



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2020

For more information, contact:

In Georgia: Diana Chachua, dchachua@ndi.org, + 995 577 779639

In the United States: Jerry Hartz, jhartz@ndi.org, +1 202 728-5500

GEORGIA HAS CHANCE TO REAFFIRM POSITION AS DEMOCRATIC LEADER

Statement of the National Democratic Institute

Tbilisi, Georgia

“As parliamentary elections approach in October, Georgia has a chance to reaffirm its position as a democratic leader in the Eurasia region,” said Ambassador Derek Mitchell, President of the National Democratic Institute, at the conclusion of a visit to the country. “NDI will remain steadfast in its commitment to support Georgian democracy during this critical year, and for years to come.”

On February 24-26, Mitchell visited Tbilisi and Marneuli for consultations on developments in Georgia’s democracy and NDI programming. This was Mitchell’s first visit to Georgia.

During his three-day visit, Mitchell met with the Prime Minister, the President, the Speaker and other members of parliament, heads of the ruling and opposition political parties from across the political spectrum, leaders of civil society organizations, mayors and sakrebulo members, the chair of the Central Election Commission, women politicians, youth leaders, and representatives of the diplomatic community. NDI is grateful to everyone who shared their time and views so generously.

NDI’s on-going activity in Georgia, and electoral conditions in advance of the October 2020 parliamentary election, were the focus of Mitchell’s conversations.

“Georgia’s friends in the West, including NDI, will be closely following electoral preparations,” Mitchell said. “Building public confidence in the process this year will require reaching timely and broad-based consensus on the country’s electoral system; respecting the rights of all candidates and parties to participate without fear of politicized prosecution; safeguarding the rights of civil society organizations to organize, operate and speak freely; empowering women to participate safely and equally; creating space for constructive engagement of youth; and avoiding political polarization that can degrade national unity and invite external illiberal influence.”

NDI has worked in Georgia since 1994 with the parliament; political parties; municipal councils (sakrebulo); national and local government officials; and civil society groups throughout the country to help realize Georgians' aspiration for democracy, security, and prosperity. In all of its activities, NDI responds to requests from its Georgian partners. NDI collaborates closely with the governing party and parties in opposition alike, and favors none over any other. The Institute's interest, as always, is in transparent, accountable and inclusive democratic processes, not particular electoral outcomes.

In Georgia, NDI has regularly conducted public opinion research to provide decision makers and activists with reliable information about citizens' opinions and priorities. The Institute's surveys and focus groups are designed with input from representatives of the Georgian government and of parties across the political spectrum. As conveyed to Mitchell during his visit, the findings have been used extensively by members of parliament, as well as local elected officials, to inform their legislation and policy-making processes, and by the ruling and opposition political parties to assist their development of organizational, including electoral, strategy.

For more information about NDI and its programs, please visit www.ndi.org.

###