



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 2, 2017

For more information, contact:

In Georgia: Diana Chachua, [dchachua@ndi.org](mailto:dchachua@ndi.org), 577 779639

In the United States: Emily Rodriguez, [erodriguez@ndi.org](mailto:erodriguez@ndi.org), +1 202 728-5527

## **NDI INTERIM REPORT CITES LARGELY ORDERLY BUT UNCOMPETITIVE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS**

TBILISI – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) today released a report presenting interim findings of NDI’s election observation mission for the period August 29 to September 25.

Georgia approaches the October 21 local elections in a mostly calm and peaceful environment. Pluralism is an established feature of the Georgian political landscape and voters have a variety of political choices as the October 21 local elections approach. The Central Election Commission (CEC) is on course with its electoral preparations. Active civil society observation efforts are underway. Importantly, citizens trust the electoral process and deemed last year’s parliamentary elections as safe, orderly, and without intimidation. These polls provide an opportunity for Georgia to continue its track record in holding generally credible elections.

However, to date, there has been little visible competition or contest of ideas and policies. The ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party has extensive campaign advertising, received 95% of all campaign donations, and enjoys ample media visibility, including coverage of government achievements and projects. In contrast, opposition parties explain that a crippling lack of resources prevents them from doing little more than door-to-door campaigning and argue that such an uneven distribution of funds and resources makes the prospect of a robust competition impossible. Parties and candidates appear either overly confident of, or resigned to, a particular outcome.

Although mostly peaceful, in the more competitive areas of Marneuli and Khobi, violence allegedly targeting European Georgian candidates has been reported. Investigations into the incidents have been launched. Opposition parties have also reported widespread misuse of state resources, intimidation by the ruling party, and bias in election staff selection, although they have filed few complaints on these matters, citing lack of faith in the complaints resolution process and limited resources.

"While we commend the overall peaceful nature of this campaign so far, even one act of violence is too many and harms the electoral process," said NDI. "It is imperative that the relevant authorities act with speed and integrity to sanction perpetrators ahead of the elections to demonstrate zero tolerance for violent conduct."

The observation mission is comprised of an observation coordinator, twelve long-term observers (LTOs), and two analysts focusing on election administration and disinformation. The team has already visited 59 of Georgia’s 64 constituencies and conducted more than 350 meetings with government and election officials, political party representatives, civil society organizations, and media representatives,

and attended campaign events, sessions of election commissions, and other election-related activities. NDI observers will continue to evaluate election processes through election day and the post-election period. The report builds on the findings of the NDI pre-election assessment mission in July. The July 21 statement of the Institute's pre-election delegation and other relevant materials can be found at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org). Before election day, the mission will be joined by a high-level delegation of short-term observers (STOs) to assess election-day proceedings.

The aim of NDI's election observation efforts is to accurately and impartially assess various aspects of the election process; examine the broader political environment and factors that could affect the integrity of the process; and offer any recommendations to support peaceful, credible elections and public confidence in the process. The Institute undertakes all international observation missions in accordance with the *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* and its accompanying *Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, which have been endorsed by 52 of the leading international election observation organizations. The NDI mission is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

*NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. The Institute has been working in the country since 1994 to support the development of the parliament, political parties and civil society. For more information about NDI and its programs, please visit [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*

###