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**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT
July 1, 1996**

**NDI/COUNCIL OF FREELY-ELECTED HEADS OF GOVERNMENT
INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER DELEGATION TO THE JUNE 30, 1996
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

The international observer delegation sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, based at the Carter Center, is pleased to offer this Preliminary Statement on the June 30 presidential run-off election in the Dominican Republic.

Our delegation, comprised of 38 observers from 13 countries, was led by: former Presidents Jimmy Carter, of the United States; Belisario Betancur, of Colombia; Ramiro de León Carpio, of Guatemala; former Prime Minister of Canada, Joe Clark; former United States Congresswoman Claudine Schneider; and former Governor of New Hampshire and White House Chief of Staff, John Sununu. The delegation also included parliamentarians and other elected officials, political party and civic leaders, election experts and regional specialists. The delegation was invited to observe the election by the Central Election Board (JCE) and the two presidential candidates. We were also welcomed by civic and religious leaders. Our delegation came to witness the election. We did not seek to supervise or certify the election. Ultimately, it is the Dominican people who will judge the electoral process.

The primary purposes of the delegation, like its predecessor delegation to the May 16 first round, were to demonstrate the international community's continued support for a genuine democratic process in the Dominican Republic and to provide the international community with an objective assessment of the June 30 election. We also sought to learn from the Dominican people about the nature of the electoral process and its implications for the further development of the Dominican Republic's democratic institutions.

Our delegation was in close communication with the Organization of American States (OAS) and other groups that observed the June 30 election process. Staff from NDI have been continuously in the Dominican Republic since April and will remain in the country to follow post-election developments. These developments will be important for informing the international community about the evolving character of the Dominican electoral process.

NDI and the Council organized a 27-member international election observer delegation to the May 16 first round of the presidential election process. That delegation, which was led by former Presidents Betancur and de León Carpio, issued its Preliminary Statement on May 18,

1996. NDI and the Council also sent a pre-election assessment delegation to the Dominican Republic in April 1996, which was led by former Presidents Carter and Betancur. NDI sent an international observer delegation to the 1994 elections in the Dominican Republic, and the Carter Center and NDI sent a joint observer delegation to the 1990 elections as well.

This delegation's mission included the examination of three distinct aspects of the election: the campaign; election-day proceedings; and the tabulation of results to date. This statement is a preliminary assessment of these issues. We note that the resolution of any electoral complaints that might be lodged has yet to be completed. A more detailed report will be issued by NDI and the Carter Center at a later date. In addition to its direct observations, the delegation also relied on the findings of the Council/NDI observer delegation to the May 16 first round, the Council/NDI pre-election assessment delegation and on information gathered by the Carter Center and NDI during the entire pre-election period and period between the first and second rounds.

The delegation arrived in the Dominican Republic on Thursday, June 27. Many of the delegation's members also observed the first round on May 16. During our stay we met with government and election officials, the two presidential candidates, journalists, *La Red Ciudadana de Observadores Electorales/Participación Ciudadana* (the national election monitoring group) and others involved in the electoral process in Santo Domingo and in 11 other regions around the country. The delegation's leaders also met separately with President Joaquín Balaguer, the two presidential candidates, with the JCE and with representatives of the Action Group for Democracy (a coalition of religious, labor, business and other Dominican leaders). On election day, members of the delegation visited more than 500 polling stations and municipal electoral boards (JMEs) in rural and urban areas throughout the nation.

The election process, while not without problems, represents an important step forward for the democratic process in the Dominican Republic. The sense of public service and guardianship of the democratic process that was demonstrated in this election -- by the members of the JCE and JMEs, by officials at the voting stations (*colegios electorales*), by both of the Presidential candidates, by the political party delegates and Dominican civic organization leaders and national election monitors, and most of all by the voters themselves -- mark an important juncture in the development of Dominican democracy.

The election provides a moment of justified national pride and sets the stage for actions that can enhance even further the election process in the future. The delegation sincerely hopes the political parties that participated in the second round will take advantage of the unique opportunity presented by this election to form a commission with a mandate to find ways to institutionalize recent gains made in the Dominican election process and to address further matters such as the appropriate use of state resources in elections, including appropriate access to state media, media guidelines for election campaign coverage and other important electoral issues.

THE PRE-ELECTION AND INTERIM ELECTION PERIODS

The delegation, like our predecessor delegation, noted that several reforms were agreed upon formally after the controversial 1994 elections, including:

- a reconstituted JCE, with all board members approved by each of the major political parties;
- a reliable computer system that could guarantee the accuracy of voter lists and ensure it would be operated in a transparent manner;
- improved access to the electoral process for political parties and access for domestic election observers;
- new voter lists used by officials on election day to be posted publicly well in advance of election day and to remain posted for a reasonable time; and
- a new inscription and voting process on election day at the *colegios electorales*.

Most of these reforms were enacted. A new JCE was instated in early 1995, and a series of positive developments created an improved atmosphere for the May 16 election. Our predecessor delegation was impressed by a large number of positive developments on May 16, resulting from the dedicated efforts of Dominican voters and election officials. These developments were described in that delegation's May 18 Preliminary Statement.

Since the May 16 first round, the election environment has remained generally positive. NDI and the Carter Center expressed concern early in June over reports in the Dominican Republic that the police detained certain individuals who were not carrying their identity cards (*cédulas*) and over reports that police were confiscating *cédulas* from some people. Reports that *cédulas* were being purchased also caused concern. The delegation noted that the JCE and the government took steps to address these matters.

There were reports of isolated incidents of violence in the interim election period. There were also reports from credible sources that sums of money were used to buy influence among some voters and that state resources were used for partisan purposes. Nonetheless, there were numerous positive developments during this time as well. The following are among these developments.

- The JCE took steps to improve the election process, partially in response to suggestions put forth by the political parties, civic groups and international observer delegations to the May 16 first round. These steps included, among others, providing that ballots could be signed by the president of the table before

handing them to voters on election day in order to reduce the number of annulled ballots, adjusting the process for collecting *cédulas* to reduce confusion during the inscription process, attempting to arrange the polling stations in order to reduce crowding and confusion, as well as assigning electoral supervisors to circulate among polling stations in order to address problems.

- Political parties, the government, civic groups, the Catholic Church and other religious bodies continued to express broad support for the JCE.
- Civic organizations continued to help actively to ensure a more transparent electoral process. A broad-based civic group, *La Red Ciudadana de Observadores Electorales/Participación Ciudadana*, continued its civic education campaign and continued to organize a large network of domestic monitors in order to observe the voting process and conduct a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) as it did successfully for the May 16 first round. In addition, the Action Group for Democracy continued its civic education and worked to assure a peaceful electoral process.
- The presidential candidates and political parties once again actively campaigned around the country and communicated with the electorate through the news media, rallies and other means.

ELECTION DAY

Election day was peaceful, except for isolated incidents. The credibility of the JCE, JMEs and other election officials was further heightened as a result of the positive electoral process.

The delegation was struck by the enthusiasm with which Dominicans sought to exercise their right to vote on June 30. The turnout was impressive. The sense of civic pride in exercising the right to vote -- and in protecting the integrity of the election process -- exhibited by the voters, as well as by election officials, political party delegates and Dominican election monitors was inspiring. The delegation was also taken by the expression of appreciation for the role of international observers it received from so many Dominicans on election day.

Once again on June 30 many voters stood for hours in long lines waiting to sign in at their polling station and to vote. In addition, polling officials worked long hours and put forth great efforts to discharge their electoral duties. They, as well as political party delegates and Dominican election monitors, exhibited professionalism and effectiveness in discharging their respective tasks. Of the approximately 525 polling stations observed by the delegation, only six were found not to have performed satisfactorily.

For the second round, as in the first, political party delegates were present at the polling stations throughout the country. In virtually all of the voting stations that we observed, delegates were present from both political parties. Party delegates appeared well prepared for their

responsibilities and acted in a cooperative manner toward each other and toward electoral officials. They received signed copies of the official tally sheets (*actas*) after counting was completed at the voting stations (*colegios electorales*) and were generally allowed to scrutinize the tabulation processes at the JMEs and at the JCE. In addition, international observers were welcomed once again by election officials, party delegates and prospective voters.

The delegation was further encouraged in the second round by the role played on election day by the national election monitoring network *La Red Ciudadana de Observadores Electorales* coordinated by *Participación Ciudadana*. This Dominican civic group once again placed approximately 1,140 observers at the polling stations (the maximum allowed by the JCE). In addition, it conducted a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) to enhance public confidence in the official election results. This was demonstrated at its two press conferences on election day to review its qualitative findings about the voting process and by its turning over to the JCE the results of its vote tabulation.

The delegation also was encouraged by the JCE's rapid processing of election results and by its hourly release of results, as was done in the first round. By processing and releasing all results except for the 33 remaining *colegios electorales* (out of the 9,946 total) by 4:30 a.m., the JCE greatly enhanced confidence in its procedures. We also noted the availability of news concerning the election that was broadcast by Dominican television outlets, within JCE guidelines, and by outside cable news channels. The availability of election-related information contributed to public confidence in the orderly development of the election process.

The delegation recognizes that there is no perfect election system and notes the significant improvements in the Dominican electoral process since the controversial 1994 elections. At the same time, certain features of the June 30 election caused concern for the delegation.

While the interim election environment and election day were relatively peaceful, the delegation deeply regrets the politically motivated deaths and other isolated incidents of violence and intimidation associated with the election. We join with the vast majority of Dominicans who hope future political activities will take place in this country without violent incidents.

The delegation noted that television Channel 6 broadcast programming on election eve that appeared to constitute political campaigning in violation of the electoral regulations. The delegation also witnessed instances of campaigning at several *colegios electorales*.

We observed instances of printing flaws in ballots at several locations and appreciated the speedy ruling by the JCE that such ballots, if used by the voters, should not be counted as annulled votes.

The delegation noted that election officials in many places took steps to reduce serious crowding and confusion where numerous *colegios electorales* were placed in one location. Crowding remained a problem, however, especially given the limited facilities available for

polling. The new closed voting system (*colegios cerrados*), which requires voters to remain for long periods after signing in and before voting, adds to this problem. The delegation hopes that this issue will receive serious consideration in the JCE's post-election analysis.

The delegation also took note that the JCE continued to limit the number of national observers from civic organizations to 1,140. The domestic civic group *La Red Ciudadana de Observadores Electorales/Participación Ciudadana* initially trained more than 3,000 observers, but the restriction on the number of Dominican observers limited the group's ability to fully mobilize the public's interest in citizen participation. In addition, given the predicted closeness of the second round, it would have been best if a larger number of nonpartisan civic observers had been allowed. This could have enhanced their parallel vote tabulation as well as generally helped to enhance public confidence in the election.

Problems exist in every election. The delegation, however, did not observe, nor did it receive evidence that electoral problems in this election were of a magnitude that would materially affect the results. The problems observed also did not appear to disproportionately affect either of the candidates in the second round. In addition, the delegation has not been presented with evidence of manipulation or irregularities that would materially affect the outcome of the election.

CONCLUSION

The delegation would like to emphasize its appreciation for the efficient and professional work accomplished by the JCE, other electoral officials, the political parties, the Action Group for Democracy and *La Red Ciudadana de Observadores Electorales/Participación Ciudadana* in this election. The cooperation among these entities contributed to public confidence and to a significantly improved election process.

The delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to government leaders, JCE members and other electoral officials, the presidential candidates and civic and religious leaders with whom it met and to the Dominican people for their warm hospitality.

Dr. Leonel Fernández represents a new generation of leadership, and the delegation wishes him every success in his important efforts to advance economic and political development in the Dominican Republic. The delegation recognizes the contributions of Dr. José Francisco Peña Gómez to this country. His statesmanship, and deep and abiding dedication to democracy is a source of inspiration. We are hopeful that this election process will usher in a new democratic era for the Dominican Republic and bring democracy one step closer to becoming a hemispheric reality.