

N E W S   R E L E A S E

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NDI OBSERVATION DELEGATION IN BURUNDI FOR JUNE 1 ELECTION

BUJUMBURA, Burundi, May 31, 1993. A 16-member international observation delegation organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has arrived in the east African nation of Burundi to observe the June 1 presidential election. This is Burundi's first multiparty presidential election since it became independent in 1962 and is crucial for the establishment of democracy in the country.

The delegation is being led by Messrs. Manuel Pinto da Costa, former President of Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and Charles Lapointe, former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in Canada, and consists of parliamentarians, leaders of political parties, democratic activists and political experts from Benin, Belgium, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, the Netherlands, Sao Tomé & Príncipe, Senegal and the United States.

NDI has organized several training programs in Burundi during the past 16 months. Two NDI representatives have been in-country since April 1 to monitor the pre-electoral period. On May 19, NDI issued an assessment of the pre-election period, focusing on voter registration and the role of Burundi's media in the campaign.

Since their arrival on May 29, delegation members have participated in training sessions organized by NDI and the United Nations Development Program, during which NDI experts described their pre-electoral observations. For election day, the delegation will be deployed in eight provinces and the capital. After a series of de-briefings, the entire delegation will hold a press conference on June 3, tentatively scheduled for 11 a.m., at the Hotel Source du Nil in Bujumbura. A comprehensive report on the Burundian electoral process will be prepared following the legislative elections.

The June 1 election is an important test for Burundi as it attempts to overcome the problems of ethnic conflict. The election also is important for Central and East Africa, where multiparty elections have been marred by significant problems, (e.g. Ethiopia and Kenya) or have not been scheduled (Uganda and Zaire).

NDI, directed by former Vice-President of the United States, Walter Mondale, organizes non-partisan programs to support democratic institutions around the world. NDI has sponsored international observation missions in more than 25 countries.

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