



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 19, 2014

Contact: Kathy Gest, kgest@ndi.org, +202-728-5535, in Washington
Olena Botsko, obotsko@ndi.org, +38 050 382 9697, in Kyiv

**NDI DELEGATION SAYS UKRAINE CAN OVERCOME CHALLENGES
TO DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

KYIV, Ukraine -- The integrity of Ukraine's Oct. 26 parliamentary elections will depend on Ukrainians taking concerted, proactive steps to compensate for weaknesses in its electoral framework and embracing new political practices, the National Democratic Institute said in a pre-election assessment report released here today.

"Never before has Ukrainian democracy held so much promise and faced so many obstacles at once," the delegation said. "The May presidential election marked a milestone of constructive citizen engagement, political leadership and public integrity." It demonstrated that, "given sufficient political will, Ukraine is capable of conducting democratic elections, even in the face of grave security threats."

The mission said that steps that could be taken before the elections to improve prospects for a democratic process relate to "enfranchisement and electoral security, constructive campaigning, women's participation and financial disclosure." In the longer term, "urgent reforms are needed in the areas of the electoral framework, campaign and party finance, and media transparency."

"Although a fragile ceasefire is in effect," said the delegation, the occupation of Crimea and conflict in the East threaten Ukraine's sovereignty and independence "while placing extreme burdens on the country's developing democratic institutions, including the upcoming parliamentary elections."

The delegation said that credible parliamentary elections are necessary to enable the new government to pursue reforms and find an acceptable solution to the conflict.

"The civic momentum that emerged from the Euromaidan movement has not waned, but is being channeled into more sustainable forms of political organizing and governance," the mission said, adding "the infusion of new faces into politics is one of the most striking aspects of the current political environment."

The delegation also noted encouraging signs that several political parties have placed more women in winnable positions on candidate lists.

Members of NDI's delegation were Edward "Ted" Kaufman, former U.S. senator from Delaware; Robert Adams, international elections and democratization expert for Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS); Marija Babic, independent electoral expert; Laura Jewett, NDI regional director for Eurasia; and Mary O'Hagan, senior resident director for NDI in Ukraine.

NDI will follow up on the pre-election mission's findings and continue to assess the political environment and security issues throughout the process. The Institute will deploy a delegation to assess procedures on and around election day.

The NDI mission was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

###

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan nongovernmental organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.