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**DESPITE UNREST AND INCONCLUSIVE RESULTS, MOST GEORGIANS VOTED FREELY, NDI DELEGATION FINDS**

TBILISI – Following a vibrant and competitive campaign, citizens were able to cast their votes freely and, in most places, counting proceeded in a calm and orderly manner, a delegation from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) observing Georgia’s October 8 parliamentary elections said in a statement issued today. In some electoral precincts, however, counting was disrupted or terminated by unruly and, in some cases, violent crowds.

On a day that started smoothly, the vast majority of Georgian voters, poll workers, party activists, and candidates demonstrated their commitment to democracy by participating peacefully in the election process. NDI observed a voting process that included minor violations but polling station officials largely worked diligently over long hours to organize and execute proper election procedures.

However, as the evening progressed, the situation deteriorated in some areas. In several precincts, the counting process was disrupted by clashes at polling stations and a demonstration outside the Central Election Commission overnight. The clashes detracted from the democratic contributions of the many Georgians who had voted and administered polling stations in good faith earlier in the day. With the exception of some districts where the counting was particularly problematic, the issues did not appear to interfere with the national outcome though they may affect some majoritarian races.

“It will now be incumbent upon all government officials, election administrators, parties, candidates, and NGOs to allay tensions. All sides should refrain from further violence,” said NDI. “National election results confirmed as valid by credible observers, such as the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) PVT, should be accepted. Political parties should document any grievances and complaints and seek redress through established legal complaint mechanisms. The CEC should immediately address the irregularities in and disruption of the counting to determine, where needed, the possibility of recounts or reruns, particularly in those majoritarian races where the outcome could be affected.”

Members of the NDI delegation, which included former ambassadors and parliamentarians, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and regional specialists from eleven countries, visited more than 80 polling stations in ten regions across the country. Leading the delegation were Ted Kaufman, former U.S. senator from Delaware and NDI board member; Sam Gejdenson, former U.S. representative from Connecticut and a member of the NDI board; Janusz Onyskiewicz, former Polish minister of defense

and former vice president of the European Parliament; Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, a Belgian minister of state and former member of the European Parliament; Laura Jewett, NDI's regional director for Eurasia; and Laura Thornton, senior director of the National Democratic Institute's office in Tbilisi.

In Tbilisi, the delegation met with party representatives, government and election officials as well as representatives of civil society, the media, and the international community. After briefings in Tbilisi, teams of observers were deployed to locations around the country, where they met with local electoral authorities, party and media representatives, and domestic election monitors to assess the electoral environment. On Election Day, the NDI observers visited polling stations for the opening, voting, closing, and counting processes in their assigned regions. The mission built on the work of an NDI [pre-election assessment mission](#) that visited the country in June, as well as the findings of long-term analysts who have been on the ground since August.

The Institute noted that today's statement is preliminary, pointing out that official results tabulation is not complete and there may be complaints to be resolved. It said it will continue to monitor the process and issue further reports as appropriate.

The NDI observer mission conducted its activities in a nonpartisan, professional manner, in accordance with Georgian law and the [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation](#). NDI remained in close contact with Georgian domestic monitoring groups and other international observer delegations throughout the electoral period. The observation delegation is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

*NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.*

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