

Since the August coup, the Institute has tailored its programs to support efforts for a return to constitutional order and to facilitate dialogue on possible solutions to the political crisis. NDI

provided technical assistance on communications, message development and media relations for non-governmental organizations, trade unions and political parties.

Campbell said that NDI, a leading election observation organization with more than 20 years of experience in over 90 countries, would not send observers to Mauritania unless it was clear that the democratically-elected president and the major political forces in Mauritania had reached a consensus on a process leading to a return to democracy.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. NDI opened its Nouakchott office in 2006, providing technical assistance to Mauritanian civil society, political parties and members of parliament.

NDI is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than two decades. For more information about NDI, please visit our website, www.ndi.org.

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