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NDI Poll: Citizens Feel Country Direction at its Worse in a Decade as Perception of Government Performance and Leaders Declines; Georgians Unenthusiastic about Political Choices

TBILISI – Poll results released today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and CRRC-Georgia, show the perception of the country’s direction is at its lowest since 2010, with 46 percent saying the country is moving in the wrong direction, and only 25 percent believing it is heading in the right direction. Further, a majority, 56 percent, believes the government is performing badly, an increase from 48 percent in December 2018. Only 36 percent assess the government as performing well. Georgians in Tbilisi and large urban settlements have more negative assessments of government performance, with 64 and 66 percent, respectively, rating it as bad.

Georgians believe multiple forces are dividing their country and pushing people apart, including the country’s leaders (68 percent), Georgian media (72 percent), economic system (73 percent), Russia (73 percent), and politicians (81 percent). In terms of unifiers, the majority identifies religion and the education system as bringing people together, 62 and 53 percent, respectively.

The performance of the country’s top leaders -- prime minister, president and speaker of parliament -- has declined sharply over the past three years, with fewer than 20 percent of Georgians positively evaluating their performance. However, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze enjoys a 43 percent favorable performance ranking from the public.

Georgians’ evaluation of institutions is also mixed. Institutions with the highest performance ranking are the Orthodox Church (61 percent), public service halls (59 percent), and the army (55 percent). Georgians’ worst assessments are of the prosecutor’s office, parliament, and the courts, with only 14 percent, 12 percent, and 12 percent positive evaluations, respectively. A plurality, 46 percent, believe that the church should have an influence on political decision-making, while 39 percent believe it should have no influence.

“Unfortunately, Georgians see their leaders and representatives, who should be working on behalf of all Georgians, as harmful to the country’s unity,” said Laura Thornton, NDI Global Associate. “Particularly when people are losing confidence in their country’s direction, divisiveness and polarization can threaten Georgia’s resilience and growth, and leaders should lead by example and do more to bring people together.”

Support for political parties continues to remain low, with the plurality of Georgians (37 percent) unable to identify a party to which they feel closest. The ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party has 21 percent support, while the opposition party United National Movement (UNM) garners 15 percent. European Georgia (EG) and the Alliance of Patriots (AoP) have four and three percent support, respectively. If elections were held tomorrow, the majority of Georgians, 60 percent, would be undecided about how they would vote. 17 percent would vote for GD, 14 percent for UNM, and three percent for EG and AoP.

“The stark dissatisfaction of the public with their leaders and lack of confidence in their country’s progress is a clear message to Georgian parties and elected officials to rethink their approach and policies. They need to implement clear, positive, and inclusive agendas and deliver on promises to earn public support in 2020,” said Thornton.

NDI surveys public opinion to help Georgian stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern by providing accurate, unbiased and statistically-sound data. This poll aims to capture the most relevant information to foster the development of responsive policies and governance. A wide range of leaders from across the political spectrum have reported that the polls are important to their work and encourage continued polling. The results reflect data collected from March 28 to April 15, 2019, through face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgia’s adult population (excluding occupied territories), including oversamples in Azeri and Armenian ethnic minority settlements. This included 2,927 completed interviews. The average margin of error was +/- 2.3 percent.

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This poll was carried out by CRRC Georgia.

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CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization with a mission to promote evidence based debates on policy issues by providing reliable, up-to-date and accessible data and analysis. More information is available at <http://www.crrc.ge>