



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Fifth Floor, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 328-3136 ■ FAX (202) 939-3166 ■ E-Mail: demos@ndi.org

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 26, 1996

CONTACT:
Pat MERLOE, Tim McCOY
NOVOTEL, tel. 229.30.41.77.
NDI Office: Room 139

NDI INTERNATIONAL PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT DELEGATION TO BENIN ISSUES FINDINGS

Cotonou, February 26, 1996 -- A four-member international delegation organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has issued its pre-election statement assessing the pre-electoral environment and preparations for Benin's March 3 presidential election. Included in the delegation's report are seven recommendations covering such topics as improving public access to voter registration and polling site lists, increasing domestic voter education activities and taking steps to avoid election-related violence.

The delegation's findings, which are described in a eight-page report, are based on meetings with Benin's Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), Constitutional Court, High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC), representatives of the seven presidential candidates, non-governmental organizations, journalists and others. The delegation also traveled throughout various regions of the country to collect additional information on election preparations and the campaign environment.

The NDI delegation included Edith Coliver (United States), a former leader of the League of Women Voters and participant in numerous election-related programs in Asia; Honoré Guie, professor of constitutional law at the University of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and president of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Economic and Social Development in Africa (GERDDES-Afrique); Yaovi Crespin Leguede (Togo), co-secretary general of GERDDES-Afrique, and Patrick Merloe (United States), delegation leader and NDI's senior official for electoral programs.

NDI, based in Washington DC, has conducted election-related programming in more than 40 countries around the world. The pre-election delegation is the latest in NDI's nonpartisan activities to assist the democratic process in Benin, which will also include international observer delegations to the March 3 election, and to the March 17 run-off, if a second round of voting is necessary. NDI staff will remain in Benin until the final results of the election are determined. Additional statements will be released by the NDI observer delegations, and NDI will release a final report after the official election results are announced.

The statement of the NDI pre-election assessment delegation is available in English and French. A copy of the statement is attached.

- ### -