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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**“YEMEN’S APRIL 27 ELECTIONS WERE A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD; HOWEVER, SUSTAINED AND FORCEFUL EFFORTS MUST BE UNDERTAKEN TO REMEDY CRITICAL FLAWS IN THE COUNTRY’S ELECTION AND POLITICAL PROCESSES,” SAYS NDI OBSERVER DELEGATION**

An NDI-sponsored international election observer delegation released a preliminary statement today on its observations and offered nine recommendations to establish firmly the institutions and processes needed to strengthen Yemen’s position as an emerging democracy.

On April 27, 2003, Yemen held its third parliamentary elections since the country’s unification in 1990. “These elections were marked by enthusiasm and determination by Yemenis to exercise their right to vote and freely choose their representatives. Nonetheless, the atmosphere of anxiety in the run-up to the elections caused by persistent violence, heavy-handed and coercive measures on election day by elements of the ruling General People’s Congress (GPC) party in many polling centers, significant incidents of underage voting and other irregularities are troubling,” the delegation said.

The observer delegation recognized: the efforts by the government and political parties to address fears of election-day violence; the participation of all political parties in these elections; and the significant advances that have been made in the electoral administration since the 1997 parliamentary elections. The delegation also noted an impressive increase in women’s registration, the adoption of a new and generally sound election law and a sense of excitement over multi-party political competition.

Despite these improvements, however, NDI delegates noted patterns of election law violations including political intimidation, underage voting, improper behavior by security forces, vote buying and obstruction by ruling party counting commissioners. Serious incidents were witnessed in Sana’a, Aden, Ta’iz, the Hawdramowt and elsewhere around the country. In addition, because the vote tabulation is still underway and electoral appeals that may be lodged cannot yet be addressed, concerted steps to ensure the credibility of this election process and longer-term efforts to ensure the integrity of the political process are essential to further democratic progress.

The delegation, made up of representatives from 11 nations in Europe, North America, South America, the Middle East and North Africa, visited Yemen from April 22 to 29, 2003. It included political leaders, present and former elected officials and experts in human rights, election processes and Yemeni history and politics.

*For a copy of the delegation’s full statement please see the NDI website at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*