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PRESS RELEASE

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OSWALDO PAYÁ SARDIÑAS OF CUBA AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) TO RECEIVE 2002 NDI DEMOCRACY AWARD

*Payá honored for his work with the Varela Project in Cuba;
Leadership of César Gaviria, Secretary-General of the OAS, also to be recognized.*

WASHINGTON, DC -- The National Democratic Institute (NDI) announced today that Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas of the Varela Project in Cuba, and the Organization of American States (OAS) will receive its 2002 W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. later this year. With this 15th annual Award, NDI will also recognize the leadership role of César Gaviria, the Secretary-General of the OAS, who will accept the Award on behalf of the Organization.

In announcing the decision to honor Mr. Payá, NDI cited his courageous leadership of the Varela Project, an initiative calling for a referendum on open elections, freedom of speech, freedom for political prisoners and free enterprise. The Varela Project draws upon a provision in the Cuban constitution that enables citizens to introduce legislative initiatives when accompanied by 10,000 signatures. In submitting to the Cuban National Assembly more than 11,000 signatures, the Project drew on support from more than 100 organizations in Cuba, and continues to attract signatures – almost 35,000 to date. The Project is named after the 19th century Catholic priest and independence leader Felix Varela.

“Inspired by the efforts of democratic forces in Chile prior to the 1988 plebiscite, the Varela Project seeks to promote peaceful political reform,” said NDI Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. “With its roots entirely within the island, the Project presents a positive message for democratic change and reflects universal values and principles.”

“I am honored to accept this Award on behalf of those Cubans struggling for reform,” Mr. Payá said. “International attention and solidarity provide recognition and encouragement to the thousands of Cubans working on this initiative. I hope to travel to Washington D.C., to personally receive the Award.”

The OAS will be honored for its evolving and growing role in protecting and promoting democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The OAS is the only inter-governmental organization whose Charter calls on member states to “exercise representative democracy.” By adopting instruments such as Resolution 1080 in 1991 (known as the Santiago Declaration), the Protocol of Washington in 1997, and the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001, the OAS has not only defined democracy in the hemisphere, but has defended the rights of citizens when

democracy has been under threat. The OAS also has agencies tasked with supporting democracy, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which provides recourse to citizens who have suffered human rights violations, and the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy which supports countries in strengthening their democratic institutions and practices.

Mr. Gaviria became Secretary-General in 1994 and was re-elected in 1999. Through his strategy for a "New Vision of the OAS," he has fostered institutional changes that have reinvigorated the inter-American agenda. He has strengthened the Organization's programs to promote democracy and human rights, and he has carried out numerous personal missions in defense of democratic institutions and processes in the hemisphere. Secretary-General Gaviria served as president of Colombia from 1990 to 1994.

NDI's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award is the Institute's highest honor, presented annually to individuals and organizations dedicated to democracy and human rights. Past recipients of the Award have included: Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations; the eight political party leaders who negotiated the Northern Ireland peace agreement; Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi; Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel; President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia; former Argentine President Raul Alfonsin; Chile's 1988 Free Election Movement; former U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter; former U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale; Senator Edward Kennedy; former Senator George Mitchell; the late Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO; Linda and the late Peter Biehl of the Amy Biehl Foundation in South Africa; and then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government.

For more information about NDI visit our website at www.ndi.org. For more information about the Varela Project visit www.proyectovarela.org, and about the OAS visit www.oas.org

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