

## **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO PRE-ARRIVAL STATEMENT**

Two U.S.-based non-governmental organizations focusing on strengthening democratic institutions, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), are organizing a program design mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo September 18 through October 6, 1997. The purpose of the mission is to identify specific program activities to support the Congo's democratic transition. This activity builds upon the team's September and October 1996 assessment mission to Zaire to review the state of preparations for the national elections. The team will identify problems related to the Congo's democratic development; suggest methods by which those problems could be resolved; analyze the feasibility of NDI and IFES programming in the Congo; and, if appropriate, draft workplans for technical assistance in 1997 and 1998.

During its two week stay in the Congo, the team will meet with government officials, political leaders, representatives of civil society and the international community. After initial meetings in Kinshasa the team will travel to other regions in the Congo before returning to Kinshasa.

The international team will be comprised of six individuals from the United States, South Africa and Canada, each of whom has considerable experience in democratic development and/or regional issues. Team members include: Hassen Ebrahim, former parliamentarian and executive director of the South African Constitutional Assembly; Denise Dauphinais and Tom Bayer, IFES program officers for Africa and the Near East; Jean Lavoie, Canadian attorney and former NDI field representative in Burundi and Namibia; Anthony Jones, former US Peace Corps volunteer in Zaire; and Kimberly Pease, NDI program assistant for East and Central Africa.

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