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October 26, 2005

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Dear Colleagues:

NDI is happy to report that it endorses the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. We are proud to have been one of the initiators of the process that led to the Declaration and Code of Conduct and to have been part of the joint secretariat for the process along with the UN Electoral Assistance Division and The Carter Center. Each organization that has endorsed the Declaration and Code of Conduct and other participating organizations that have not yet completed their endorsement procedures have made substantial contributions to the development of this truly consensus document.

The process leading to the Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct is unprecedented in the field of electoral observation and democracy promotion more generally. This is the first time that leading intergovernmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations have jointly endorsed a set of principles to which they are committed in conducting their activities in this critical area. In addition to developing the content of the Declaration of Principles, the process has already produced significant results in the ongoing communication among our organizations and in our cooperation on the ground in the electoral arena. The process and the Declaration of Principles hopefully will serve as an example of the benefits of mutual consultation and elaboration of standards in other important areas as well.

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation sets forth the standard by which election observations should be conducted in an impartial and professional manner. The Declaration of Principles also strikes the balance of recognizing that genuine elections are an ultimate act of sovereignty and are simultaneously an expression of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Genuine elections are an insufficient but requisite part of achieving democratic governance, which is not only a right but is essential to resolving peacefully the competition for political power. This is not simply a matter of domestic peace and governmental legitimacy but is also vital to advancing international peace and stability.

*Over two decades of working to strengthen and expand democracy*

The Declaration of Principles places election observation into this broader context. This highlights the reason why the international community undertakes international election observation and why it is so important to conduct this activity properly. The Declaration also sets forth specific elements that are necessary to credible international election observation. It provides real guidance to observer missions, host governments, electoral authorities, news media and the international community.

For all of these reasons, the impact of the Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct promises to be measurable. All of our organizations played critical roles in getting us to this point. We all have much to do to ensure the wide dissemination of the Declaration and to take on the harder task of ensuring its implementation. NDI is committed to this effort and to working with other organizations in addressing the challenges that face international election observation and broader democracy promotion going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Wollack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "K" and "W".

Kenneth Wollack  
President