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POLITICAL PARTIES IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE AGREE TO HISTORIC CODE OF CONDUCT

ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE –Ivorian political party leaders have agreed to a landmark code of conduct that was signed here last week in a high-profile ceremony attended by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The document represents the commitment of all Ivorian parties to resolve political and electoral disputes through dialogue and the rule of law rather than through violence.

The code will be in effect as Côte d'Ivoire prepares for presidential elections scheduled for Nov. 30 that will play an important role in the country's reconciliation process following several years of conflict. The code was the result of negotiations among Ivorian political parties, co-facilitated by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the UN mission in Abidjan and the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission. The consultative process helped the political parties reach consensus on the code and ensured their support for it.

An aggressive campaign is underway by the political parties and Ivorian civil society organizations to raise citizens' awareness regarding the code through print and broadcast media. A comprehensive radio program will air discussions of the code's principles and dispute resolution mechanisms. The code will also be posted in schools, offices and other public areas across the country.

During the April 24 signing ceremony, Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo said that through the code Ivorian parties have committed to hold peaceful and transparent elections, adding that it should serve as a roadmap to help bring about peace as the country slowly emerges from five years of armed conflict.

Urging all political leaders to honor the code, Mr. Ban noted that Côte d'Ivoire has reached a "point of no return" in the country's peace process. "It is the shared resolve to move forward – of Ivorian stakeholders, notably President Gbagbo, Prime Minister [Guillaume] Soro, political parties and Ivorians countrywide – that has made it possible to reach this point," he said.

The code seeks to regulate the behavior of political parties, candidates and their supporters and identifies mechanisms to resolve election-related disputes.

More information about the code is available at <http://ndiaction.org/node/304>. The text of the code of conduct is available in French at:

http://www.accessdemocracy.org/library/2305_ci_codeconduct_042908.pdf

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