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**PRIME MINISTER TSVANGIRAI OF ZIMBABWE, CHOCÓ WOMEN  
OF COLOMBIA HONORED AT NDI 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DINNER**

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Monday by honoring two champions of democracy, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe and the Network of Chocó Women of Colombia, at an event hosted by NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright.

Albright described Tsvangirai as “a courageous democratic leader of our time” as she presented him with NDI’s W. Averell Harriman award, which recognizes individuals and organizations that have exhibited a sustained commitment to democracy and human rights. The award also recognized the democratic aspirations of the Zimbabwean people.

“Truly, building democracy is not for the faint of heart,” Albright said, recounting the many hardships that Tsvangirai has endured in Zimbabwe as the founder and leader of the democratic opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change, and as prime minister in a power sharing arrangement with President Robert Mugabe.

“The situation remains difficult, as repression has not ended, but for the first time in many years, the pulse of democracy in Zimbabwe can be felt,” Albright said.

“While my personal circumstances have been well documented,” Tsvangirai said, “the reality is that many thousands of Zimbabweans have suffered even worse hardships in our struggle for a free society and dignity, and these same Zimbabweans remain committed and determined to continue the peaceful fight until our country is truly democratic.”

Tsvangirai quoted Albright in recognizing that democracy is a process, not an event, but said, “We must also acknowledge that it is a process that can also be reversed. Too often, those that form new governments on the wave of democratic promises and aspirations soon begin to mimic those non-democratic regimes they replaced.”

“As African leaders we must end the conspiracy of silence that has often allowed repression to continue unchecked,” he continued. “We must acknowledge and respect the fundamentals of good governance, respect for the rule of law and property rights and the imperative to invest in developing our human capital. In doing so, we will unleash the full potential of our continent and ensure that Africa takes its rightful place in the world as a fully-fledged partner for progress, prosperity and stability.”

The Network of Chocó Women, an umbrella group representing 52 civil society organizations from 18 municipalities in the primarily Afro-Colombian region in the western part of Colombia, received the \$25,000 Madeleine K. Albright grant to continue its work providing leadership training and advocacy for women's rights. The region has the nation's highest levels of poverty and illiteracy.

Nimia Teresa Vargas, co-founder of the group, accepted the award with Network Technical Advisor Teresa Ochoa Palacios also present at the event.

“Chocó was born as a territory where 120 slaves declared their freedom, and that has made us citizens who fight for freedom every day, for freedom with guarantees for a better life, so that our children will be happy,” Vargas said through an English interpreter. “It is there where we, the members of the network, were born, a network now with more than 1,000 women who in different regions continue to fight for our rights and for the rights of our people.”

To mark its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Institute created a film, “NDI's First Quarter Century: Working for Democracy and Making Democracy Work,” which had its premier at the awards dinner. Narrated by Christiane Amanpour, CNN's chief international correspondent, it highlighted the Institute's history of supporting the efforts of political parties, civic groups, parliaments, elections and women's groups in more than 100 countries.

NDI is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide by promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information about the dinner and about NDI is available at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).

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