



CONTACT: Julie Page Denham (Freetown) 076 333 730

jdenham@ndi.org

Unisa Mansaray

(Freetown) 076 660 382

umansaray@ndi.org

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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE DELEGATION TO OBSERVE SIERRA LEONE'S 2007 PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF ELECTION

Freetown -- The National Democratic Institute (NDI) today announced the arrival of its observer delegation for Sierra Leone's September 8 presidential run-off elections. Comprised of 35 observers, the delegation includes current and former elected officials, political and civic leaders, elections experts and regional specialists drawn from 18 countries in Africa, Europe and North America. The delegation will be co-led by: **Nora Owen**, former Minister for Justice and former Member of Parliament (Ireland); **Ken Nnamani**, former Senate President (Nigeria); and **Christopher Fomunyoh**, Senior Associate for Africa, NDI (Cameroon).

Through the observation mission, NDI seeks to demonstrate international support for, and interest in, a democratic and peaceful electoral process in Sierra Leone. *"The presidential run-off election provides a new opportunity for the people of Sierra Leone to demonstrate their commitment to peaceful elections, as witnessed during the successful August 11 poll,"* noted Dr. Fomunyoh. NDI calls on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to ensure that the campaign period remains peaceful and that the citizens of Sierra Leone can exercise their political and democratic rights on September 8.

While in Freetown, the NDI delegation will meet with Sierra Leonean government and National Electoral Commission (NEC) officials and representatives of political parties, civil society, the media and diplomatic corps. The delegation will build on the findings of an NDI-sponsored observer mission to the August 11 elections and pre-election delegations in March and July 2007. It will also draw on the experience of NDI long-term observers, who have witnessed various phases of electoral preparations throughout the country, including voter registration, candidate nominations, the campaign period and the general political environment in the lead up to the run-off election. *(Please visit www.ndi.org for a copy of the preliminary statement of NDI's international observer delegation to the August 11 elections).*

Teams of NDI delegates will then deploy to all of the country's 14 districts for the September 8 elections. Upon reaching their deployment sites, each observer team will meet with NEC representatives, candidates, party leaders and domestic election monitors to assess the electoral environment.

On election day, NDI observers will visit polling places and counting centers in their respective districts. The NDI observer teams will regroup in Freetown for debriefing and to prepare a **preliminary statement, which will be released at a press conference at the Bintumani Hotel on Monday, September 10.**

The NDI observer mission will conduct its activities in a nonpartisan, professional manner, in accordance with Sierra Leonean law and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. NDI also will remain in close contact with Sierra Leonean domestic monitoring groups and other international observer delegations throughout the electoral period.

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