

STATEMENT OF J. BRIAN ATWOOD
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

November 14, 1988

It is my privilege to introduce the international delegation that is present in Pakistan this week for Pakistan's National Assembly and Provincial Assembly elections.

The delegates -- who are members of parliament, professors of law and politics, elections experts and political professionals -- come from Turkey, Tunisia, Malaysia, Ireland and the United States. The American members of the delegation represent both the Republican and Democratic parties. A complete list of the delegation is available.

The Honorable Ruairi Quinn, T.D., a minister in the previous government of Ireland, is serving as co-leader of the delegation. I want to express my gratitude to him and to all of the delegates for agreeing to join us in this endeavor.

We are here to demonstrate international support for the democratic transition that is underway here in Pakistan and to report to the international community on the election process that will occur on Wednesday and Saturday of this week.

It is important that the modest role of this international delegation be understood. We do not presume to judge the Pakistan election process; Pakistan is a sovereign and proud nation. We hope to express, by our presence, international support for the democratic aspirations of the Pakistani people. Worldwide attention is focussed on Pakistan this week, and we want to provide a first-hand report on the significant events occurring in this country.

The National Democratic Institute has been studying the Pakistan political system for two years. Four survey missions have visited Pakistan, including, most recently, a six-member team that was here October 10-18. These missions have met

with political party leaders across the spectrum, government officials, the elections commissions at both the federal and provincial level, and independent Pakistan analysts of the political scene.

The most recent mission prepared a comprehensive report, which has been made available to the public. It concluded that a framework for procedurally correct elections has been devised. It is a good system. The written law compares favorably with those of democratic countries around the world. The independence and integrity of the Election Commission and the judiciary contribute significantly to the prospects for free and fair elections. As is true in all countries, however, the implementation on these procedures in the days ahead will be the key to any independent assessment of these elections.

We believe that the safeguards are such that efforts to commit fraud will be detected and will come to the attention of the Pakistan people.

Since arriving in Pakistan, our delegation has met with the Election Commission and several Pakistan political analysts. The Election Commission has provided us with identification cards that will enable our delegates to enter polling sites and observe the proceedings. Neither the commission nor the government has placed any restrictions or conditions on where or when we may visit polling places.

Later today, we will divide into five teams. One will remain in Islamabad, while the others will travel to the provincial capitals: Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. On Tuesday, these teams will meet with political leaders and local elections officials in each area, in preparation for visits to polling sites in the five areas on election day. The delegates will be particularly interested in the observations and impressions of Pakistanis, as they assess the campaign, the procedures on election day, and the results.

The delegation will reassemble on November 17, in Karachi. Several members of the delegation will remain in Pakistan for the Provincial Assembly elections. As soon as

possible after our return home, when we have consolidated our various observations, the delegation will prepare a report that will be published by NDI.

I will conclude by noting that so far we have been favorably impressed by the administrative preparation for the election, and by the apparent free and open nature of the campaign. We have been particularly impressed with the willingness of the courts and the Election Commission to attempt to resolve controversies quickly.

It appears to us now that the determination of Pakistan's next government will rest, as it should, in the hands of persons freely elected by the people of Pakistan. We share their hopes for peaceful elections and for the continued development of a democratic, civil polity in Pakistan.