



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 2, 2010

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NDI TO FIELD AFGHANISTAN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

*Institute Also Working with Candidates, Political Parties,
Polling Agents and Domestic Monitors*

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) announced today its international observation mission for the Sept. 18 elections for Afghanistan’s *Wolesi Jirga*, the lower house of the National Assembly.

The Institute is mobilizing more than 140 international and Afghan observers who will monitor every aspect of the election process, including the campaign, balloting on election day and the counting of ballots. The delegation will issue a preliminary statement in the days following the election.

The mission includes both long- and short-term observers covering all of the country’s regions and the capital. For four weeks before and four weeks after election day, the observers will monitor electoral activities and meet with candidates, political parties, government officials, representatives of the Independent Election Commission, international and Afghan NGOs, domestic election monitors and other organizations related to the electoral process.

The Institute will also field additional short-term observers to monitor voting and counting processes in polling stations in 22 of the country’s 34 provinces. NDI will coordinate with other observer groups including its long-time Afghan partner, the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), which plans to deploy 7,000 domestic monitors.

NDI will issue periodic election updates during the electoral process. The first election update is available at http://www.ndi.org/afghanistan_elections_update.

The mission's international observers – a diverse and experienced group with representation from Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Lebanon, Netherlands, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, United Kingdom and the United States – all have experience in previous Afghan elections. The group includes current and former government, political party and election officials, legislative staff, representatives of democracy and human rights organizations, and academics. The mission's Afghan observers include male and female trainers who prepared thousands of candidates and polling agents for the 2009 and 2010 elections, and who are knowledgeable about local conditions and electoral procedures.

NDI fielded 112 observers for the August 2009 presidential and provincial council elections and issued both [preliminary](#) and [final](#) reports. The Institute also created an online mapping tool, www.afghanistanelectiondata.org, for analyzing election results data from those elections using demographic, ethnographic, topographic and security information. The tool also identifies areas that had significant electoral irregularities. Data from the previous elections in 2004 and 2005 are being added to the site, and data from this year's elections will also be available on the site.

The observation mission is one of a number of election-related activities being carried out this year by NDI, which has worked in Afghanistan since 2002. Implemented through its seven regional offices in the country, these activities include:

- Support for candidate polling agents to strengthen their skills to report on election-day activities. Some 96 Afghan master trainers are conducting workshops across Afghanistan to help 35,000 candidate agents learn about election procedures, election administration, and the rights and obligations of polling agents. NDI developed a candidate agent manual, in Dari and Pashtu, and is working with the Independent Election Commission to distribute thousands of copies around the country.
- Candidate orientation seminars conducted in 30 of the country's 34 provinces reached 1,709 candidates (68 percent of those registered).
- Campaign schools for this year's record number of women candidates, focusing on their particular challenges. About 246 (or 62 percent of all) women candidates participated.
- Political party strengthening to help parties develop campaigns that address voter concerns and, among other things, build campaign management skills.
- Support for domestic election monitoring. NDI is providing technical and financial support to FEFA.

The Institute's election observation will be carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which is endorsed by 35 intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the United Nations Secretariat. The mission builds upon NDI's 25 years of experience observing over 200 elections around the world and its election-related and operational experience in Afghanistan.

The Institute's election observation mission is funded through a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Other election-related activities are supported by USAID and the Canadian International Development Agency.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.

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