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KEY REFORMS NEEDED TO CLEAN UP AFGHAN ELECTIONS

Civic and Political Leaders Call on Afghan Government To Commit to Specific Improvements before Next Polls

KABUL, Afghanistan –More than 60 political and civil society representatives are calling on the Afghanistan government to carry out critical reforms to improve the electoral process before the country's next round of voting in 2013.

Afghanistan's 2009 presidential and provincial council elections and 2010 parliamentary polls were marred by widespread fraud, doubts about the independence of election authorities, a defective voter registration process and barriers to women's participation. Domestic and international observers have said these problems must be addressed to build greater confidence in the integrity of Afghan elections.

The representatives – from Afghan civil society groups, election management bodies, parliament, provincial councils, political parties, academia and the media – participated in a conference here Sept. 19 and 20 that focused on lessons learned from the country's past elections. At this convening event, organized by the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the participants developed a concrete plan to advance key reforms. These included:

- Protecting the independence of the electoral management bodies – the Independent Electoral Commission, the Electoral Complaints Commission and the Candidate Vetting Commission;
- Ensuring transparency in the conduct of these electoral management bodies, with the aim of enhancing public trust and ensuring justice;
- Encouraging political parties to nominate qualified male and female candidates, and engage in transparent reporting of campaign contributions and expenses, and public and comprehensive reporting of the performance of elected representatives;

- Developing a new identification system based on a national census in order to evaluate candidates accurately and identify fake voter ID cards;
- Conducting several elections simultaneously, if possible;
- Introducing a collaborative tracking system that will show the progress of the preparations, execution and evaluation of elections as well as the performance of the election management bodies, elected institutions and key political actors; and
- Amending articles of the election law to improve electoral transparency.

The group also appealed to the international community to continue supporting Afghan efforts to promote credible elections – particularly in the areas of financial accountability, broad and inclusive political participation by voters across Afghanistan, and the political empowerment of women, minorities and persons with disabilities.

Reports of FEFA's 2009 and 2010 domestic election observation missions may be found on FEFA's website (www.fefa.org.af). Reports of NDI's international election observer missions may be found on the NDI website (www.ndi.org), including its [final statement](#) for the 2009 elections and the [final statement](#) for the 2010 elections.

The conference and NDI's electoral support programs in Afghanistan are funded through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 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.

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