



Statement on Kyrgyzstan's December 16 Parliamentary Elections *January 7, 2008*

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) have been working in Kyrgyzstan for many years to promote democratic development. The Institutes support the development of civil society and a multiparty system that allows for divergent viewpoints, and not a particular ideology or electoral outcome. As part of their efforts to assess long-term democratic developments, IRI and NDI take into account the conduct of elections, including the processes that culminated in parliamentary balloting on December 16, 2007.

The Institutes commend the efforts of OSCE/ODIHR, the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), Taza Shailoo, the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, and other credible and experienced monitoring groups. These observer groups noted significant failings of this electoral process. In particular, they found that access to the media, especially state-run outlets, was limited for opposition parties and heavily imbalanced in favor of the ruling party and that opportunities for debate between parties were restricted. Concerning election day itself, these observer groups reported many vote counting irregularities, ballot stuffing, multiple voting, the significant misuse of early voting and mobile voting procedures, and the widespread revision of precinct protocols at higher-level election commissions.

The volume of observed irregularities suggests that the awarding of seats in the Kyrgyz Parliament does not correspond to Kyrgyzstan's commitment under the OSCE's Copenhagen Document (paragraphs 7.4 and 7.9) to count and report honestly and publicly ballots cast by a free voting procedure. NDI and IRI are particularly concerned that the court that upheld the Central Election Commission's exclusion of the major opposition party from the Parliament did not accept as evidence properly signed and stamped originals of protocols collected by independent non-partisan observers from the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society and Taza Shailoo. These observer protocols clearly demonstrated that the major opposition party had passed the required 0.5 percent electoral threshold in the City of Osh.

Further, the Central Election Commission has failed to fulfill Article 48 of Kyrgyzstan's Election Code, which stipulates that both the final result and the result of the vote at each precinct should be published. Full transparency is crucial to building public confidence in the elections on the part of Kyrgyz citizens and the international community.

IRI and NDI join the OSCE in expressing deep concern that individuals exercising their constitutional right to gather peacefully and protest the parliamentary election results have been detained and sentenced.

The Institutes remain committed to working with the government of Kyrgyzstan and the country's civil society and political parties in promoting genuine elections and democratic progress. Credible elections are the best guarantor of a stable and prosperous Kyrgyzstan, as they demonstrate the public's support for the government they have chosen.