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For more information:

In Tunis, Gaby Senay, gsenay@ndi.org +216 92 18 34 69

In Washington, Kathy Gest, kgest@ndi.org (+1) 202-728-5535

**WITH A SUCCESSFUL ELECTION PROCESS, OPPORTUNITY FOR POLITICIANS TO RESPOND TO CITIZENS
CONCERNS**

TUNIS, Tunisia – The conduct of a credible first round presidential election in Tunisia represents an important and positive achievement contributing to the country’s ambitious democratic transition, according to the preliminary observations of the international mission of the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

In its preliminary statement, the Institute noted that election authorities have improved procedures since the legislative elections. The administration of the process showed professionalism. According to NDI, Tunisians showed their confidence by turning out in meaningful numbers as voters and observers for the Nov. 23 vote, which was the first opportunity in Tunisian history for citizens to freely select their president.

“I am inspired by what has been accomplished and the involvement of Tunisians in all facets of the democratic process: in political parties, in election management, and in civil society,” said Ana Gomes, member of the European Parliament from Portugal and a leader of the delegation. “This is a long process that will continue through the remarkable perseverance of Tunisians; the international community should show its commitment and support to that process.

“Now, and especially for the run-off election, presidential candidates and civil society must absolutely engage youth in the entire process, especially so they will continue to be involved in the years to come,” added Olivia Chow, a former member of the Official Opposition of the Parliament of Canada and another delegation leader.

“Once the results are known, those elected will have the responsibility to ensure that their actions meet citizens’ expectations for positive change and show that democracy can deliver. Political leaders need to demonstrate an ongoing willingness and effort to engage constituents on issues and make them a part of the political process over the long-term,” added U.S. Representative David E. Price (D-NC).

NDI launched its mission with the deployment of long-term observers in late June at the beginning of the voter registration period, and received a similar delegation for the legislative elections on October 26. Sixty-four observers, representing 27 countries, participated in the observation mission to the presidential election.

Before a run-off election, the Institute recommends that candidates articulate clear platforms to better engage citizens, especially youth; that media hold televised debates between the two candidates; that election authorities clarify campaign finance regulations to ensure fairness between the candidates; and that election authorities undertake additional efforts to educate citizens about the voting process and to mobilize participation on the next election day.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org

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