



National Democratic Institute
2030 M Street, NW, Fifth Floor
Washington DC 20036
Tel: 202.728.5500
Fax: 202.728.5520
www.ndi.org

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jean Freedberg
(202) 728-5527
jfreedberg@ndi.org

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NDI CONVENES GLOBAL WOMEN'S FORUM TO REFORM POLITICAL PARTIES

Madeleine Albright will chair two-day conference, "Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties," attended by political leaders from around the world.

WASHINGTON, DC -- The National Democratic Institute (NDI) announced today that women political leaders from every region of the world will gather in Washington, DC on December 9-10 to launch a global initiative to strengthen political parties through women's leadership. The Forum, chaired by NDI Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright**, will identify how best to reform the mechanisms within political parties that marginalize and exclude women from the political process.

"There have been many initiatives to promote women's political leadership, but little attention has been paid to reforming and modernizing the way political parties operate," said Albright. "After all, political parties are the gateway to political office, and are key to advancing women's participation."

Added NDI President Kenneth Wollack: "The surest way to promote women's full participation in a country's political process is through political party reform. Parties must do more than establish 'women's wings' or place women at the bottom of party lists – they must develop real avenues for women's leadership."

Participants in the Forum will include **Beatriz Merino Lucero**, Prime Minister of Peru and **Geraldine Ferraro**, former U.S. Member of Congress and vice-presidential candidate.

Cabinet Ministers include: **Amat Alaleem Alsoswa**, Minister for Human Rights from Yemen; **Mu Sochua**, Minister of Women's and Veterans Affairs from Cambodia; **Alice Sumani**, Minister of Gender from Malawi; and **Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck**, former Minister of State and President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian House of Representatives. Ms. Neyts-Uyttebroeck is also the President of the international grouping of Liberal parties.

Many members of parliament will attend the Forum, including the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nepal, and members from Algeria, Cambodia, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Macedonia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Uganda. In addition, there will be

political party leaders from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Croatia, Mali, Nepal, Peru, and Sierre Leone, and civil society representatives from Algeria, Dominican Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal, and Thailand.

Forum participants will develop a Global Action Plan to promote political party reforms that will advance women's leadership. The Plan will address topics such as party structure, candidacy, fundraising, government policy and affirmative steps that parties can take to ensure greater equity in their structures and processes.

A highlight of the Forum will be a luncheon on December 10, Human Rights Day, that will be attended by some 500 guests from Congress, the Administration, the diplomatic corps, and the Washington DC policy community.

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 and the Forum, please visit our website at www.ndi.org

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA ARE INVITED TO COVER THIS EVENT.

The plenary sessions on December 9 and the luncheon on December 10 at the Omni Shoreham hotel are open to the media. In addition, NDI will be happy to arrange interviews with individual participants, or to put together "panels" of guests for you to interview.

Please feel free to request special topics -- for instance women's participation in a particular region or country; the challenges of women in leadership; Muslim women's leadership, or others.

Please call us at (202) 728-5527 or 728-5528 and let us know how we can help you.

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