

THE  
CARTER CENTER



BUILDING CONSENSUS ON  
PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL  
ELECTION OBSERVATION

DECEMBER 2006

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## SUMMARY

International election observation is conducted by dozens of organizations around the world. As election observation activity has grown and the number of organizations involved has proliferated, several critical challenges have emerged. Foremost is the need for greater coordination and standards of professionalism among election observation organizations. To this end, The Carter Center, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD), and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), launched a collaborative project to build consensus on best practices in this field.

Over three years and through a series of conferences involving more than 20 intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations, two important documents were developed: the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. The Declaration and Code were formally endorsed by 22 organizations at the United Nations on Oct. 27, 2005. This was an important step in improving international election observation. These documents provide a common point of reference and guiding principles for election observation, addressing key issues such as the purpose, scope, and conduct of missions; minimum conditions of access to electoral processes; and the importance of harmonizing assessment criteria among observer groups.

The Declaration and Code, and the process of developing and gaining endorsement of them, have furthered the maturation of a coordinated community of election observation organizations. However, election observation organizations still face many important challenges, including:

- developing methodologies to assess electronic technologies in the electoral process;
- ensuring sustained coordination and cooperation among election observation organizations;
- ensuring genuine follow up to recommendations of observation missions by host governments and the implementation of needed reforms; and
- building consensus on assessment criteria and standards for electoral processes.

This brief report outlines the consensus-building process that led to the endorsement of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers and discusses some of the continuing challenges facing the election observation community as a whole.



## INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, the number of countries undergoing transitions toward multiparty democracy has risen dramatically. These countries have received significant levels of electoral assistance in the form of election finance, material supplies, skills development, and institutional capacity building.

International and domestic election observation have been especially important elements of such assistance, providing both independent evaluations of the effectiveness and fairness of electoral processes and assessments of what these processes reveal about the quality of democratic governance in countries around the world. Observer mission reports often generate political momentum for government and opposition parties to make commitments for democratic reform. In the decades ahead, election observation missions will continue to play a crucial role as countries around the world attempt to build solid foundations for good governance and democratic development.

Nevertheless, international election observation activities have come under criticism in recent years for a number of reasons, including the varying standards used by different observer groups and the perception that high-cost international observer missions have only a limited impact on democratization.

### PROFESSIONALISM AND VARYING STANDARDS

As the number of democracy assistance programs has risen over the last two decades, so has the number of election observer groups. These groups employ varying methods and criteria for assessment and exhibit different levels of professionalism. As a result of these variances, the likelihood of individual missions arriving at different conclusions has increased, with some organizations severely criticizing an electoral process, while others praise the same election as largely “free and fair.”

Host governments sometimes issue open invitations to international observer groups. However, host governments facing difficult elections often selectively invite observer groups they perceive as more sympathetic to their interests. Instances in which election observation reports are inconsistent among different organizations generate doubts about the methods, professionalism, and credibility of international observation as a whole. Variation in methods and conclusions breeds confusion about the meaning of “free and fair,” the underlying criteria by which the integrity of elections is assessed, and the value of observers’ reports and recommendations.

### COST AND IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

International observation also has been criticized for being too costly and making only a limited, short-term impact on democratization. Host countries and international donors therefore have favored programs that support the activities of local observers.

Although support to local observers is indeed essential over the long term for democratic consolidation, the vital role of international election observation during transitional or especially controversial elections is at times overlooked and undervalued. Unlike most local observer groups, international observers have extensive comparative experience and high-level visibility. Consequently, their assessments often have a much larger impact on domestic and international public opinion and public judgments about the quality of elections. In addition, international observer missions often play a critically important support role for local observers by amplifying the voice and credibility of their efforts, thereby increasing their impact and long-term sustainability.





## BUILDING CONSENSUS ON PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

To address some of these issues, The Carter Center, NDI, and UNEAD began a multiyear project in 2003 to help establish professional standards and to increase the effectiveness and credibility of international election observation, thereby increasing public confidence in the work of international observers. The project built on the existing work of many organizations involved in election observation,

including a related initiative undertaken by NDI and UNEAD and involving the Organization of American States, and previous work by The Carter Center.

This brief report outlines the consensus-building process that led to the endorsement of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers and highlights some of the continuing challenges facing the election observation community as a whole.



## PROCESS FOR BUILDING CONSENSUS ON PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

The collaborative process that led to the eventual endorsement of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers began with several meetings designed to gather information from many stakeholders in the election observation community.

### ATLANTA 2003

In October 2003, The Carter Center hosted the first meeting on “Building Consensus on Principles for International Election Observation.” Representatives of 15 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations participated in the two-day workshop, including the African Union; the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; the European Commission; the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa; the International Republican Institute; the Organization for Security

and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Southern African Development Community—Parliamentary Forum; the Asian Network for Free Elections; IFES; the Organization of American States; Economic Community of West African States; and the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators’ Association.

The goal of the meeting was to begin to set the parameters, content, and form of a proposed Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct. All discussions were off the record to ensure frank debate of the key issues and challenges facing international election observation.

Over the course of two days, participants discussed a wide variety of issues, including foundational questions about the very nature of election observation, such as: What is election observation? What should observers assess? What conditions must be in place for an election observation mission to be meaningful and effective? What does coordination among observers mean in practice? What relationship should observers have with donor agencies?

Participants shared information from their years of collective experience and described in detail the election observation methodology of their organizations, including whether invitations were required from host governments or other bodies, whether organizations require a memorandum of understanding with the host government, the composition of observation teams and the process of selecting observers, and whether long-term observation was a component of their observation work. All agreed that an objective and sound methodology was essential for the credibility of international election observation as a whole.



ANNEMARIE FOYO

*Carina Perelli of UNEAD, President Carter, and Ken Wollack of NDI address the 2003 “Building Consensus on Principles for International Election Observation” meeting at The Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga.*



In addition, participants discussed more sensitive issues, such as why host countries at times restrict access for international observers, the conditions that must be in place for observation to be meaningful, the impact of electronic technologies on international election observation, and the importance of ensuring that the mere presence of an observation mission does not lend legitimacy to an undemocratic electoral process. Despite the fact that the representatives came from a diverse group of institutions, each with different mandates and approaches, all agreed that there were many common characteristics among them.

The success of the first meeting was critical because it established the parameters of discussion and laid the foundation for a genuine, inclusive consensus-building process. Based on the findings of the meeting, the partner organizations—UNEAD, NDI, and The Carter Center—created an early draft of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and a Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that was circulated among participants for comment in advance of the next meeting.

### JOHANNESBURG 2004

In February 2004, The Carter Center and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) hosted two back-to-back, one-day workshops in Johannesburg, South Africa. The first meeting was with domestic observer organizations from across Africa, and the second was with representatives of several African electoral management bodies. While these meetings were not formally part of the Carter Center's joint project with NDI and UNEAD, the Center and EISA wanted to ensure that the concerns and ideas of regional stakeholders in Africa were taken into account in the drafting of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

Representatives of the following domestic observer groups attended: Emang Basadi (Botswana), the

National Elections Observatory (Cameroon), League of Voters (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (Malawi), Election Support Network (Mali), the Civic Education Forum (Mozambique), the Namibian Nongovernmental Organizations Forum, the Campaign for Good Governance (Sierra Leone), the Foundation for Democratic Process (Zambia), and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network. A representative of the Southern African Development Community—Parliamentary Forum also attended.

Representatives of the electoral commissions of Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Cameroon, Zambia, Lesotho, and Mauritius participated in the meeting with electoral management bodies. IFES, NDI, and the Commonwealth Secretariat also took part in these meetings, along with host organizations EISA and The Carter Center.

Discussions over the course of the two days highlighted several significant issues for international election observation, including roles and relationships with domestic observer groups, the importance of long-term observation as a methodological tool, and international standards for assessing democratic elections.

Participants agreed that domestic and international observers play complementary but distinct roles in the electoral process. For domestic monitors, election observation is a human right and a core component of the right of citizens to participate in the public affairs of their countries. Domestic observers tend to have a better understanding of the complex political dynamics in their countries, conduct longer term and more comprehensive observations, and are an important source of information for international observers about the electoral process. Domestic observers also have the capacity to deploy large numbers of monitors to polling stations on election day.

Participants suggested that international observers, on the other hand, ensure timely information sharing, encourage coordinated deployment of observers and complementary recommendations, and use their leverage and public profile to amplify the findings of domestic observer groups.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION



ANNEMARIE POYO

*Fetuao Toia Alama of PIANZEA, Abou Yacoubou of ECOWAS, and Jeff Fischer of IFES discuss the parameters of international election observation.*

In addition, both the domestic observer and the electoral management body representatives at the meeting stressed that international observers should be accurate, impartial, and honest; the methodology of the election observation organization and the code of conduct to which they hold themselves should be clear; and there should be greater consistency between the findings of different election observation organizations.

The representatives of both the domestic observation groups and the electoral management bodies underscored the importance of long-term observation, particularly observers arriving well in advance of election day to observe pre-election preparations and remaining through the postelection phase to observe complaints procedures. In addition, participants noted that long-term observation helps strengthen the relationship between domestic and international observer groups, enabling improved coordination of their efforts.

While recognizing that this issue would not be explicitly addressed in the Declaration of Principles, the representatives of both domestic observer groups and electoral management bodies agreed that there was a need for greater clarity about the criteria that international observer groups use to assess the degree to which elections are genuinely democratic.

The Carter Center and EISA noted the comments of both groups of stakeholders for the drafting process

leading to the Declaration of Principles and the Code of Conduct. Many of their concerns and comments are reflected in the final text of the documents.

### BRUSSELS 2004

In September 2004, the European Commission hosted a half-day meeting on “Building Consensus for International Election Observation,” in which representatives of 14 intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations discussed an early draft of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

The conversations during the meeting focused less on substantive issues of election observation and more on the process and technical details involved in refining the draft of the Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct to adequately reflect the institutional politics of the international election observation organizations involved.

Participants agreed that the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the attached Code of Conduct would not be legally binding on endorsers but serve as guidelines for best practices that could become customary over time. In addition, participants felt that the documents should be viewed as technical documents that would remain open for endorsement after official endorsement by the participating organizations. As a result of the



ANNEMARIE POYO

*A. Edgardo Reis of the Organization of American States exchanges views with Takawira Musavengana of SADC-PF.*



extensive process to create the documents, participants agreed that all organizations involved should feel ownership of them.

Importantly, in regard to the issue of whether or not to observe a given election, participants determined that in those cases in which a given organization was not able to observe an election for whatever reason, it might nonetheless be desirable in some circumstances for other endorsing organizations to observe. In such cases, cooperation among endorsing groups could help to resolve any tensions with, or unreasonable restrictions imposed by, the host government. In addition, participants agreed that in such cases, observer groups might also consider employing alternative observation models that would facilitate involvement of other endorsing organizations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants were invited by The Carter Center, NDI, and UNEAD to submit comments on the draft Declaration of Principles so that they could be addressed in the revised document. In the months that followed the Brussels meeting, the partners continued to consult with some 25 organizations involved in reviewing the draft documents. During 2005, a large number of these organizations indicated their intention to formally endorse the Declaration and Code and attend the New York meeting where the documents would be commemorated.

## NEW YORK 2005

On Oct. 27, 2005, representatives of 22 inter-governmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers at a ceremony hosted by the United Nations in New York. Following a formal session that included keynote addresses by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former U.S. President and Carter Center founder Jimmy Carter, and NDI Chairperson and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, meeting participants discussed how the Declaration

of Principles and Code of Conduct might best be implemented.

All participants agreed that the documents would be a useful tool when training both long-term and short-term observers. Not only do the documents provide principles for credible election observation methodologies, they also provide guidelines on professional behavior for observers.

Some participants suggested that the Declaration and Code could be shared with election officials and political candidates in countries being observed. In addition, participants noted that the media could serve as an important resource in disseminating information about the documents and the role of international election observers. Sharing the documents with the media also could help educate governments on issues such as when to issue an invitation and what conditions must be in place for an observation mission to be meaningful and credible.

During this discussion participants agreed, based on past experience, that there is often tension between the media's desire for an immediate evaluation of whether an election was "free and fair" and the increasing sophistication of election observation missions in which observer organizations give a more nuanced report after comprehensive information has been collected and incorporated into the post-election statement. A goal of election observation is to support countries' efforts to move toward more genuine democratic institutions and practices, and participants emphasized the importance of using the Declaration and Code as a means of ensuring that countries meet their commitments to citizens.

All participating organizations agreed to circulate the Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct as widely as possible and to include the documents with briefing materials for election observation mission participants. In addition, they agreed to provide the Declaration and Code to electoral officials, government officials, civil society organizations, and the media in an effort to improve the coordination of observation missions and to share statements and information among organizations. Figure 1 is a summary of the Declaration.

*continues on p. 10*



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

### SUMMARY OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation provides guiding principles and a common point of reference for international election observation. Some of the main articles of the document are summarized below.

#### Elections

Genuine democratic elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, and their free expression provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of the government. (Art. 1)

The rights of citizens to vote and be elected at periodic, genuine elections are internationally recognized human rights. (Art. 1)

#### International Election Observation Defined

International election observation is

- the systematic, comprehensive, and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes, and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment;
- the impartial and professional analysis of that information and the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes based on the highest standards for accuracy. (Art. 4)

International election observation should, when possible, offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of the electoral process. (Art. 4)

International election observation missions are organized efforts of intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations and associations to conduct international election observation. (Art. 4)

#### The Scope and Purpose of Election Observation Activities

International election observation evaluates pre-election, election day, and postelection periods. (Art. 5)

Specialized observation missions may examine limited pre-election or postelection issues and specific processes, such as the use of electronic technologies, as long as such missions make clear in public statements that their activities and conclusions are limited in scope and they draw no conclusions about the overall election process. (Art. 5)

International election observation must be conducted

- with respect for the sovereignty of the country holding elections and with respect for, and in a manner consistent with, the human rights of the people of the country;
- with respect for the laws of the host country. (Art. 9)

International election observation missions must be

- of sufficient size to determine independently and impartially the character of election processes in a country;

- of sufficient duration to determine the character of all of the critical elements of the election process in the pre-election, election day, and postelection periods. (Art. 19)

Organizations endorsing the Declaration recognize that international election observation missions should include persons of diverse political and professional skills, standing, and proven integrity to observe and judge processes in light of their relevant expertise. (Art. 20)

#### Conflicts of Interest and Disclosure

No one should be allowed to be a member of an international election observer mission unless that person is free from conflicts of interest that would interfere with conducting observations accurately and impartially. (Art. 6)

International election observation missions should not accept funding from the government of which elections are being observed and should be prepared to disclose the sources of their funding upon appropriate and reasonable requests. (Art. 6)

#### Reporting

International election observation missions are expected to issue timely, accurate, and impartial statements to the public that present their findings, conclusions, and recommendations. (Art. 7)

#### Cooperation

The organizations that endorse the Declaration and Code of Conduct pledge to cooperate with each other in conducting international election observation missions. (Art. 8)

International election observation missions should identify, establish regular communication with, and

Figure 1



cooperate as appropriate with credible domestic non-partisan election monitoring organizations. (Art. 17)

#### **When and When Not to Observe**

A decision by any organization to organize an international election observation mission or to explore the possibility of organizing an observation mission does not imply that the organization necessarily deems the election process in the country holding the elections to be credible. (Art. 11)

An organization should not send an international election observation mission to a country under conditions that make it likely that its presence will be interpreted as giving legitimacy to a clearly undemocratic electoral process. (Art. 11)

#### **Prerequisites for Observation**

An international election observation mission should not be organized unless the country holding the election takes the following actions:

- issues an invitation or otherwise indicates its willingness to accept international election observation missions;
- guarantees unimpeded access of the international election observer mission to all stages of the election process and all election technologies;
- guarantees unimpeded access to all people concerned with election processes;
- guarantees freedom of movement around the country for all members of the international election observer mission;
- guarantees the international election observer mission's freedom to issue public statements and reports concerning its findings and recommendations about election-related processes;
- guarantees full, country-wide accreditation for all observers;
- guarantees that no governmental authority will take any reprisal against any national or foreign citizen who works for, assists, or provides information to the international election observation mission. (Art. 12)

#### **Political Competitors**

Political contestants have vested interests in the electoral process through their rights to be elected and to participate directly in government. They therefore should be allowed to monitor all processes related to elections. (Art. 14)

#### **Domestic Observation**

Citizens have an internationally recognized right to associate and a right to participate in governmental and public affairs in their country. These rights may be exercised through nongovernmental organizations engaged in domestic observation activities. (Art. 16)

International election observation missions should evaluate and report on whether domestic nonpartisan election monitoring and observation organizations are able, on a nondiscriminatory basis, to conduct their activities without undue restrictions or interference. (Art. 16)

International election observation missions should advocate for the right of citizens to conduct domestic nonpartisan election observation without any undue restrictions. (Art. 16)

#### **Methodologies and Approach**

Declaration endorsers pledge to be transparent about the principles and observation methodologies they employ. (Art. 24)

The organizations endorsing the Declaration recognize that there are a variety of credible methodologies for observing election processes and commit to sharing approaches and harmonizing methodologies as appropriate. (Art. 24)

#### **Training of Observers**

Endorsers of the Declaration pledge to

- familiarize all participants in their international election observation missions concerning the principles of accuracy of information and political impartiality;
- provide a terms of reference or similar document that explains the purposes of the mission and the methodologies to be employed;
- provide information concerning relevant national laws and regulations, the general political environment, and other matters, including those that relate to the security and well-being of observers;
- require all participants in the election observation mission to read and abide by the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. (Art. 21)

#### **Endorsement**

The Declaration and Code of Conduct are intended to be technical documents that do not require action by the political bodies of endorsing organizations. (Art. 24)

The Declaration and Code of Conduct remain open for endorsement. (Art. 24)



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION



UNITED NATIONS

*Endorsers of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, United Nations, October 2005.*

*continued from p. 7*

### LONDON 2006

In the summer of 2006, two meetings were convened in London by the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNEAD, The Carter Center, and NDI to address issues regarding the implementation of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. These were the first in a series of meetings to follow up on the working session held at the United Nations on Oct. 27, 2005.

Participants at the New York meeting had agreed on the need to maintain the momentum of the Declaration of Principles process, in particular by focusing on the challenge of implementing the standards put forth in the documents.

The first meeting was held on May 31, 2006, under the theme “Facilitating Donor Involvement in Ensuring the Integrity and Effectiveness of International Election Observation” and was attended by representatives of a number of donor agencies, including USAID, Irish Aid, and Canada Corps/Canadian International Development Agency; representatives from the governments of Norway, Switzerland, Japan, and Germany; and several of the observer organizations involved in drawing up the

Declaration and Code.

On June 1, this group was joined by representatives of several other organizations that endorsed the Declaration and Code. Through the discussions, it became clear that an unexpected but welcome development sparked by the Declaration process was the gradual emergence of a professional community of observation organizations.

Endorsing organizations agreed on several key conclusions:

- Election observation needs to be more closely tied to a broader spectrum of democracy-promotion activities.
- There needs to be more systematic tracking of implementation of observer mission recommendations, including possible joint follow-up trips and reports.
- It is desirable, where possible, to have “democratic dialogue” with host countries so that observer organizations can use observation activities as part of longer term support for democratization.

Strong statements and several proposals were made by endorsing groups on how coordination and collaboration among groups could be maintained.





One suggestion that was widely welcomed by participants was to continue holding annual informal meetings of election observation groups. Such meetings could focus primarily on the status and implementation of the Declaration and Code, including issues such as information sharing and strategic planning regarding election observation priorities and plans, implementation, and post-election follow-up. In addition, many endorsing organizations voiced solid support for the need to increase cooperation among observation organizations to work toward harmonizing election observation methods and criteria for assessing democratic elections.

Figure 2 lists the organizations that have endorsed the Declaration and Code as of June 1, 2006.



UNITED NATIONS

David Carroll of The Carter Center shares his views on the Declaration of Principles with Hiroko Miyamura of UNEAD and Pat Merloe of NDI.

ENDORISING ORGANIZATIONS AS OF JUNE 1, 2006	
• African Union (AU)	• IFES
• Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)	• International IDEA
• Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials	• Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
• The Carter Center	• International Republican Institute (IRI)
• Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL)	• National Democratic Institute (NDI)
• Commonwealth Secretariat	• Organization of American States (OAS)
• Council of Europe European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission)	• Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR)
• Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)	• Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators' Association (PIANZEA)
• Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)	• Pacific Island Forum
• European Commission	• Southern African Development Community—Parliamentary Forum (SADC–PF)
• European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO)	• United Nations Secretariat
• Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS)	• United States Association of Former Members of Congress (USAFMC)
• La Francophonie	

Figure 2



## CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

During the three years of the project “Building Consensus on Principles for International Election Observation,” participants identified four key challenges facing the community of international election observation organizations: (1) the need to improve coordination and cooperation among observer groups, (2) the need to ensure that recommendations and findings of election observation missions are implemented by host governments and linked to broader efforts of democracy promotion, (3) the need to develop new methodologies appropriate for assessing electronic voting technologies, and (4) the need to develop commonly shared criteria for assessing democratic elections. These challenges were recurring topics of discussion during the meetings, and observer groups will continue to collectively explore these issues as they seek to develop common approaches.

### COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

The process of developing the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers was important not only because it established common guidelines for professionalism and integrity in election observation, but also because it provided an unprecedented opportunity for observer groups to collectively reflect on 20 years of election observation experience and to recognize the commonalities of methodology and approach that already exist among organizations. However, observer organizations also recognize that the practice of election observation can be strengthened further by even greater coordination and cooperation.

Participants in all of the meetings agreed that observer groups would benefit from continuing to share their methodologies and approaches with one

another and that observation missions, once in the host country, should try to ensure greater collaboration through information exchange and formal meetings. This has proven successful in recent election observation missions.

Observer organizations use a variety of criteria to decide whether to observe an election, one of which may be whether other international observer organizations plan to observe a given election. However, it is not always easy to know this information in advance. Some groups have included information about upcoming election missions on their Web sites, while others have made a concerted effort to coordinate pre-election assessment missions or brief other organizations on the findings of their assessment teams.

At the London meeting, participants agreed that the momentum created by the process of developing the Declaration and Code should not be lost. To that end, it was suggested that annual meetings be held to review the status and implementation of the Declaration and Code. In addition, observer groups recognized the benefit of continued consultations on topical issues such as electronic voting.

### FOLLOW-UP AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Election observation should be understood in the context of, and closely linked to, broader efforts to promote democracy, with elections as unique opportunities to assess how well a country’s political institutions serve its citizens. Election observation experience has demonstrated that success on election day is often undermined by democratic rollbacks on other fronts. Where possible, election observation should provide for long-term monitoring of a wide range of processes and issues, possibly in some cases spanning an entire election-to-election cycle. Broadly



focused monitoring and assessments should be used to identify priorities and set the agenda for postelection follow-up work on a range of democratization and governance issues.

A recurring topic of conversation throughout the meetings on the Declaration and Code was the need for more systematic and thorough follow-up on the recommendations for reform made by observer organizations. Observer groups agreed that one alternative step that could be used more routinely would be to organize early follow-up visits or round-table discussions with stakeholders. In addition, participating organizations agreed that political will for follow-up and ongoing assessments throughout the electoral cycle were critical. While capacity building might legitimately form part of the follow-up, the key concerns would more often involve political and electoral reform. It was suggested that follow-up should encompass action on the full range of observer recommendations and specific visits targeting particular areas.

Observer organizations agreed that follow-up activities should not take the form of an exclusive dialogue with the authorities. Rather, roundtables and visits should also include civil society because it is important to involve all critical local stakeholders. Political parties, nongovernmental organizations, and domestic observers all should be part of the process. Many domestic observer groups are active throughout the electoral cycle, and some also act as pressure groups for democratic change. A related suggestion on this issue was that domestic observers might usefully produce annual reports on their countries' democratic development.

Observer groups agreed that observation organizations and host governments might consider acceptance of an invitation to observe an election as an invitation to enter into a democratic dialogue covering the whole electoral cycle, not merely an invitation to one discrete event. It would then be incumbent on the host government and the observers to continue the dialogue after the conclusion of the electoral process.

A number of participants spoke about their willingness to consider organizing follow-up missions jointly with other observer groups that had sent missions, then reporting to donors and embassies on their assessments of progress made and remaining priorities.

## ELECTRONIC VOTING

Automated voting (commonly referred to as electronic or e-voting) technologies are used increasingly in elections across the world, particularly because they often are seen as symbolizing a country's level of modernization. The possibilities for rapid aggregation and analysis of results, as well as potentially greater accuracy, have added to the attractiveness of computer-based voting equipment. There is little doubt that the ability to quickly publish results can be of particular advantage in conflict and post-conflict situations, where a prolonged period of counting can heighten tensions and reduce confidence in the final results. E-voting systems also offer the potential to remove human error and multiple layers of process that can lead to mistakes and disputed results in hotly contested elections. While e-voting systems can contribute to greater confidence, they also raise many new challenges regarding public confidence. Mechanisms that promote sufficient transparency are needed when using, and particularly when introducing, e-voting systems in polarized electoral or political environments.

To date, international election observers have had fairly limited experience observing electronic voting technologies. However, election observers recognize the need to develop new methods of observation that will facilitate assessments of electoral processes that are inherently opaque. Observer groups recognize that the use of technologies in all parts of the electoral process, from voter registration and boundary delimitation to the aggregation of final results, requires greater coordination among observation organizations and a commitment to sharing e-voting experiences, including lessons learned. Adaptations to observation methodologies should be shared among the observation community.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

Several endorsing organizations, including The Carter Center, are embarking on initiatives to better understand electronic electoral technologies and to determine how to best observe them. Observer groups have agreed to coordinate their efforts, so that the community as a whole might benefit.

### CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

The joint initiative of The Carter Center, UNEAD, and NDI on the Declaration and Code focused narrowly on general principles for international observation. While clearly a critically important milestone, the joint initiative did not address the issue of the need to develop a common international understanding about what constitutes democratic elections. As a result, there remains an urgent need for observer organizations to establish clear benchmarks and build international consensus on detailed criteria for assessing elections.

A collective effort aimed at developing specific standards and criteria for assessing democratic elections and building consensus around common international standards would be an important next step in the process that was initiated with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct. The European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other organizations have made important strides in several key areas, systematizing observation methodologies and comparing regional election standards.

The Carter Center plans to build on the success of the election observation principles project by working with other organizations to develop detailed criteria for evaluating democratic elections. The Center will collaborate closely with other organizations on these issues with the overall objective of promoting the progressive elaboration of a common set of criteria for assessing democratic elections.



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DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
ELECTION OBSERVATION

and

CODE OF CONDUCT  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
ELECTION OBSERVERS

Commemorated October 27, 2005, at the United Nations, New York



DECLARATION  
OF PRINCIPLES  
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**Endorsing Organizations as of October 24, 2005:**

African Union

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

The Carter Center

Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL)

Commonwealth Secretariat

Council of Europe European Commission for Democracy  
through Law (Venice Commission)

Council of Europe – Parliamentary Assembly

Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)

European Commission

European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations  
(ENEMO)

Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS)

IFES

International IDEA

Inter-Parliamentary Union

International Republican Institute (IRI)

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Organization of American States (OAS)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,  
Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
(OSCE/ODIHR)

Pacific Islands, Australia & New Zealand  
Electoral Administrators' Association (PIANZEA)

Pacific Island Forum

United Nations Secretariat

*This Declaration and the accompanying Code of  
Conduct for International Election Observers remain  
open for endorsement by other intergovernmental  
and international nongovernmental organizations.  
Endorsements should be recorded with the United  
Nations Electoral Assistance Division.*



# DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

October 27, 2005

Genuine democratic elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The rights of citizens to vote and to be elected at periodic, genuine democratic elections are internationally recognized human rights. Genuine democratic elections serve to resolve peacefully the competition for political power within a country and thus are central to the maintenance of peace and stability. Where governments are legitimized through genuine democratic elections, the scope for non-democratic challenges to power is reduced.

Genuine democratic elections are a requisite condition for democratic governance, because they are the vehicle through which the people of a country freely express their will, on a basis established by law, as to who shall have the legitimacy to govern in their name and in their interests. Achieving genuine democratic elections is a part of establishing broader processes and institutions of democratic governance. Therefore, while all election processes should reflect universal principles for genuine democratic elections, no election can be separated from the political, cultural and historical context in which it takes place.

Genuine democratic elections cannot be achieved unless a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms can be exercised on an ongoing basis without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, including among others disabilities, and without arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions. They, like other human rights and democracy more broadly, cannot be achieved without the protections of the rule of law. These precepts are recognized by human rights and other international instruments and by the documents of numerous intergovernmental organizations. Achieving genuine democratic elections therefore has become a matter of concern for international organizations, just as it is the concern of national institutions, political competitors, citizens and their civic organizations.

International election observation expresses the interest of the international community in the achievement of democratic elections, as part of democratic development, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. International election observation, which focuses on civil and political rights, is part of international human rights monitoring and must be conducted on the basis of the highest standards for impartiality concerning national political competitors and must be free from any bilateral or multilateral considerations that could conflict with impartiality. It assesses election processes in accordance with international principles for genuine democratic elections and domestic law, while recognizing that it is the people of a country who ultimately determine credibility and legitimacy of an election process.





**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION**

International election observation has the potential to enhance the integrity of election processes, by deterring and exposing irregularities and fraud and by providing recommendations for improving electoral processes. It can promote public confidence, as warranted, promote electoral participation and mitigate the potential for election-related conflict. It also serves to enhance international understanding through the sharing of experiences and information about democratic development.

International election observation has become widely accepted around the world and plays an important role in providing accurate and impartial assessments about the nature of electoral processes. Accurate and impartial international election observation requires credible methodologies and cooperation with national authorities, the national political competitors (political parties, candidates and supporters of positions on referenda), domestic election monitoring organizations and other credible international election observer organizations, among others.

The intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration and the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers therefore have joined to declare:

- 1 Genuine democratic elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The rights of citizens to vote and to be elected at periodic, genuine democratic elections are internationally recognized human rights. Genuine democratic elections are central for maintaining peace and stability, and they provide the mandate for democratic governance.
- 2 In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and other international instruments, everyone has the right and must be provided with the opportunity to participate in the government and public affairs of his or her country, without any discrimination prohibited by international human rights principles and without any unreasonable restrictions. This right can be exercised directly, by participating in referenda, standing for elected office and by other means, or can be exercised through freely chosen representatives.
- 3 The will of the people of a country is the basis for the authority of government, and that will must be determined through genuine periodic elections, which guarantee the right and opportunity to vote freely and to be elected fairly through universal and equal suffrage by secret balloting or equivalent free voting procedures, the results of which are accurately counted, announced and respected. A significant number of rights and freedoms, processes, laws and institutions are therefore involved in achieving genuine democratic elections.
- 4 International election observation is: the systematic, comprehensive and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment; the impartial and professional analysis of such information; and the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis. International election observation should, when possible, offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of electoral and related processes, while not interfering in and thus hindering such processes. International election observation missions are: organized efforts of intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations and associations to conduct international election observation.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

- 5 International election observation evaluates pre-election, election-day and post-election periods through comprehensive, long-term observation, employing a variety of techniques. As part of these efforts, specialized observation missions may examine limited pre-election or post-election issues and specific processes (such as, delimitation of election districts, voter registration, use of electronic technologies and functioning of electoral complaint mechanisms). Stand-alone, specialized observation missions may also be employed, as long as such missions make clear public statements that their activities and conclusions are limited in scope and that they draw no conclusions about the overall election process based on such limited activities. All observer missions must make concerted efforts to place the election day into its context and not to over-emphasize the importance of election day observations. International election observation examines conditions relating to the right to vote and to be elected, including, among other things, discrimination or other obstacles that hinder participation in electoral processes based on political or other opinion, gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, such as physical disabilities. The findings of international election observation missions provide a factual common point of reference for all persons interested in the elections, including the political competitors. This can be particularly valuable in the context of disputed elections, where impartial and accurate findings can help to mitigate the potential for conflicts.
- 6 International election observation is conducted for the benefit of the people of the country holding the elections and for the benefit of the international community. It is process oriented, not concerned with any particular electoral result, and is concerned with results only to the degree that they are reported honestly and accurately in a transparent and timely manner. No one should be allowed to be a member of an international election observer mission unless that person is free from any political, economic or other conflicts of interest that would interfere with conducting observations accurately and impartially and/or drawing conclusions about the character of the election process accurately and impartially. These criteria must be met effectively over extended periods by long-term observers, as well as during the more limited periods of election day observation, each of which periods present specific challenges for independent and impartial analysis. International election observation missions should not accept funding or infrastructural support from the government whose elections are being observed, as it may raise a significant conflict of interest and undermine confidence in the integrity of the mission's findings. International election observation delegations should be prepared to disclose the sources of their funding upon appropriate and reasonable requests.
- 7 International election observation missions are expected to issue timely, accurate and impartial statements to the public (including providing copies to electoral authorities and other appropriate national entities), presenting their findings, conclusions and any appropriate recommendations they determine could help improve election related processes. Missions should announce publicly their presence in a country, including the mission's mandate, composition and duration, make periodic reports as warranted and issue a preliminary post-election statement of findings and a final report upon the conclusion of the election process. International election observation missions may also conduct private meetings with those concerned with organizing genuine democratic elections in a country to discuss the mission's findings, conclusions and recommendations. International election observation missions may also report to their respective intergovernmental or international nongovernmental organizations.



**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION**

- 8 The organizations that endorse this Declaration and the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers pledge to cooperate with each other in conducting international election observation missions. International election observation can be conducted, for example, by: individual international election observer missions; ad hoc joint international election observation missions; or coordinated international election observation missions. In all circumstances, the endorsing organizations pledge to work together to maximize the contribution of their international election observation missions.
- 9 International election observation must be conducted with respect for the sovereignty of the country holding elections and with respect for the human rights of the people of the country. International election observation missions must respect the laws of the host country, as well as national authorities, including electoral bodies, and act in a manner that is consistent with respecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 10 International election observation missions must actively seek cooperation with host country electoral authorities and must not obstruct the election process.
- 11 A decision by any organization to organize an international election observation mission or to explore the possibility of organizing an observation mission does not imply that the organization necessarily deems the election process in the country holding the elections to be credible. An organization should not send an international election observation mission to a country under conditions that make it likely that its presence will be interpreted as giving legitimacy to a clearly undemocratic electoral process, and international election observation missions in any such circumstance should make public statements to ensure that their presence does not imply such legitimacy.
- 12 In order for an international election observation mission to effectively and credibly conduct its work basic conditions must be met. An international election observation mission therefore should not be organized unless the country holding the election takes the following actions:
  - a Issues an invitation or otherwise indicates its willingness to accept international election observation missions in accordance with each organization's requirements sufficiently in advance of elections to allow analysis of all of the processes that are important to organizing genuine democratic elections;
  - b Guarantees unimpeded access of the international election observer mission to all stages of the election process and all election technologies, including electronic technologies and the certification processes for electronic voting and other technologies, without requiring election observation missions to enter into confidentiality or other nondisclosure agreements concerning technologies or election processes, and recognizes that international election observation missions may not certify technologies as acceptable;
  - c Guarantees unimpeded access to all persons concerned with election processes, including:
    - i* electoral officials at all levels, upon reasonable requests,
    - ii* members of legislative bodies and government and security officials whose functions are relevant to organizing genuine democratic elections,
    - iii* all of the political parties, organizations and persons that have sought to compete in



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the elections (including those that qualified, those that were disqualified and those that withdrew from participating) and those that abstained from participating,

*iv* news media personnel, and

*v* all organizations and persons that are interested in achieving genuine democratic elections in the country;

*d* Guarantees freedom of movement around the country for all members of the international election observer mission;

*e* Guarantees the international election observer mission's freedom to issue without interference public statements and reports concerning its findings and recommendations about election related processes and developments;

*f* Guarantees that no governmental, security or electoral authority will interfere in the selection of individual observers or other members of the international election observation mission or attempt to limit its numbers;

*g* Guarantees full, country-wide accreditation (that is, the issuing of any identification or document required to conduct election observation) for all persons selected to be observers or other participants by the international election observation mission as long as the mission complies with clearly defined, reasonable and non-discriminatory requirements for accreditation;

*h* Guarantees that no governmental, security or electoral authority will interfere in the activities of the international election observation mission; and

*i* Guarantees that no governmental authority will pressure, threaten action against or take any reprisal against any national or foreign citizen who works for, assists or provides information to the international election observation mission in accordance with international principles for election observation.

As a prerequisite to organizing an international election observation mission, intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations may require that such guarantees are set forth in a memorandum of understanding or similar document agreed upon by governmental and/or electoral authorities. Election observation is a civilian activity, and its utility is questionable in circumstances that present severe security risks, limit safe deployments of observers or otherwise would negate employing credible election observation methodologies.

13 International election observation missions should seek and may require acceptance of their presence by all major political competitors.

14 Political contestants (parties, candidates and supporters of positions on referenda) have vested interests in the electoral process through their rights to be elected and to participate directly in government. They therefore should be allowed to monitor all processes related to elections and observe procedures, including among other things the functioning of electronic and other electoral technologies inside polling stations, counting centers and other electoral facilities, as well as the transport of ballots and other sensitive materials.



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- 15 International election observation missions should:
- a establish communications with all political competitors in the election process, including representatives of political parties and candidates who may have information concerning the integrity of the election process;
  - b welcome information provided by them concerning the nature of the process;
  - c independently and impartially evaluate such information; and
  - d should evaluate as an important aspect of international election observation whether the political contestants are, on a nondiscriminatory basis, afforded access to verify the integrity of all elements and stages of the election process. International election observation missions should in their recommendations, which may be issued in writing or otherwise be presented at various stages of the election process, advocate for removing any undue restrictions or interference against activities by the political competitors to safeguard the integrity of electoral processes.
- 16 Citizens have an internationally recognized right to associate and a right to participate in governmental and public affairs in their country. These rights may be exercised through nongovernmental organizations monitoring all processes related to elections and observing procedures, including among other things the functioning of electronic and other electoral technologies inside polling stations, counting centers and other electoral facilities, as well as the transport of ballots and other sensitive materials. International election observation missions should evaluate and report on whether domestic nonpartisan election monitoring and observation organizations are able, on a nondiscriminatory basis, to conduct their activities without undue restrictions or interference. International election observation missions should advocate for the right of citizens to conduct domestic nonpartisan election observation without any undue restrictions or interference and should in their recommendations address removing any such undue restrictions or interference.
- 17 International election observation missions should identify, establish regular communications with and cooperate as appropriate with credible domestic nonpartisan election monitoring organizations. International election observation missions should welcome information provided by such organizations concerning the nature of the election process. Upon independent evaluation of information provided by such organizations, their findings can provide an important complement to the findings of international election observation missions, although international election observation missions must remain independent. International election observation missions therefore should make every reasonable effort to consult with such organizations before issuing any statements.
- 18 The intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration recognize that substantial progress has been made in establishing standards, principles and commitments concerning genuine democratic elections and commit themselves to use a statement of such principles in making observations, judgments and conclusions about the character of election processes and pledge to be transparent about the principles and observation methodologies they employ.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

### **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION**

- 19 The intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration recognize that there are a variety of credible methodologies for observing election processes and commit to sharing approaches and harmonizing methodologies as appropriate. They also recognize that international election observation missions must be of sufficient size to determine independently and impartially the character of election processes in a country and must be of sufficient duration to determine the character of all of the critical elements of the election process in the pre-election, election-day and post-election periods – unless an observation activity is focused on and therefore only comments on one or a limited number of elements of the election process. They further recognize that it is necessary not to isolate or over-emphasize election day observations, and that such observations must be placed into the context of the overall electoral process.
- 20 The intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration recognize that international election observation missions should include persons of sufficiently diverse political and professional skills, standing and proven integrity to observe and judge processes in light of: expertise in electoral processes and established electoral principles; international human rights; comparative election law and administration practices (including use of computer and other election technology); comparative political processes and country specific considerations. The endorsing organizations also recognize the importance of balanced gender diversity in the composition of participants and leadership of international election observation missions, as well as diversity of citizenship in such missions.
- 21 The intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration commit to:
  - a familiarize all participants in their international election observation missions concerning the principles of accuracy of information and political impartiality in making judgments and conclusions;
  - b provide a terms of reference or similar document, explaining the purposes of the mission;
  - c provide information concerning relevant national laws and regulations, the general political environment and other matters, including those that relate to the security and well being of observers;
  - d instruct all participants in the election observation mission concerning the methodologies to be employed; and
  - e require all participants in the election observation mission to read and pledge to abide by the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, which accompanies this Declaration and which may be modified without changing its substance slightly to fit requirements of the organization, or pledge to abide by a pre-existing code of conduct of the organization that is substantially the same as the accompanying Code of Conduct.
- 22 The intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations endorsing this Declaration commit to use every effort to comply with the terms of the Declaration and the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. Any time that an endorsing organization deems it necessary to depart from any of terms of the Declaration or the Accompanying Code of Conduct in order to conduct election observation in keeping with



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the spirit of the Declaration, the organization will explain in its public statements and will be prepared to answer appropriate questions from other endorsing organizations concerning why it was necessary to do so.

- 23 The endorsing organizations recognize that governments send observer delegations to elections in other countries and that others also observe elections. The endorsing organizations welcome any such observers agreeing on an ad hoc basis to this declaration and abiding by the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.
- 24 This Declaration and the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers are intended to be technical documents that do not require action by the political bodies of endorsing organizations (such as assemblies, councils or boards of directors), though such actions are welcome. This Declaration and the accompanying Code of Conduct for International Election Observers remain open for endorsement by other intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations. Endorsements should be recorded with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division.



## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

International election observation is widely accepted around the world. It is conducted by intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations and associations in order to provide an impartial and accurate assessment of the nature of election processes for the benefit of the population of the country where the election is held and for the benefit of the international community. Much therefore depends on ensuring the integrity of international election observation, and all who are part of this international election observation mission, including long-term and short-term observers, members of assessment delegations, specialized observation teams and leaders of the mission, must subscribe to and follow this Code of Conduct.

### **Respect Sovereignty and International Human Rights**

Elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The rights of citizens to vote and to be elected at periodic, genuine elections are internationally recognized human rights, and they require the exercise of a number of fundamental rights and freedoms. Election observers must respect the sovereignty of the host country, as well as the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people.

### **Respect the Laws of the Country and the Authority of Electoral Bodies**

Observers must respect the laws of the host country and the authority of the bodies charged with administering the electoral process. Observers must follow any lawful instruction from the country's governmental, security and electoral authorities. Observers also must maintain a respectful attitude toward electoral officials and other national authorities. Observers must note if laws, regulations or the actions of state and/or electoral officials unduly burden or obstruct the exercise of election-related rights guaranteed by law, constitution or applicable international instruments.

### **Respect the Integrity of the International Election Observation Mission**

Observers must respect and protect the integrity of the international election observation mission. This includes following this Code of Conduct, any written instructions (such as a terms of reference, directives and guidelines) and any verbal instructions from the observation mission's leadership. Observers must: attend all of the observation mission's required briefings, trainings and debriefings; become familiar with the election law, regulations and other relevant laws as directed by the observation mission; and carefully adhere to the methodologies employed by the observation mission. Observers also must report to the leadership of the observation mission any conflicts of interest they may have and any improper behavior they see conducted by other observers that are part of the mission.





**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS**

**Maintain Strict Political Impartiality at All Times**

Observers must maintain strict political impartiality at all times, including leisure time in the host country. They must not express or exhibit any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, political parties, candidates, referenda issues or in relation to any contentious issues in the election process. Observers also must not conduct any activity that could be reasonably perceived as favoring or providing partisan gain for any political competitor in the host country, such as wearing or displaying any partisan symbols, colors, banners or accepting anything of value from political competitors.

**Do Not Obstruct Election Processes**

Observers must not obstruct any element of the election process, including pre-election processes, voting, counting and tabulation of results and processes transpiring after election day. Observers may bring irregularities, fraud or significant problems to the attention of election officials on the spot, unless this is prohibited by law, and must do so in a non-obstructive manner. Observers may ask questions of election officials, political party representatives and other observers inside polling stations and may answer questions about their own activities, as long as observers do not obstruct the election process. In answering questions observers should not seek to direct the election process. Observers may ask and answer questions of voters but may not ask them to tell for whom or what party or referendum position they voted.

**Provide Appropriate Identification**

Observers must display identification provided by the election observation mission, as well as identification required by national authorities, and must present it to electoral officials and other interested national authorities when requested.

**Maintain Accuracy of Observations and Professionalism in Drawing Conclusions**

Observers must ensure that all of their observations are accurate. Observations must be comprehensive, noting positive as well as negative factors, distinguishing between significant and insignificant factors and identifying patterns that could have an important impact on the integrity of the election process. Observers' judgments must be based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis, distinguishing subjective factors from objective evidence. Observers must base all conclusions on factual and verifiable evidence and not draw conclusions prematurely. Observers also must keep a well documented record of where they observed, the observations made and other relevant information as required by the election observation mission and must turn in such documentation to the mission.

**Refrain from Making Comments to the Public or the Media before the Mission Speaks**

Observers must refrain from making any personal comments about their observations or conclusions to the news media or members of the public before the election observation mission makes a statement, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the observation mission's leadership. Observers may explain the nature of the observation mission, its activities and other matters deemed appropriate by the observation mission and should refer the media or other interested persons to the those individuals designated by the observation mission.

**Cooperate with Other Election Observers**

Observers must be aware of other election observation missions, both international and domestic, and cooperate with them as instructed by the leadership of the election observation mission.



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**Maintain Proper Personal Behavior**

Observers must maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including exhibiting sensitivity for host-country cultures and customs, exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time.

**Violations of This Code of Conduct**

In a case of concern about the violation of this Code of Conduct, the election observation mission shall conduct an inquiry into the matter. If a serious violation is found to have occurred, the observer concerned may have their observer accreditation withdrawn or be dismissed from the election observation mission. The authority for such determinations rests solely with the leadership of the election observation mission.

**Pledge to Follow This Code of Conduct**

Every person who participates in this election observation mission must read and understand this Code of Conduct and must sign a pledge to follow it.



## PLEDGE TO ACCOMPANY THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVER

***I have read and understand the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that was*** provided to me by the international election observation mission. I hereby pledge that I will follow the Code of Conduct and that all of my activities as an election observer will be conducted completely in accordance with it. I have no conflicts of interest, political, economic nor other, that will interfere with my ability to be an impartial election observer and to follow the Code of Conduct.

***I will maintain strict political impartiality at all times. I will make my judgments based on the*** highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis, distinguishing subjective factors from objective evidence, and I will base all of my conclusions on factual and verifiable evidence.

***I will not obstruct the election process. I will respect national laws and the authority of election*** officials and will maintain a respectful attitude toward electoral and other national authorities. I will respect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of the country. I will maintain proper personal behavior and respect others, including exhibiting sensitivity for host-country cultures and customs, exercise sound judgment in personal interactions and observe the highest level of professional conduct at all times, including leisure time.

***I will protect the integrity of the international election observation mission and will follow the*** instructions of the observation mission. I will attend all briefings, trainings and debriefings required by the election observation mission and will cooperate in the production of its statements and reports as requested. I will refrain from making personal comments, observations or conclusions to the news media or the public before the election observation mission makes a statement, unless specifically instructed otherwise by the observation mission's leadership.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers were developed through a multi-year process involving more than 20 intergovernmental and international nongovernmental organizations concerned with election observation around the world.

The process began informally in 2001 at the initiative of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) and included an initial meeting at the UN in New York and a meeting in Washington co-hosted by the OAS and NDI.

Building on that foundation, the UNEAD, The Carter Center, and NDI formed a joint secretariat and launched the formal phase of the process in October 2003 at a meeting held at The Carter Center in Atlanta. This was followed by a September 2004 meeting in Brussels, which was hosted by the European Commission. An ongoing consultative process transpired among the participating organizations, which resulted in a consensus document that was offered for organizational endorsements beginning in July 2005.

The secretariat was comprised of Carina Perelli and Sean Dunne for UNEAD, David Carroll, David Pottie and Avery Davis-Roberts for The Carter Center, and Patrick Merloe and Linda Patterson for NDI. The secretariat members prepared the documents, with Mr. Merloe serving as the lead drafter, drawing on a substantial body of existing documentation from organizations involved in election observation. During the process, the secretariat received critical input and comments from many of the participating organizations.

*The process was supported by financial assistance from the United Nations, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Commission, the Republic of Germany and the Starr Foundation, as well as a number of individual contributors.*



# REMARKS OF U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN AT ENDORSEMENT CEREMONY

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 2005

President Carter, Secretary Albright, distinguished guests, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, and my dear friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations, particularly the representatives of the two dozen organizations that are today endorsing the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

I am honored to be joined by two dear friends who have been tireless champions of democracy during their distinguished public careers—former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

We are here to signal our endorsement of a pioneering initiative that should strengthen the role of the international community in supporting democratic elections around the world.

Just last month at the World Summit, the member states of the United Nations reaffirmed that democracy is a universal value. The spread of democracy around the world has been one of the signal transformations of our times. Elections—observed by the international community or assisted in other ways by it—are at the heart of this inspiring story.

It is a story interwoven with that of the United Nations itself. Our organization was first called upon to observe elections in 1947 on the Korean Peninsula. Through the era of trusteeship and decolonization, the United Nations supervised and observed plebiscites, referenda, and elections worldwide. U.N.-monitored elections were key elements of the transitions to peace in places such as Namibia, Cambodia, and Central America—and in helping bring about the end to apartheid.

Today, the United Nations rarely fields its own observers. This task is more commonly carried out

by regional organizations and international NGOs, frequently in conjunction with national groups. But electoral assistance remains a strategic and high-profile activity for the United Nations, particularly in nations emerging from conflict or undergoing fragile political transitions—from Afghanistan to Burundi to Iraq, and just a few weeks ago in Liberia where President Carter participated.

Credible elections can be a crucial step in the transition from war to peace. However, unfair or fraudulent elections can become detonators of conflict. Elections can also be misused by those wanting to create an appearance of democracy without permitting its substance.

The presence of international election observers—fielded always at the invitation of sovereign states—can make a big difference in ensuring that elections genuinely move the democratic process forward. Their mere presence can dissuade misconduct, ensure transparency, and inspire confidence in the process. The public statements made by observer missions, both before and after an election, can have enormous political significance.

For the international community, the opportunity to assist carries with it a great responsibility. And that, in essence, is the spirit of today's initiative—to ensure that election observers are always making a positive contribution.

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, and its accompanying Code of Conduct, marks an important step forward.

Among the many sensible guidelines it establishes is agreement by organizations sending observers that they will act with total impartiality. They agree also to examine all of the relevant stages of the elections and not simply parachute in on the day of the vote.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

They commit to take no funding from host governments whose elections they are observing and to insist on freedom of movement and full access to information throughout the many stages of the election.

Organizations also undertake carefully to select and train members of the observation team, ensuring that they have no political bias that might affect their judgment. Each and every observer is asked to adhere to a code of conduct.

The declaration is also very explicit in committing organizations never to send an election observation mission to a country if its presence would be misinterpreted as giving legitimacy to an election that clearly is not democratic.

The community of organizations providing international election observers has grown and diversified over the years. Until now, however, there has been no set of commonly held standards governing this important work.

Now we do—and we must make full use of them. We should also make it a priority to strengthen local civil society groups to play the role of electoral watchdogs within their own national arenas. Our ultimate goal therefore should be to work ourselves out of a job. But until that is possible, let us live up to these guidelines. I am very glad, on behalf of the U.N. Secretariat, to endorse them and to pledge to follow them fully in our work.

Thank you very much.



# REMARKS OF FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER AT ENDORSEMENT CEREMONY

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 2005

Thank you very much. We are assembled here, as election observers, in what is one of the fastest growing enterprises in the world. As the field of election observation has expanded in recent years, we have been able to accomplish a great deal by exchanging information among ourselves and identifying best practices. The Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct that our organizations have jointly endorsed today is an important milestone in our efforts to improve election observation. This is a great achievement and was long overdue.

It has been increasingly difficult for host nations to engage with the various monitoring organizations, especially when we speak a different language and utilize different principles, methodologies, and procedures. Host countries confront many serious challenges in administering credible elections without also having to face a cacophony of approaches and principles from the observer organizations. So, it is very good that this group is assembled here and that we have committed ourselves to adhering to the practices and approaches set forth in the Declaration of Principles and Code of Conduct.

I want to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for welcoming us here at the United Nations and for the great contributions the United Nations has made to this process over the last several years. I also want to thank the National Democratic Institute, which has been at the forefront of our joint initiative, in particular Ken Wollack and Patrick Merloe for their efforts and commitment, as well as Secretary Madeleine Albright for her leadership.

Looking around the table, I see many organizations that The Carter Center has had the particular privilege and opportunity of working with, including the African Union, the Commonwealth, the European

Union, IFES, the International Republican Institute, the OAS, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and others. We have had excellent working relationships with these and others in various election observation efforts and look forward to continued partnerships.

There have been a few occasions in our election work when The Carter Center had to leave a country in a hurry after we determined that the electoral process was very likely to be fraudulent. Either we condemned the election and departed before election day, or we concluded that we could not undermine our reputation by issuing a statement that might be interpreted as endorsing the election. I hope that these cases will be fewer in the future.

As the secretary-general noted, The Carter Center and NDI were in Liberia the week before last. Over the years, the Center has been involved in over 60 elections, and we have cooperated with many of your organizations in some of these elections. Through this experience, we have learned how important it is for us all to share experiences with one another and to improve the methods, practices, and principles that guide our efforts. The Carter Center has been eager to form such partnerships and to work closely with you.

The collaborative efforts among our organizations that led to this meeting should be continued in the future so that we can jointly address a range of new challenges that confront the community of international election observation organizations. One major development we need to be concerned with is the increasing use of automated voting systems.

Other key challenges include the need to develop better methods for observing and assessing campaign finance and media access. In addition, we need to continue to improve our techniques of assessing voter registration processes and electoral dispute resolution



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

mechanisms. More broadly, we also need to promote the idea that all countries should welcome international observers. I think that the Declaration of Principles will be a great help in this regard and will encourage all countries to recognize the importance of international election observation.

Looking forward, we need to engage a more difficult challenge, which is to build broad consensus on standards for democratic elections. I think this is critically important, and ultimately such standards could provide the basis for the assessment made in our election observation work. Clearly, however, it is not possible or desirable for there to be complete uniformity among countries in terms of democratic practices. And, I certainly wouldn't want countries to pattern policies after those of the United States of America. The important thing now is that we have managed to come to consensus among ourselves on basic approaches to election observation, and these efforts provide an important foundation for promoting greater consensus on standards for democratic elections.

The United States has had two very troubled elections recently, in 2000 and in 2004. Following both elections, I worked with other U.S. political leaders, including former President Gerald Ford and former Secretary of State James Baker, to develop

recommendations for reforming and improving the U.S. electoral system. While the United States has made some progress, we still have a long way to go. The United States has policies that make it difficult for international organizations to monitor the election and which would be severely criticized by observer groups. For example, in the United States, the process of choosing nominees is only susceptible to the influence of about 8 percent of the American voters. There is no restraint in the amount of money coming into a campaign. Potential presidential candidates have to raise \$100–\$150 million to be seriously considered as a nominee. There is not equal access to the media, and there is not a central election commission in charge of administering elections.

The point is not to criticize my own country but to say that all nations need to learn how best to have an honest, fair, open, safe, and constructive election. The leaders must be committed to the democratic process and to building democratic institutions; they must respect human rights in all aspects; civil society must be increasingly involved and there should be a willingness to welcome international observers. We still have a lot to learn, and I hope on behalf of The Carter Center that all of us assembled here today can learn from each other.

Thank you very much.





# REMARKS OF FORMER U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AT ENDORSEMENT CEREMONY

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 27, 2005

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary-General and Mr. President; it is not every day I have the opportunity to follow two Nobel Prize winners to the microphone. It is a daunting experience but, in this case, a welcome one.

And I am delighted to be here in my capacity as chairman of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, known more succinctly as NDI.

So to everyone, I say hello.

Today really does mark a milestone in a process that began more than four years ago. As is shown by the presence here this afternoon, it has in fact been a team effort and a team success. And the winner is democracy.

According to the U.N. Charter, one purpose of the United Nations is to promote respect for human rights. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the will of the people, as expressed in periodic and genuine elections, shall be the basis of authority in government. Together, these fine principles accomplish absolutely nothing unless they are backed up by actions.

In world politics, as in war, the high ground makes the difference. And because democracy occupies the rhetorical high ground in global affairs, many leaders like to call themselves democrats whether they have earned that right or not. And that is why we have had so many democratic people's republics that were neither democratic nor responsive to the people. And why we have seen so many elections where the official candidate has won with 100 percent of the vote, or 99 percent or, in some cases, 110 percent.

Saddam Hussein won elections and so does Fidel Castro. So if words are to have meaning, we must draw distinctions between real democracy and sham

democracy, between elections that are free and fair and those that are phony and fixed.

Democracy needs referees. As the secretary-general mentioned, the first U.N. election mission was dispatched to Korea in 1948. But election observers did not truly come into their own until the Cold War began to wind down. Beginning in the late 1980s, there were so many places, such as the Philippines and Namibia, Haiti, and Nicaragua, where international monitors and observers really have played a vital role.

Observers are now very much a regular part of many election narratives. Prior to voting, the questions are asked: Will observers be allowed and under what conditions will they operate? During and after the voting, the question becomes: What are the observers saying? What are they thinking? Is President Carter's thumb pointed up or down?

Over the past two decades, election observers have compiled an impressive record. We have exposed fraud, mitigated conflicts, validated legitimate winners, and, above all, given voters a reason to believe that going to the polls makes a difference. We have also learned that unless election observers are known to be impartial and consistent and truthful, they will not be trusted. And if they are not trusted, they will have no value.

It is this understanding that brought us here today. And just as observers are needed to draw the line between fair and unfair elections, so our Declaration and Code of Conduct is designed to identify those who are committed to doing that job right.

The task of developing these documents has been valuable in itself. I think the process really has been important because it has allowed us to compare experiences and share ideas.



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

And looking ahead, I believe the Declaration and Code will be indispensable to the observer delegations we assemble, the governments with whom we deal, the media with whom we interact, and the publics whose interests we exist to serve.

We all know that elections, in themselves, are not sufficient to produce democracy, but we also know that free elections are the essential first step.

And I fully expect the monitoring of elections to remain a growth industry for years to come—I hope ahead of security, Mr. President—and I am pleased that we will go forward with this Declaration and Code of Conduct in place.

Before closing, I would like to recognize all of the regional and pro-democracy organizations that participated in this effort. I want especially to acknowledge the leading role played by the United Nations, and particularly the secretary-general, who has been a steadfast champion of democracy, and Carina Perelli, who directs the U.N.'s Electoral Assistance Division and who is taking care of business in Baghdad.

I also have to, with all great humility and love, praise President Carter for the trailblazing record he and The Carter Center have established in this field.

I am proud of many things in my life, but serving in his administration is right up there; NDI has been proud to work with him and with the Center as partners on many elections, going back to Panama in 1989.

Thanks are due, as well, to all those at NDI who have worked so hard on this project: Pat Merloe, one of my traveling companions who has been superb and represents us so well and who directs our electoral programs and was one of the initiators of this entire process, and my friend and partner in all of this, Ken Wollack as president of NDI. I think we have all worked together with all the organizations represented here and, I hope, been helpful in providing leadership.

It has been said that anything worth doing is done in faith. The development of this Declaration and Code of Conduct was done in faith that it would be a living document, a document that reflects our shared commitment to the integrity of the electoral process and our belief in the validity of democratic principles and our conviction that freedom is the path to a world more peaceful, prosperous, and just than it has ever been. And it is a great honor and pleasure to work with all of you on this continuing project.

Thank you very much.



## PRESS CLIPS

### INTERNATIONAL MONITORS SAY ELECTION OBSERVER GUIDELINES NEEDED

U.N. Electoral Assistance Division, written by Serena Parker

April 30, 2005

Election observers are playing an increasingly important role in elections around the world. But how different regional groups judge elections in various countries can vary. Observer groups say standards are necessary to ensure legitimacy and to help persuade governments to enact reforms when necessary. The United Nations and other major international organizations are working to develop such standards.

The U.N. Electoral Assistance Division is about to take a major step toward making international election observation activities systematic, as it prepares to issue a set of common goals and principles and a code of conduct for international election monitors.

In recent elections in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, European observers said the polls were not fully free and fair. In Ukraine, last year, the findings of election observers played a key role in the events that led to mass protests and a second and third round of voting for president.

Professor Peter Lewis, who teaches politics at American University in Washington, says guidelines are urgently needed to prevent undemocratic regimes from taking advantage of the system, citing the recent elections in Togo as an example.

“Togo just illustrates once again, as in Zimbabwe, how governments can game [take advantage of] the process,” said Peter Lewis. “You invite in a set of observers who are essentially going to sign off on the election. And from what I have been given to understand about the details of the Togolese election, the assessment of the international observers from Economic Community of West African States entirely lacks credibility. I mean, we had one province where the vote for the president exceeded the total

population of the province. To me—and I’m not a professional election observer—that’s kind of a red flag. That tells me something is not quite right there.”

The West African nation of Togo has been rocked by violent protests after election officials announced that Faure Gnassingbe, the son of the country’s longtime ruler, was the winner in highly disputed presidential elections.

Mr. Lewis was one of the panelists who participated in a recent conference on international election observers, held at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. The panelists said international election observers face many challenges, for example, governments that reject international monitors on the grounds that they may be highly critical of the voting process.

Such was the case in Zimbabwe, where a hand-picked group of observers from South Africa was invited in and said the election results reflected the will of the people. Meanwhile, traditional observers from the West were barred from monitoring the election, and the British, United States, and other Western governments said the poll was neither free nor fair.

Professor Lewis says the biggest challenge is how to ensure monitoring teams’ observations and recommendations are implemented.

“What is the strategic role of election observers?” he asked. “Are they there to encourage an ongoing process of election reform, a so-called work in progress, whereby you note the flaws that you see each time, present them to the government, and express fervent hope that this will be addressed and then leave it at that?... Or is it a process whereby international observers represent certain universal,



## INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

global standards of conduct and are there to issue essentially a certification of whether those standards were honored and upheld?”

One way to encourage governments to adopt the recommended reforms is to have them sign an agreement beforehand with the international organization that is sending the observers. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—or OSCE—already does this.

The agreement would bind governments to seriously address any concerns raised by election observers. If they fail to implement the necessary reforms, international election monitors would refuse to participate in future elections, effectively denying the governments their stamp of approval.

Eric Bjornlund, author of “Beyond Free and Fair: Monitoring Elections and Building Democracy,” says before taking this extreme action, observers need to be sure they are evaluating the elections in context.

“Irregularities and problems exist in all elections,” said Eric Bjornlund. “This is not a human rights problem in that sense. And every person who is unfairly denied the right to vote—that’s a significant issue and should be followed up, but it’s not necessarily an issue worthy of calling into question the legitimacy of the election.”

Another way to encourage governments to follow standard election guidelines and enact reform when needed is to involve the international business community, which could withhold investment, says Matt Dippell, deputy director for Latin America and

the Caribbean at the National Democratic Institute, a Washington-based NGO that promotes democracy and governance issues around the world.

“I think the situation with international observation would benefit from having coordinated responses and trying to bring in the international investment community in a unified approach,” said Matt Dippell. “In the sense that it’s important to start to raise the political cost for countries that reject or don’t respond to observers. And that, I think, will send a message to countries that they need to comply.”

Mr. Dippell, who served as an election monitor in Peru, says, while the international election observers are important, equally if not more important are the domestic observers. He says he saw this first-hand in Peru where the local groups were much larger and could mobilize large numbers of volunteers to fan out across the country. In addition, he says, because they are locally organized, they are able to press for reforms after the election is over.

Similarly in Ukraine, after the OSCE said the December 2004 election fell short of democratic standards, it was local groups that mobilized tens of thousands of Ukrainians and eventually forced the government to hold a second and third round of voting.

As international election observers take stock of their own practices, the panelists said, more should be done to support local nongovernmental organizations involved in democracy and governance issues.



## UNITED NATIONS, OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES, AND NGOs ADOPT STANDARDS FOR ELECTION MONITORING

U.S. Newswire  
October 26, 2005

National Democratic Institute Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will join former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza and others on Oct. 27 to unveil a Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. Together with representatives of more than 20 participating intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, both regional and international, they will launch the Declaration at a ceremony at U.N. headquarters in New York.

International election observation has become central to helping nations around the world consolidate peace and strengthen democracy. The 12-page Declaration of Principles and its accompanying Code of Conduct bring participating observer groups for the first time under a common set of standards for professional, impartial, and effective observation. They are intended to establish consensus on key principles, to provide guidelines for best practices for the growing field of election observation, to protect the integrity of democratic elections, and help advance democratic transitions. This initiative was started by the U.N. Electoral Assistance Division, the National Democratic Institute, and The Carter Center, which served as the secretariat for the project.

The full text of the Declaration may be read at <http://www.ndi.org> or <http://www.cartercenter.org>.

“Our hope is that the Declaration will enable consistency among observer groups and ensure the effectiveness and credibility of observation missions worldwide,” said former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

“This Declaration brings together an unprecedented group of international organizations in support of the principles of international election observation,” said NDI Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. “It is a major landmark

in developing an international consensus on the standards for election observation.”

Endorsing organizations commit themselves, for example: to act impartially; monitor all stages of the election process; and accept no funding from the host government. The common standards also establish prerequisites for observation, such as freedom of movement, freedom to make public statements and free access to information. They are also specific about the principle of ensuring that sending monitors not be done in a way that lends undue legitimacy to undemocratic elections.

In addition to the United Nations, organizations participating in the meeting include:

- African Union;
- Asian Network for Free Elections;
- The Carter Center;
- Center for Electoral Promotion and Advice of the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights;
- Commonwealth Secretariat;
- Electoral Institute of Southern Africa;
- European Commission;
- European Network of Electoral Monitoring Organizations;
- Electoral Reform International Services;
- la Francophonie;
- IFES, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance;
- Inter-parliamentary Union;
- International Republican Institute;
- National Democratic Institute;
- Organization of American States;
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand Electoral Administrators’ Network;
- Pacific Island Forum.



INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ELECTION MONITORING  
SLATED FOR ADOPTION AT U.N.

**U.N. Press Releases**  
**October 26, 2005**

**A**s international election observation plays an increasingly important role in helping nations consolidate peace and strengthen democracy, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other key players in the field are poised to adopt a new set of standards—including a ban on receiving funding from host governments—for carrying out this vital work.

The Declaration of Principles and an accompanying Code of Conduct will bring participating observer groups for the first time under a common set of standards for professional and effective observation, U.N. officials said.

The secretary-general will be joined at an endorsement ceremony on Thursday by representatives of

more than 20 organizations active in observing elections around the world, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter of The Carter Center, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and the secretaries-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Pacific Islands Forum.

The new standards commit endorsing organizations to act impartially, monitor all stages of the election process, and accept no funding from host governments. They also establish prerequisites that must be met for international observation, including freedom of movement, freedom to make public statements, and free access to information.



## STANDARDS FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL OBSERVATION ENDORSED AT U.N.

U.N. Press Releases  
October 27, 2005

The presence of international observers can make a dramatic difference in ensuring that elections move a country's democratic process forward, while fraudulent voting can detonate conflict, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said today at a ceremony in New York to adopt a set of standards in the electoral field.

"The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, and its accompanying Code of Conduct, marks an important step forward," he said to representatives of some two dozen organizations, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter of The Carter Center and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright of the National Democratic Institute.

The secretary-general noted that the guidelines serve to enshrine the principle of total impartiality. "They agree also to examine all of the relevant stages of the elections and not simply parachute in on the day of the vote," he noted. "They commit to take no funding from host governments whose elections they are observing and to insist on freedom of movement and full access to information throughout the many stages of the election."

The pioneering initiative setting common standards should strengthen the role of the international community in supporting democratic elections around the world, he said.

The mere presence of international election observers, fielded always at the invitation of sovereign states, "can dissuade misconduct, ensure transparency, and inspire confidence in the process," Mr. Annan said.

The spread of democracy around the world is an inspiring story interwoven with that of the U.N. itself, since the world body was first called to observe elections on the Korean Peninsula in 1947, he said.

"Through the era of trusteeship and decolonization, the United Nations supervised and observed plebiscites, referenda, and elections worldwide. U.N.-monitored elections were key elements of the transitions to peace in places such as Namibia, Cambodia, and Central America—and in helping bring about the end to apartheid," he pointed out.

Today the U.N. rarely fields its own observers, he said, but election assistance remains a strategic and high-profile activity for the world body, particularly in nations emerging from conflict or undergoing fragile political transitions—from Afghanistan to Burundi to Iraq, and a few weeks ago in Liberia, where President Carter took part in the process.

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers were drafted by a joint secretariat of the U.N. Electoral Assistance Division, the Carter Center and the National Democratic Institute.

"Genuine democratic elections cannot be achieved unless a wide range of other human rights and fundamental freedoms can be exercised on an ongoing basis without discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, including among others disabilities, and without arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions," the Declaration says.

It stresses that human rights and democracy cannot be achieved without the protections of the rule of law.



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INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION UNVEILED

U.S. Department of State Press Releases and Documents

November 3, 2005

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched a new Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation at a ceremony at U.N. headquarters in New York Oct. 27.

The 12-page Declaration of Principles and its accompanying Code of Conduct provide election

observer groups, for the first time, with a common set of standards for professional, impartial, and effective observation. The declaration was initiated by the U.N. Electoral Assistance Division, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and The Carter Center.

The text of the declaration is available on the Carter Center Web site.



# THE CARTER CENTER AT A GLANCE

**Overview:** The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide. A non-governmental organization, the Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 65 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers to increase crop production.

**Accomplishments:** The Center has observed 67 elections in 26 countries; helped farmers double or triple grain production in 15 African countries; worked to prevent and resolve civil and international conflicts worldwide; intervened to prevent unnecessary diseases in Latin America and Africa; and strived to diminish the stigma against mental illnesses.

**Budget:** \$49.1 million 2005–2006 operating budget.

**Donations:** The Center is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, financed by private donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and international development assistance agencies. Contributions by U.S. citizens and companies are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

**Facilities:** The nondenominational Cecil B. Day Chapel and other facilities are available for weddings, corporate retreats and meetings, and other special events. For information, (404) 420-5112.

**Location:** In a 35-acre park, about 1.5 miles east of downtown Atlanta. The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, which adjoins the Center, is owned and operated by the National Archives and Records Administration and is open to the public. (404) 865-7101.

**Staff:** 160 employees, based primarily in Atlanta.



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