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Pre-Election Report

**The May 16, 1996
Presidential Election
in the Dominican Republic**

May 7, 1996

National Democratic Institute For International Affairs

conducting nonpartisan international programs to help promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions



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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was established in 1983. By working with political parties, civic organizations, parliaments, and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has a staff of 175 with field offices in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States.

NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 70 countries. Programs focus on six major areas:

Political Party Training: NDI conducts multipartisan training seminars in political development with a broad spectrum of democratic parties. NDI draws international experts to forums where party members learn first-hand the techniques of organization, communication and constituent contact.

Election Processes: NDI provides technical assistance for political parties, nonpartisan associations and election authorities to conduct voter and civic education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programs. The Institute has also organized more than 25 major international observer delegations.

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THE COUNCIL OF FREELY ELECTED HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

The Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government is a group of 26 current and former heads of government from throughout the Americas. The Council was established in November 1986 at a meeting chaired by former U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford on "Reinforcing Democracy in the Americas" at the Carter Center. The Council's goals are to reinforce democracy in the Americas, promote multilateral efforts to resolve conflict in the hemisphere, and to advance regional economic cooperation.

The Council has been a pioneer in mediating and observing elections. The Council or its representatives have observed 13 elections in 9 countries: Panama (1989, 1994), Nicaragua (1989-1990), the Dominican Republic (1990), Haiti (1987, 1990, 1995), Guyana (1990-1992), Suriname (1991), the United States (1992), Paraguay (1993), and Mexico (1992, 1994). The elections in Nicaragua and Haiti were the first free elections accepted by all parties in the two nations' histories, and in Guyana, the first such elections in 28 years. The Council has worked since the elections to help consolidate democracy in Guyana, Nicaragua, Panama, and Haiti. In addition to reinforcing democracy, the Council has supported efforts to resolve the debt crisis of the 1980s, and to promote freer trade in the 1990s. Members have worked to resolve the property problem in Nicaragua and the Ecuador-Peru territorial dispute, among other issues.

The Council is based at the Latin American and Caribbean Program of the Carter Center of Emory University. Dr. Robert Pastor, Fellow at the Center, is Executive Secretary of the Council; Dr. David Carroll is Associate Director; Dr. Jennifer McCoy, Senior Research Associate; and Ms. Harriette Martin, Administrative Assistant.

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Jimmy Carter, Chairman of the Council, former U.S. President (1977-81)
George Price, Vice-Chairman, former Prime Minister of Belize (1981-84, 1989-93; Premier, 1965-81)

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of Haiti (1991-present)
Ernesto Pérez Balladares, President of Panama (1994-present)
Rafael Caldera, President of Venezuela (1969-1974, 1994-present)
John Compton, Prime Minister of St. Lucia (1987-present)
P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica (1992-present)
Julio Maria Sanguinetti, Uruguayan President (1985-1989, 1995-present)

Raúl Alfonsín, former Argentine President (1983-1989)
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Edward Seaga, former Jamaican Prime Minister (1980-1988)
Pierre Trudeau, former Canadian Prime Minister (1968-1979)

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PRE-ELECTION REPORT THE MAY 16, 1996 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs and the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, based at the Carter Center, conducted a pre-election mission to the Dominican Republic from April 24 to 25, 1996. The delegation was led by former Presidents Jimmy Carter of the United States and Belisario Betancur of Colombia. The other members of the delegation were: former Senator Jose O. Bordon of Argentina; Curtis Cutter, NDI senior advisor; Robert Pastor, the Council's executive director; Santiago A. Canton, NDI director for Latin America and the Caribbean; Becky Castle, the Council's program coordinator; and Kate Kelsch, NDI program officer. The purpose of the delegation was to demonstrate the international community's continued support for the democratic process in the Dominican Republic and to provide the international community with an objective assessment of the preparation for the May 16 elections. The delegation also learned from the Dominican people about the nature of the electoral process and its implications for the further development of the Dominican Republic's democratic institutions.

Both NDI and the Council have a history of election monitoring in the Dominican Republic. For the 1990 presidential, legislative and local elections, NDI and the Carter Center co-sponsored an international election observation delegation. Although the 1990 observation team witnessed irregularities, the delegation did not see evidence of a pattern of irregularities which would have affected the result. Four years later, NDI organized an election observation delegation for the 1994 presidential, legislative and local elections. The delegation observed serious, widespread irregularities and concluded that the results may not have reflected the will of the Dominican electorate. An estimated 45,000 Dominicans were denied the opportunity to vote, while the margin of victory was just 22,281. Following the disputed elections, political party leaders and representatives of civil society worked together to gain agreement for a "Pact for Democracy." The constitution reform, which resulted from the Pact, called for a new presidential election in May 1996 and outlined other electoral reforms.

The pre-election mission of April 24 to 25, 1996 was made after receiving invitations from the three major Presidential candidates and the Central Electoral Board (*Junta Central Electoral - JCE*). During the two-day visit, the delegation met with: Dr. Jose Francisco Peña Gómez, Dominican Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Dominicano - PRD*) presidential candidate; Leonel Fernández, the Dominican Liberation Party (*Partido de la Liberación Dominicana - PLD*) presidential candidate; and Jacinto Peynado, current Vice President and the Social Christian Reformist Party (*Partido Reformista Social Cristiano- PRSC*) presidential candidate; the Action Group for Democracy, a coalition of representatives of civil society; Participación Ciudadana, a national election monitoring group; prominent journalists; and other Dominican leaders. Additionally, the delegation met with the President Joaquin Balaguer, Cardinal Nicolas de Jesús Lopez Rodriguez, and the five judges of the JCE. All the Dominican's with whom the delegation met indicated that they would

welcome a Council/NDI international observer delegation for the upcoming election which, in their view, would contribute to an open electoral process.

President Betancur and President Ramiro de Leon Carpio of Guatemala plan to lead the NDI/Council delegation for the May 16 election. If there is a second round, then both Presidents Carter and Betancur will observe the June 30 run-off. The presence of international observers can increase confidence in the process, encourage political participation and help to safeguard the credibility of the elections. It should not, however, overshadow the significant and singular role that dedicated members of Dominican civil society continue to play in the electoral process. Ultimately, it is the Dominican people who will determine the legitimacy of the May 16 election.

The pre-election delegation concluded that a series of positive developments since the controversial 1994 electoral process have created a promising atmosphere for the May 16 election. Several factors led to this conclusion:

- 1) The delegation was encouraged by the broad support for the JCE among political parties, the government, civic groups and the Catholic Church. The JCE has consulted with the various political actors and made efforts to respond to their concerns about the electoral process.
- 2) An updated electoral registry has remedied many of the flaws of the previous list. The JCE gave all political parties the opportunity to scrutinize and make recommendations to the JCE concerning the registry. Until recently, the parties seemed to have no major concerns regarding the electoral registry and have expressed their overall satisfaction with the work of the JCE in updating it.
- 3) Civic organizations been more active in helping to ensure a transparent electoral process. In the past, political parties, nongovernmental organizations and the Church were primarily involved after irregularities had already occurred. For these elections, a broad-based civic group, *Participacion Ciudadana*, has conducted a civic education campaign and organized a large network of domestic monitors who will observe the voting process and conduct a parallel vote tabulation (PVT). In addition, the Action Group for Democracy, an entity representing the Church, labor, business and other sectors of Dominican society, has worked to assure a peaceful electoral process.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, a number of features of the electoral process were cause for concern. Representatives of political parties, the Church, and civic groups raised the following issues.

- 1) Repeatedly, the delegation heard concerns about possible problems with the *colegio cerrado*, a voting procedure that requires men and women to vote at separate times during election day. Several candidates said that because of a dearth of knowledge, this new system would increase voter absenteeism. It was also mentioned that the *colegio cerrado* system in combination with long lines may lead to impatience and possibly tensions at the polling

stations. In response to these concerns, the delegation encouraged the government, the parties and the JCE to engage in an intensive voter education campaign. All Dominicans sectors pledged to continue educational efforts. The Cardinal responded positively to a request by President Carter to clarify the *colegio cerrado* system during Sunday services.

- 2) During recent weeks, the PLD has expressed concern regarding the electoral registry. The PLD allege that more than 20 percent of the voter list includes Haitians who are not eligible to cast ballots. The PLD indicated that they will instruct their party pollwatchers to challenge the vote of anyone who looks Haitian, hopefully forcing them to cast a *voto observado*. The delegation expressed deep concern that such action could be discriminatory and racist. In the delegations subsequent meeting with the JCE, the JCE said in exceptional cases where the voters' documents are questionable, they would be able to vote in a special envelop using the *voto observado* procedure, a procedure similar to tendered or challenged ballots.

The JCE also explained to the delegation that the political parties had the opportunity to raise their concerns about the list, and the PLD did not respond with sufficient evidence to substantiate their allegations. The NDI/Council delegation also asked the PLD to provide evidence to supports its claim; NDI/Council has yet to receive any documentation.

- 3) In the meeting with the JCE, the delegation expressed concern over lack of direct access to the JCE's computer center. In 1994, tampering inside the computer center was believed to be the cause for voters being illegally removed for lists. Although the delegation requested that the JCE provide access to the computer center for each party's technical representative, as well as computer specialists from international observer delegations, the JCE responded that as soon as the first person not employed by the JCE enters the computer center, the integrity of the JCE would be undermined. Presidents Carter and Betancur said that while they respected the JCE's position, the integrity of the election would be enhanced if a way could be found to permit access for a technical representative of the political parties and the observers.
- 4) The JCE has capped the number of national observers at 1,140. The domestic civic group *Participación Ciudadana* has already trained more than 3,000 observers, and this restriction will limit their ability to observe. The delegation urged greater flexibility on this issue; the JCE believes the approved number of observers is sufficient to cover adequately the election.
- 5) None of the candidates expressed major concerns regarding violence during the campaign and, compared with previous elections, the level of political violence has decreased. Nevertheless, the delegation has pointed to a series of politically motivated deaths and encourages Dominicans to participate in the process in a peaceful manner.

II. ELECTORAL BACKGROUND

Dominican history is replete with election controversies. The 1962 presidential election was the first relatively free Dominican election in 38 years. Juan Bosch, founder of the PRD, won the election but was overthrown by a military coup less than a year after he assumed office. Two and a half years later, the country experienced a civil-military uprising intended to bring Bosch back to power. Those events led to civil strife that resulted in U.S. military intervention. Some 24,000 U.S. troops were then incorporated into an OAS inter-American peace force that withdrew from the country in September 1965.

New elections were held in 1966 that brought Balaguer to the presidency. In 1970 and 1974, Balaguer was re-elected. In the 1978 elections, the opposition candidate Silvestre Antonio Guzman Fernández of the PRD, won. Guzman's victory was proclaimed after the administration of President Carter strongly protested a suspension of the vote count. This was the first time in the Dominican Republic's history that power was transferred between two elected presidents of different parties.

The 1982 and 1986 elections took place within a democratic framework, but irregularities and accusations of fraud were commonplace. In 1982, PRD presidential candidate, Salvador Jorge Blanco, won the election with 47 percent of the vote, while Balaguer garnered 37 percent. In 1986, challenges of the results and accusations of fraud by Jacobo Majluta, PRD presidential candidate, resulted in two suspensions of the counting process. This delayed announcement of Balaguer's victory until nearly two months after election day; PRD ultimately recognized the election results and handed over the presidency to Balaguer.

The 1990 presidential contest was one of the closest and most disputed in the country's history. According to official results, President Balaguer defeated Juan Bosch by 24,470 votes. The NDI/Carter Center delegation which observed the election concluded that "[T]here is no doubt that aspects of the May 16 elections were flawed. All parties, as well as the JCE, acknowledged irregularities in the process. [However], the delegation was not presented with evidence that indicated sufficient irregularities in the balloting and counting processes to invalidate President Balaguer's victory. The irregularities that were documented did not appear to favor one candidate or party to a significant degree."

The May 16, 1994, elections in the Dominican Republic were also disputed and resulted in a contentious post-electoral environment. On election day, many Dominicans and international observer delegations sponsored by NDI, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), observed that prospective voters with valid identification cards were turned away from the polls because voter lists did not contain their names. The names of these potential voters, however, were on voter lists previously issued to the political parties by the JCE. Furthermore, it appeared that a disproportionate number of disenfranchised voters identified themselves as members of the opposition parties -- the PRD and PLD. The NDI

delegation's post-election statement gave widespread publicity to the serious irregularities witnessed by observers.

Prompted by these irregularities, a Verification Commission was established shortly after the elections to determine the magnitude and possible reasons for the irregularities. After reviewing 15 percent of the polling station lists, the Verification Commission estimated that up to 45,000 voters were disenfranchised on election day.

On August 2, 1994, the JCE, ignoring the Verification Commission's July report, declared incumbent President Joaquín Balaguer the winner. The JCE stated that Dr. José Francisco Peña Gómez of the PRD had been defeated by a margin of 22,281 votes (approximately 0.74 percent of the valid votes cast).

Although a winner had been declared, the seemingly systematic alteration of voting lists led to negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition. After months of negotiations and several international efforts to mediate, political party leaders, church officials and representatives of civil society signed a "Pact for Democracy" in August, 1994.

The Pact for Democracy promised new elections in 18 months; a constitutional reform prohibiting two successive terms for a president; and a second round of voting if no presidential candidate received a majority. Additionally, the Pact called for: a reconstituted JCE, of which all members were to be approved by each of the major political parties; a reliable computer system that could guarantee an accurate voter list and be operated in a transparent manner; voter lists to be posted and made public in sufficient time as to allow for review and changes; the official voter lists used by table officials on election day to be publicly displayed in advance of the elections; and access to all stages of the electoral process for political parties, and domestic and international observers.

The Dominican Congress approved the measures outlined in the Pact, but scheduled elections in two years instead of 18 months. On August 16, 1994, President Balaguer was sworn in as president of the Dominican Republic to serve a two year term.

III. THE 1996 ELECTION

The May 16 elections will take place under circumstances different from those in 1990 and 1994. The Constitutional reforms in 1994 ban the consecutive re-election of a president, call for a second round presidential election if no party receives a majority in the first round and establish a *colegio cerrado* voting system. In addition, for the first time ever, Joaquín Balaguer and Juan Bosch will not be their parties' candidates for president, a new JCE has garnered the respect of Dominican society, and a more active civil society is engaging Dominicans in the political process.

A. *Election Day Procedures*

As a result of the Pact for Democracy, a new constitution was approved which establishes a *colegio cerrado* voting system. *Colegios cerrados* are defined as voting tables. There may be several tables at one voting site, such as a school. The voting system is closed in the sense that voters must sign-in and remain at their voting table during a time period before the tables open for voting. Voters will then vote in the order in which they signed in. After the sign-in period ends, the voting list at the table is closed. Any registered voter who arrives after the sign-in period has ended will not be allowed to vote.

There will be 9,946 voting tables on election day. The JCE has decided that there will be no more than 400 voters assigned to each voting table, although the law allows up to 600 voters per table. Some voters' tables have been changed from past elections. The JCE provided the political parties with the voter list to allow them to inform their supporters of the table changes. The JCE also provided the Municipal Election Boards (*Juntas Municipales Electorales - JMEs*) with the voter list to allow them to inform citizens of such table changes.

On election day, voters will vote in two shifts based on gender. Women will vote in the morning; men will vote in the afternoon. Women voters must arrive to their voting tables between 6:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. to sign-in. At 8:30 a.m., or when the name of the last women who arrived before 8:30 a.m. has been recorded, the lines will close and no one else will be permitted to line up. The secretary at the voting table will draw a line in the sign-in list below the name of the last person to arrive before 8:30 a.m., and each member of the table will sign below the line to ensure that no one else is added to the list.

Citizens must remain in line at the polls from the time they arrive at their voting table to sign-in until they have voted, unless there is an emergency. Women will vote in the order in which they were entered on the registrar list, except in the case of special circumstances such as pregnancy or being accompanied by children. Voting for women will officially close at 1:00 p.m. or after the last woman in line has cast her ballot.

Once the morning shift is completed, male voters will begin lining up. They must follow the same procedure as the women. The JCE has recommended that if the first group of voters has finished before 1:00 p.m., men can start lining up at that time. All men must sign-in between 1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. The actual voting for men will begin at 3:30 p.m. and finish at 6:00 p.m. or when the last voter in line has cast his ballot.

While political party leaders are optimistic that the new system will deter misconduct by preventing multiple voting, they are concerned that the new system could impede the process and discourage prospective voters from going to the polls. Some Dominicans told the delegation that they believe it will be difficult for Dominicans to understand the voting system, especially the process of women voting in the morning and men in the afternoon, since it is customary for families to vote together. Furthermore, Dominicans expressed concern that the system could result in increased

absenteeism among women who may remain at home to take care of their children and among citizens of higher socio/economic classes who may not be willing to wait in line for one to three hours. One political party also raised the issue that voting may take longer than the time allocated, which in turn may increase tensions at voting tables. Due to vivid memories of the previous electoral processes, any irregularity in the election could be interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as another attempt to manipulate the process, and this may be used by one of the contenders to dispute the results.

The delegation encouraged the political parties, President Balaguer, the JCE, the Cardinal and *Participación Ciudadana* to increase their voter education efforts in the weeks leading up to the election. President Carter asked the Cardinal to continue to encourage the church clergy to inform their parishioners of the electoral process through their weekly sermons.

B. The JCE and Administrative Issues

Serious administrative problems plagued the 1994 elections, and the need for electoral changes was apparent. Several reforms were agreed upon formally by the political parties in the Pact of Democracy. These included:

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

Most of these reforms have been enacted. A new JCE board was approved and instated in early 1995. According to representatives from the political parties, church and civic groups, the new JCE members are viewed as politically independent and professional. The JCE has been more open to the political parties than in previous elections, and the JCE president has held weekly press conferences to update the public on electoral issues.

Access to the computer facilities has been strictly limited. Only computer center staff has been allowed into the computer center. The JCE has hired a new computer center director and replaced other staff members since the 1994 elections. The major political parties have a liaison and a technical representative to the JCE. The PRSC and the PLD appear to be satisfied with their access to the JCE and the attention that the Board has given them. The PRD, however, does not feel that the political parties have adequate access to the JCE computer center.

The NDI/Council delegation requested that political party representatives and an international observer delegate be given access to the JCE computer center. The JCE responded by saying that allowing additional personnel into the computer center would jeopardize the integrity of the JCE. The delegation urged that the JCE reconsider this position in order to further enhance confidence in the process.

The JCE has updated the electoral registry. Periodic reports and copies of the voter list have been given to the political parties at various stages throughout the process, allowing the political parties to audit the list and make recommendations. The PRD and the PLD conducted a door-to-door audit of parts of the list. The PRSC analyzed a print-out of the voter list.

The parties have expressed their overall satisfaction with the work of the JCE in regard to the voter registry. In recent weeks, however, the PLD has denounced the presence of Haitians on the voter list, estimating that Haitians make up more than 20 percent of the names on the list. According to the JCE, the Election Commission has taken several measures to ensure that foreigners are not on the final voter list. In the JCE's view, the PLD had enough time to provide evidence of their allegations and they did not respond with adequate documentation to support their claims. The JCE is satisfied with the electoral registry and informed the NDI/Council delegation that it cannot make additional changes to the voter registry. The delegation asked the PLD for documentation to substantiate its claims. As of the date that this report is being published, the PLD has not provided such documentation.

The PRD and PRSC asserted that the electoral registry was not an issue of particular concern and they accepted the JCE position that it was too late to resolve any additional problems with the electoral list. Furthermore, they felt that any errors still existing on the list would have a negligible affect on the results.

The PLD has stated that it will instruct its party pollwatchers to challenge the vote of anyone who looks Haitian, hopefully forcing them to cast an "observed ballot" (*voto observado*). According to Dominican law, officials at the voting tables and/or political party pollwatchers may protest the vote of a potential voter and request that he/she cast a *voto observado*. In order to protest a person's vote, there needs to be evidence that the attempting voter is: not the person that he/she alleges to be; under the legal voting age; not a citizen of the Dominican Republic; or for other reasons outlined in the Constitution. Each *voto observado* will be sealed in a special envelop, and the next day the challenger and the voter must appear before the JME to clarify the issue. If either the challenger or the voter does not appear, he/she forfeits his/her case. If a person who attempts to vote is determined not to be a citizen of the Dominican Republic, his/her ballot will be nullified and the person will be sanctioned.

The publication of the voter registry has been raised as a concern by the national observer group *Participación Ciudadana*. Representatives of the group informed the delegation that because the list was not published widely and well in advance of the election, many Dominicans may be unaware of changes in their voting sites and/or table location. While a broader publication of the

voter list is desirable and recommended for future elections, the delegation notes that the list, broken down by tables, has been given to the political parties and has been available to the citizens at each JME. The delegation, however, would encourage greater voter education efforts that would address this issue.

JME Board members are generally viewed as professional and independent. In 1995, JME Board members were selected from lists submitted to the JCE by nongovernmental groups, such as universities, associations, clubs and churches. The political parties were given a chance to review the final list and file any objections to individual being nominated. The JCE then made the final selection. However, some concern has been raised regarding the impartiality of the JME staff secretaries who run the day-to-day work of the JMEs.

The process for selecting individuals to work at the voting table on election day followed a similar process as the selection of the JME board officials. In the past, the JCE selected table officials from lists drawn up by the political parties instead of from nongovernmental groups as has been the case for this election. The more than 50,000 table officials are currently being trained to serve at the voting tables on election day.

C. Political Parties and the Campaign

In 1995, the political parties selected their presidential candidates to run in the 1996 election. This resulted in new figures being named as presidential candidates by two of the three major political parties. For the first time since the founding of the PRSC, the party nominated a presidential candidate other than Joaquín Balaguer, who has been president for 22 of the past 30 years. Jacinto Peynado, the current vice-president, was elected as the PRSC presidential candidate and Maribel Gasso was selected as the party's vice-presidential candidate. The PRSC formed coalitions with two small political parties that support the candidacy of Peynado.

The opposition parties also chose their candidates. Leonel Fernández was named as the presidential candidate for the PLD. He was nominated after Juan Bosch, the party's founder and presidential candidate in every election since 1973, announced that he would not run again for the presidency. The PLD vice-presidential candidate is Jaime David Fernández Mirabel.

José Francisco Peña Gómez, who lost the presidential race by a slim margin in the disputed 1994 elections, was again selected as the presidential candidate for the PRD. The PRD formed coalitions with nine other political parties/movements that support Peña Gómez as their candidate for president. All of these political parties are under the umbrella name of the Accord of Santo Domingo (*Acuerdo de Santo Domingo*). The Accord of Santo Domingo's vice-presidential candidate, Fernando Alvarez Bogaert, represents one of the political parties in the coalition.

Other presidential candidates who will be on the ballot include Rafael Albuquerque, Dominican People's Party (*Partido del Pueblo Dominicano - PPD*) and Rafael Abinader, Social

Dominican Alliance (*Alianza Social Dominicana* -ASD). Since finalizing the ballot, however, Alburquerque has dropped out of the race and has given his support to Leonel Fernández.

For months now, the parties and candidates have held large political rallies each weekend in cities around the country. Campaign materials are visible in public spaces and the messages of the candidates appear regularly on radio, television and in print media. The political parties feel that there is an open campaign environment, allowing for freedom of expression and movement as well as access to the press. During previous visits to the Dominican Republic, Leonel Fernández had expressed his concern regarding violence toward his supporters in the campaign. As of late April, eight deaths had occurred at political rallies throughout the country.

D. Election Observers

Election observers could play a role in promoting the transparency of the election, in motivating the electorate to vote and in ensuring a peaceful transition of power. In January 1996, the JCE approved a resolution allowing the presence of domestic and international observers. The JCE told the NDI/Council delegation that as long as observers abide by the JCE regulation governing their activities they will be seen as contributing to the transparency of the election and strengthening the process.

This will be the first time in the history of the Dominican Republic that nonpartisan domestic observers will have the opportunity to take part in the electoral process. The Dominican civic organization, *Participación Ciudadana*, is the only domestic monitoring group that plans to deploy observers on election day. *Participación Ciudadana* hopes to conduct a nationwide election observation and PVT program on election day. NDI invited a leader of *Participación Ciudadana* to observe the work of the Lima-based civic group, *Transparencia*, which monitored successfully the national elections in Peru. NDI also sponsored a *Participación* representative to travel to Paraguay to participate in a meeting of Latin American civic organizations, many of which had conducted domestic observation programs. The NDI/Council believe that the group is nonpartisan, and has conducted its activities in a professional manner. At the same time, some Dominicans have questioned the impartiality of *Participación Ciudadana*. However, individuals have produced no evidence to support this view.

In addition to the NDI/Council delegation, the Organization of American States (OAS) plans to send a delegation to observe the May 16 election. The OAS helped promote a peaceful resolution of the disputes following the 1994 elections, and their presence as observers will be important in the 1996 election. During the week before the NDI/Council delegation's visit, the Secretary General Cesar Gaviria visited the Dominican Republic and met with President Balaguer to discuss the status of the OAS invitation to observe the election. President Balaguer informed the Secretary General at that time that the OAS would be invited.

As of the NDI/Council's pre-electoral mission, the OAS had not received a formal invitation to observe the election. The NDI/Council delegation discussed this issue during their meetings in the

Dominican Republic and found Dominicans to be supportive of the presence of an OAS observation delegation. President Balaguer assured the delegation that the OAS would be invited.

The JCE has limited the total number of accredited domestic observers to 1,140, representing approximately 10 percent of the total number of voting tables. It appears that international observer delegations have been limited to 25 observers per organization. As of early May, approximately 75 international observers were accepted for accreditation. The limitation on the number of national observers restricts the domestic observer group's ability to conduct a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the electoral process. Even before the number of credentials was announced by the JCE, *Participación Ciudadana* had recruited more than 2,000 volunteers to participate as observers on election day.

The NDI/Council delegation has urged the JCE to be flexible concerning the total number of national observers. The JCE believes that 1,140 national observers is sufficient and that *Participación Ciudadana* will be able to have adequate coverage of the polling sites.

E. Civil Society

After the 1994 elections, representatives of the various political, religious, academic, labor and business sectors in Dominican society came together to form the Action Group for Democracy. Its members were witnesses to the signing of the Pact for Democracy in 1994. The Group is nonpartisan and comprises 21 organizations, seven of which make up the executive committee. Its objectives are to: contribute to the strengthening of democracy in the Dominican Republic; promote society's role in the democratic system in the Dominican Republic; and help ensure a more open, transparent and respectable 1996 election. To meet its objectives, the Action Group has: encouraged the formation of local Action Groups in 43 of the most populated municipalities; undertaken civic education activities to motivate citizen participation in the upcoming election; and supported *Participación Ciudadana* to conduct a nationwide election observation and PVT program.

In order to help improve the electoral environment, the Action Group promoted a Governability Pact which was signed by all five of the presidential candidates. The Pact promotes an open and peaceful campaign; reiterates that a new president and vice president will be elected according to the articles of the 1994 Constitution; commits the presidential and vice-presidential candidates to accept the results of the election; and obligates the presidential candidates to support the newly elected president to pursue the 10 priority public policy issues agreed upon by the candidates with the Action Group for Democracy in March 1996.

IV. CONCLUSION

Previous Dominican elections have been marred by accusations of fraud and tense political negotiations that have contributed to skepticism about the legitimacy of the elected government. The NDI/Council delegation concluded that electoral authorities, government officials, political party, civic, business and labor leaders, are working to end the era of seriously flawed elections.

The prospects for a transparent and peaceful election lies in Dominican hands. In this respect, the delegation was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm of thousands of Dominicans who will participate as observers in the May 16 election. This new development represents a step forward from past elections. Hopefully, the engagement of Dominicans in their election will contribute to an open process in which all the candidates accept the results.

The delegation was also impressed by the respect and support accorded to the electoral authorities. This represents a profound difference from the past. The NDI/Council delegation hopes that the electoral authorities will continue their activities with the professionalism and independence that has thus far characterized the work of the election commission.

The presence of an NDI/Council delegation demonstrates the interest of the international community in the Dominican Republic. The delegation raised the above mentioned issues in a spirit of cooperation and in the hope that the election authorities, the government, and political parties will make every effort to promote a transparent process. Ultimately, the delegation recognizes that it is Dominican citizens who will be the final judge of the election process. NDI and the Council look forward to continuing their support of efforts to advance the country's democratic process.

Appendices

**Council of Freely-Elected
Heads of Government**

Carter Center of
Emory University
One Copenhill
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
(404) 420-5175

Appendix A

**National Democratic Institute
for International Affairs**

1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Suite 503
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 328-3136
(202) 939-3166 (Fax)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, April 11, 1996

Contact: Darren Nance
NDI Representative in the
Dominican Republic
Hotel Santo Domingo, 221-1511

Deanna Congileo, The Carter Center
404-420-5108

PRE-ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION HEADS FOR DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government based at The Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga., and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) announced that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Colombian President Belisario Betancur will lead a pre-election mission to the Dominican Republic on April 24 to 26. Joining them on the mission will be former First Lady Rosalynn Carter; Robert Pastor, Council executive secretary; Santiago Canton, NDI director of Latin America and the Caribbean; Jose O. Bordon, former presidential candidate from Argentina; Curt Cutter, NDI senior consultant; Becky Castle, program coordinator for The Carter Center's Latin American and Caribbean program; and Kate Kelsch, NDI program officer for Latin American and the Caribbean.

The mission is being organized jointly by The Carter Center and NDI in response to invitations from the Central Election Board (Junta Central Electoral) and the leaders of the three major political parties to observe the May 16 Dominican presidential elections. "We were pleased to receive all the invitations," said President Carter, who plans to meet with President Joaquín Balaguer, party leaders, and members of the electoral commission. "It

(MORE)



demonstrates a high degree of interest in trying to keep the elections as free and fair as possible."

The purpose of the April pre-election mission is to assess the current political and electoral environment. The Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government/Carter Center and NDI jointly observed the 1990 elections in the Dominican Republic, which resulted in a contentious post-election environment and a narrow victory by President Joaquín Balaguer. Although there were many questions raised about the 1990 election and the count, the observer mission did not receive adequate evidence that would have changed the result. NDI also organized an international delegation to observe the 1994 elections. In this case, the NDI delegation noted that the irregularities observed in the electoral process could have affected the outcome. Opposition parties, including the PRD and PLD, claimed that a disproportionate number of their supporters were disenfranchised. Following a succession of negotiations, President Balaguer and opposition parties signed the "Pact for Democracy" which called for a new voting procedure, new presidential elections in two years, and a runoff election, should no candidate win a majority of the votes.

"The election in 1996 represents an important step in the consolidation of democracy in the Dominican Republic," said Dr. Robert Pastor. "As independent international observers, we want to learn about the process from Dominican leaders and reinforce local efforts to ensure the election is acceptable to all."

"The international community strongly supports efforts in the Dominican Republic to increase public confidence in the electoral process," said Santiago Canton of the National Democratic Institute. "We believe that the presence of observers -- both international and Dominican -- will contribute to enhancing the transparency of the process."

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Appendix B

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(202) 328-3136
(202) 939-3166 (Fax)

**COUNCIL OF FREELY-ELECTED HEADS OF
GOVERNMENT/CARTER CENTER AND
THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Pre-Election Mission to the Dominican Republic, April 24 to 26, 1996

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

- 10:47 am Arrival of President Betancur, Jose O. Bordon , Curtis Cutter, Dr. Robert Pastor, and Santiago A. Canton
- 12:15 pm Arrival of President Carter
- 12:40 pm Arrival Statement by President Carter and President Betancur
- 1:20 pm Arrival at Hotel
- 1:45 pm Briefing with delegation by NDI Director of Latin America and the Caribbean Santiago A. Canton
- 2:15 pm Briefing by Dominican Political Analysts
Anibal de Castro, director, Rumbo
Juan Bolivar Diaz, press director, Teleantillas and Participacion Board member
- 3:00 pm Meeting with Dominican Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Dominicano - PRD)
José Francisco Peña Gomez, Presidential Candidate; Fernando Alvarez Bogaert, Vice-Presidential Candidate; Rafeal Molina Ureña, Vicente Sanchez Baret, Hatuey Decamps Jimenez, Winston Arnaud, Manuel Casares Troncoso
- 4:00 pm Meeting with Dominican Liberation Party (Partido de la Liberación Dominicana - PLD)
Leonel Fernández, Presidential Candidate; Felix Jimenez, Reynaldo Pared, Eduardo Selman, Franklin Almeyda
- 5:00 pm Meeting with Action Group for Democracy Executive Committee
Adalberto Martinez, Leopoldo Herrera, Rafeal Toribio, Eduardo Latorre, Jose Manuel Paliza, Manuel Berges Chupani, Monseñor Agripino Nuñez, Radhames Mejia

- 6:00 pm Meeting with Participación Ciudadana Executive Committee
Dr. Antonio Isa Conde, Member of Executive Committee; Carmen Amelia Cedenó, Isis Duarte, Josefina Padilla, Pedro Catrain, Somnia Vargas, Isidoro Santana
- 7:00 pm Meeting with Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus Lopez Rodriguez
- 8:00 pm Dinner with Labor, Civic, Business leaders

Thursday, April 25, 1996

- 8:00 am JCE Meeting
President Dr. Cesar Estrella Sahdala and other JCE Board members: Aura Celeste Fernandez, Rafael Vallejo, Luis Mora Guzman, Dr. Juan Sully Bonnelly and Amable Diaz Castillo
- 9:15 pm Meeting with Vice President and Social Christian Reformist Party (Partido Reformista Social Cristiano - PRSC)
Presidential Candidate **Jacinto Peynado**; Juan Jose Arteaga, Federico Antun, Donald Reid Cabral
- 11:00 am Meeting with President Joaquin Balaguer
- 12:15 pm NDI/Council Delegation's Press Conference
- 2:30 pm Delegation's Departure

Appendix C

Arrival.DR/April 17, 1996

ARRIVAL STATEMENT OF
HONORABLE JIMMY CARTER AND
HONORABLE BELISARIO BETANCUR

On Behalf of a Joint Delegation of the
Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government/Carter Center
and the
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
April 24, 1996

President Jimmy Carter: On behalf of my friend and colleague, President Belisario Betancur of Colombia and the rest of our delegation, I would like to say how pleased we are to be in Santo Domingo today on a pre-election observation mission.

We are here because we were invited to observe the election by the Presidential candidates of the three major political parties and by the Central Elections Board (Junta Central Electoral). We were so impressed by the invitations and the wide support of the Dominican people that we altered our plans to come here, to listen to Dominican leaders, and to assess the state of the electoral climate and procedures.

We are here representing two organizations - the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, based at The Carter Center and composed of 26 current and former Presidents and Prime Ministers.

Our two groups have monitored more than 50 elections throughout the world, including those in the Dominican Republic in 1990 and 1994.

Let me ask President Betancur to introduce the members of our delegation and make some remarks and then I would like to offer a comment.

President Belisario Betancur: Thank you, President Carter. I am pleased to be working with you again. In December 1994, President Carter and I co-chaired a conference of political parties in Panama that helped them to develop a national consensus on some difficult but critical issues. This was intended to lay the foundation for a more effective democracy. It was a great success.

We are here for a similar reason. We care about democracy everywhere in the Americas. Dominican democracy can only be built by the citizens of this great country, but we are here to reinforce your aspirations.

Let me introduce our colleagues: Dr. Robert Pastor is Executive Secretary of the Council of Freely-Elected Heads of Government, and he is also a professor at Emory University and a Fellow at The Carter Center. Mr. Santiago Canton is NDI's Director of Latin America and the Caribbean. Jose Octavio Bordon was a Senator in Argentina and a presidential candidate. Curt Cutter is a Senior Consultant of NDI and an expert with extensive experience in the region. Becky Castle is the Program Coordinator for The

Carter Center's Latin American and Caribbean Program; and Kate Kelsch is the NDI program officer for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today and tomorrow, we will have a very full schedule. We will meet with President Balaguer; the Presidential candidates of the three major political parties; the Central Elections Board; local election monitoring groups; leaders from business, the church, the press and labor; and others. We hope to learn a lot.

In the new hemisphere of democracies, democrats of all countries have an obligation to be helpful to each other. It is with this spirit that we have come here today to assess the preparation for the Presidential election, consult and learn from leaders of this country, and offer our comments.

President Jimmy Carter: We do not represent any government. Our group today comes from three nations, and the Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government is an independent and bipartisan group composed of leaders from 17 countries in the Americas.

The Council and NDI have had experience with the last two Presidential elections in the Dominican Republic. In both instances, we were not shy to raise our voices when we found problems, but the parties and the people of the Dominican Republic - not us - provided the evidence to judge the election.



We believe the election on May 16 could be a pivotal one for this country. We hope that it will be the one in which questions about the fairness of past elections will finally be answered in the affirmative, and that all Dominicans - whether they win or lose - will accept the process and the results and will join together to celebrate their democracy.

HOY - Viernes 19 de abril de 1996

Ex-presidentes Carter y Betancur evaluarán el proceso electoral

Por PEDRO GERMOSEN
Redactor de Hoy

LOS EX PRESIDENTES Jimmy Carter, de los Estados Unidos; y Belisario Betancur, de Colombia, encabezarán una delegación que visitará el país entre el 24 y el 26 de este mes para evaluar el ambiente electoral, mediante reuniones con el presidente Joaquín Balaguer y los principales candidatos presidenciales.

Ambos ex mandatarios, invitados por la Junta Central Electoral (JCE), vendrán en representación del Consejo de Jefes de Gobierno Libremente Electos, del Centro Carter; y del Instituto Nacional Demócrata para Asuntos Internacionales.

Carter y Betancur vendrán acompañados de la ex primera dama norteamericana Rosalynn Carter, de Robert Pastor, secretario ejecutivo del Consejo; y Santiago A. Canton, director para América Latina y el Caribe del referido Instituto.

También de José O. Bordón, ex candidato a la Presidencia de Argentina; Curt Cutter, asesor senior del Instituto; Becky Castle, coordinadora de Programas del Centro Carter; y Kate Kelsch, oficial de programas para América Latina y el Caribe del Instituto.

"LA MISION está siendo organizada conjuntamente por el Centro Carter y el Instituto en respuesta a invitaciones de la Junta Central Electoral (JCE), y los líderes de los tres partidos políticos principales para observar las elecciones presidenciales del 16 de mayo", expresa una comunicación de ambas entidades.

"Estamos muy conformes de haber recibido las invitaciones", dijo el ex Presidente Carter, quien planea reunirse con el Presidente Balaguer, líderes partidarios y miembros de la JCE, expresa el boletín de prensa.

"Demuestra -añadió Carter- un gran interés en intentar efectuar unas elecciones lo más limpias y justas que sea posible." La nota informativa destaca que "el propósito de la misión pre-electoral de abril es evaluar el actual ambiente político y electoral."

RECUERDA que el Consejo de Jefes de Gobierno Libremente Electos, del Centro Carter, y el Instituto, observaron conjuntamente las elecciones dominicanas del 1990 y al conteo de resultados, "la misión de observación no recibió evidencia adecuada que pudiera haber modificado el resultado electoral."

Añade que el Instituto también envió una misión de observación para las elecciones de 1994.

"En esta oportunidad, la delegación estimó que las irregularidades observadas pudieron haber afectado el resultado de las elecciones", señala.

"Partidos de la oposición, incluyendo al PRD y al PLD, sostuvieron que a un número desproporcionado de sus simpatizantes se le negó el derecho de votar", expresa.

"Luego de una serie de negociaciones, el Presidente Balaguer y la oposición firmaron el "Pacto por la Democracia", recuerda, el cual, añade, establece un nuevo procedimiento de votación, nuevas elecciones presidenciales en dos años y una segunda vuelta si ningún candidato obtiene la mayoría absoluta de los votos.

"Las elecciones del 1996 representan un paso importante en la consolidación de la democracia en la República Dominicana", dijo Robert Pastor, según el boletín. "Como observadores internacionales independientes, queremos informarnos sobre el proceso por medio de los líderes dominicanos, y reforzar los esfuerzos locales para asegurar que la elección es aceptable para todos", significó. "La comunidad internacional apoya fuertemente los esfuerzos en la República Dominicana para aumentar la confianza pública en el proceso electoral", dijo Santiago A. Canton, del Instituto Nacional Demócrata. "Creemos que la presencia de observadores, tanto internacionales como dominicanos, va a contribuir para garantizar la transparencia del proceso", expresó.

JCE explica proceso a Carter

Por **MANUEL NOVA**

El Nacional

El ex presidente de los Estados Unidos, Jimmy Carter, recibió este jueves pormenorizadas explicaciones sobre el proceso que culminará en las elecciones del 16 de mayo de parte de los jueces de la Junta Central Electoral.

Carter, quien llegó ayer al país para observar la marcha del proceso, visitó esta mañana la sede de la JCE y se entrevistó con los magistrados, encabezados por su presidente César Estrella Sahdalá, de 7:50 a 9:30 de la mañana.

HORA DE CIERRE

El ex presidente de los Estados Unidos Jimmy Carter y el candidato presidencial reformista Jacinto Peynado conversaron hoy 35 minutos sobre el proceso electoral, en el Hotel Sheraton.

Carter, quien junto a sus colaboradores visita el país para observar el proceso electoral, según Peynado, expresó su deseo de que las elecciones se desarrollen con normalidad.

A la salida del encuentro, en compañía de sus principales asesores, Carter no ofreció declaraciones sobre lo tratado y se limitó a señalar por medio de un interprete que daría una conferencia para periodistas al mediodía de hoy.

El ex presidente demócrata fue enterado de la confección de las boletas electorales, de las acreditaciones de los observadores nacionales e internacionales que se cerrarán el día 31 de este mes, del padrón electoral y de la asistencia prestada por el gobierno para la organización del proceso electoral.

Trascendió, igualmente, que Carter recibió explicaciones sobre la litis judicial en torno al canal 6 de televisión cuya frecuencia se disputan Juan Ramón Gómez Díaz y Miguel Angel Decamps.

Jimmy Carter vino al país a instancias de la propia JCE que le extendió una invitación al Centro Carter, que preside el ex gobernante, en su calidad de

organización independiente especializada en la observación de procesos electorales.

Al aceptar la invitación de la JCE, el Centro Carter comunicó que su presidente podía venir al país para esta fecha ya que compromisos pendientes le impiden estar presente el 16 de mayo, día de los comicios presidenciales.

Tan pronto abandonó la sede del Tribunal Electoral, Carter y su comitiva se dirigieron al hotel Sheraton, donde se hospedan, para luego acudir al Palacio Nacional donde el ex presidente estadounidense será recibido en audiencia especial por el presidente Joaquín Balaguer.

En el encuentro, además de Carter, sus asesores y Estrella Sahdalá, estuvieron los jueces Aura Celeste Fernández, Rafael Vallejo Santelises, Juan Sully Bonnely y Luis A. Mora Guzmán, así como el mayor Sigilio Almonte, jefe de la Policía Militar Electoral.

Carter llegó ayer pasado el mediodía, poco después de que lo hiciera el ex presidente de Colombia, Belisario Betancur.

Se entrevistó de inmediato con los candidatos presidenciales José Francisco Peña Gómez y Leonel Fernández, del Acuerdo de Santo Domingo y el Partido de la Liberación Dominicana, respectivamente.

Para hoy se espera que también se reúna con el vicepresidente de la República y candidato presidencial del Partido Reformista Social Cristiano, Jacinto Peynado.

No se sabe la hora ni el lugar en que se producirá el encuentro Carter-Peynado, pero se especuló que podría ser al mediodía de hoy en el mismo Palacio Nacional.

Jimmy Carter estuvo como observador en los conflictivos comicios de 1990 que concluyeron con las denuncias de fraude del Partido de la Liberación Dominicana contra el Partido Reformista Social cristiano, aún en el poder.

Ayer, el Centro Carter emitió un comunicado señalando que de la celebración de elecciones limpias y confiables depende que se consolide la democracia dominicana.

Dice no viene a traer democracia

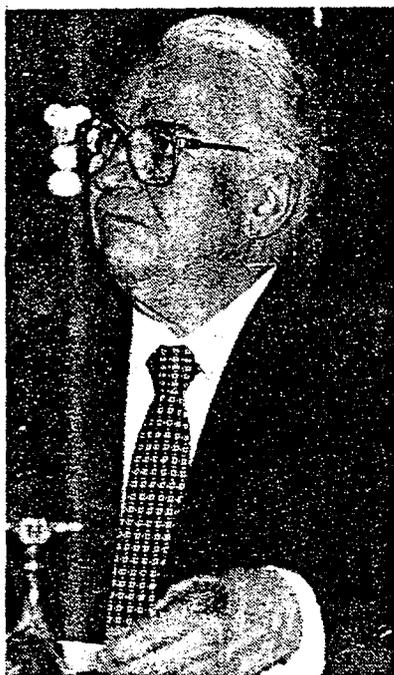
Por Juana Rubio
EL SIGLO

El ex-presidente de Colombia Belisario Betancur aseguró que su presencia y de los demás observadores del Centro Carter no tiene por finalidad traer democracia, sino reforzar las aspiraciones de los dominicanos en su propia democracia.

El ex-estadista colombiano hizo la declaración en presencia del ex-presidente Jimmy Carter, a quien acompaña en una misión pre-electoral con motivo de los comicios a efectuarse dentro de 24 días.

Expresó que viene al país junto a otros observadores para evaluar la preparación de las elecciones presidenciales, reunirse y aprender de los líderes dominicanos y ofrecer sus comentarios.

Belisario Betancur llegó por el Aeropuerto Internacional Las Américas en el vuelo 541 de American Airlines que arribó a



Belisario Betancur

las 10:40 minutos de la mañana.

Expresó que para los países de América es muy importante porque la consistencia del continente se debe a la virtualidad de

la democracia.

“No le pidamos a la democracia lo que ella no nos puede dar, sino lo que pueda dar como por ejemplo el consenso”, dijo Betancourt.

“La democracia dominicana solo puede ser construida por los mismos dominicanos, solo por los habitantes de este grande y hermoso país, de manera que nosotros no estamos aquí para traer democracia, sino para reforzar las aspiraciones del pueblo dominicano en su propia democracia”, afirmó Betancur.

Informó que la agenda que agotará es muy amplia porque se reunirán con la JCE, los grupos locales de observación, de la Iglesia, trabajadores y de la prensa en los que esperan aprender mucho.

“En el nuevo hemisferio compuesto de democracias, los demócratas de todo los pases tenemos la obligación de ayudarnos entre nosotros mismos”, dijo el ex-presidente colombiano.

También espera transparencia

Por Tulio Navarrete

El ex presidente de los Estados Unidos Jimmy Carter concluyó ayer su visita de dos días y dijo que a pesar de las 'imprecisiones' del padrón electoral, si las cosas continúan con el ritmo que llevan hasta mayo, los resultados de los comicios 'serán claros y transparentes'.

El ex mandatario norteamericano habló en una conferencia de prensa celebrada en horas del mediodía en el salón Romana del hotel Sheraton, donde anunció que su colega del Consejo de Jefes de Gobierno Libremente Electos y ex presidente de Colombia, Belisario Betancur, vendrá al frente de una misión de observadores a los próximos comicios.

Carter dijo que él estaría presente si en el país se celebra una segunda vuelta electoral, tal y como está previsto en la Constitución de la República, reformada en agosto de 1994.

Informó que la delegación que preside conjuntamente con el ex presidente colombiano Betancur se entrevistó en el hotel Sheraton el miércoles con los doctores José Francisco Peña Gómez y Leonel Fernández, candidatos presidenciales, con líderes sindicales, empresariales y de la sociedad civil y en la noche visitaron al cardenal Nicolás de Jesús López Rodríguez, con quien trataron ampliamente con relación a los temas comiciales.

Además se entrevistaron ayer con los miembros de la Junta Central Electoral, con el vicepresidente Jacinto Peynado y a las 11:00 de la mañana fueron recibidos por el presidente Joaquín Balaguer.

Durante la conferencia de prensa, Carter, cuyas palabras fueron traducidas al español por Luis García, estuvo en la mesa principal acompañado por el ex presidente Betancur, el dirigente político argentino José Octavio Bordón, Roberto Pastor, secretario ejecutivo del Consejo, Santiago Cantón, director de América Latina y el Caribe del Instituto Nacional Demócrata para Asuntos Internacionales, y Curt Cutter, asesor senior del Instituto.

La embajadora de los Estados Unidos, Donna Hrinak, asistió al encuentro.

El primero en hablar fue Betancur, y Carter respondió las preguntas de los reporteros. La reunión comenzó a las 12:15 y concluyó a la 1:10 de la tarde.

'Hay algunas interrogantes de lo que entiende el pueblo dominicano sobre los colegios cerrados. Todos los dirigentes de los principales partidos políticos, el señor cardenal López Rodríguez y los miembros de la Junta Central Electoral, han acordado continuar con un programa masivo de educación ciudadana para resolver estos puntos', dijo Carter en respuesta a una pregunta sobre cuáles eran las impresiones que su grupo había recogido del proceso electoral.

Indicó que otros de los puntos que se alegan es que en el padrón existen 'nombres de personas que no son ciudadanos de la República Dominicana. La Junta Central nos ha asegurado que tiene plena confianza en el padrón. Y si el día de las elecciones, a pesar de eso, algunos de los delegados de los partidos políticos tiene alguna duda de algunos de los votantes, puede observar el voto, el que será puesto dentro de un sobre de votos observados'.

Dijo que el día siguiente de las elecciones tanto del votante como el que presenta la observación en el colegio cerrado, aparecerán ante la Junta Municipal Electoral correspondiente 'a presentar sus alegatos y observación y el votante a defenderlo'.

'Quiero aprovechar la oportunidad para decir que si las cosas siguen como hasta ahora, estamos confiados e igualmente así nos han expresado los tres candidatos de los principales partidos políticos, que las elecciones serán limpias y correctas', concluyó.

Por su lado, la embajadora Hrinak dijo en respuesta a una pregunta que la presencia de los miembros del Centro Carter es una muestra del interés que tienen las elecciones dominicanas para la comunidad internacional. La dama rechazó, por considerarla improcedente, la pregunta de un corresponsal extranjero, en el sentido de que si el gobierno norteamericano intervendría este año nueva vez si en el país se repitiera una crisis post-electoral como la de 1994.

Ex presidente Carter:

JB prometió apoyo total a los comicios

Por Juana Rubio
EL SIGLO

El presidente Joaquín Balaguer garantizó al ex-presidente Jimmy Carter su apoyo total al proceso electoral y le dió seguridades de que cursará las invitaciones a la Organización de Estados Americanos para que envíe sus observadores a los comicios del mes próximo.

La información la ofreció el propio Carter quien reveló que iguales garantías recibió del presidente de la Junta Central Electoral, doctor César Estrella Sadhalá.

Previno que si el proceso electoral sigue tal com ahora las elecciones serán limpias y correctas.

Carter habló en una rueda de prensa antes de abandonar el país en un vuelo privado que salió de la terminal del Aeropuerto Internacional Las Américas a las 3:15 de la tarde.

“Esta mañana, tanto en la Junta Central Electoral, como el Presidente Balaguer nos han asegurado que esas invitaciones van a ser cursadas”, expresó Carter cuando se le consultó sobre las versiones de retención por el Poder Ejecutivo de las invitaciones a los delegados del organismo regional.

Informó que en el encuentro con los miembros de la JCE recibió un dossier de documentos oficiales, no confidenciales relacionados con todas las decisiones adoptadas por el tribunal respecto de las votaciones.

Carter se interesó sobre temas tales como la comprensión de los ciudadanos de los colegios cerrados y la existencia de ciudadanos extranjeros en el padrón de electores.

Señaló que los jueces del tribunal de elecciones le aseguraron que han iniciado una campaña masiva de educación sobre los colegios cerrados y que quienes sufraguen bajo dudas de su ciudadanía lo harán

observado. Ese sufragio observado se dilucidará al día siguiente en presencia de quien pidió que se le observara.

En cuanto al Pacto por la Democracia, dijo que sirvió para corregir las discrepancias que fueron observadas en 1994 y las hizo parte de una nueva disposición constitucional.

“No podemos anticipar las cosas que pudieran acontecer en el próximo proceso electoral. Pero sin embargo, nosotros confiamos en que de continuar el curso de las cosas, las elecciones serán claras y transparentes, y cualquier discrepancia podrá ser observada y corregida durante el proceso”, dijo Carter.

Al término de su visita de dos días en misión de observación pre-electoral, Carter dijo que no está de acuerdo con dos aspectos de las conversaciones que sostuvo con lo líderes dominicanos: el reducido número de observadores y la prohibición a penetrar al Centro de Cómputos de la JCE.

Entre las observaciones que hicimos a la Junta Central Electoral, estuvo nuestra intención de que podría haber un mayor número de observadores electorales, igualmente que pudiera haber cierto tipo de acceso al Centro de Cómputos.

Peynado habla con Carter en torno al proceso electoral

EL CANDIDATO presidencial reformista Jacinto Peynado conversó ayer por cuarenta minutos con el ex presidente norteamericano Jimmy Carter, con quien trató diversos aspectos sobre el proceso electoral dominicano.

Al término del encuentro, Peynado dijo a los periodistas que habló con el ex mandatario norteamericano sobre el panorama electoral dominicano, el apoyo que los partidos políticos deberán ofrecer a quien resulte triunfador en la consulta del 16 de mayo venidero y sobre el rol que tendrán las personalidades e instituciones que vendrán como observadores de las elecciones.

Agregó que también habló con Jimmy Carter sobre el padrón electoral y su limpieza, destacándose la necesidad de que después de las elecciones del mes que viene el listado de votantes sea sometido a una

nueva y exhaustiva revisión.

El candidato presidencial reformista manifestó que Carter le expresó su deseo de que las venideras elecciones sean transparentes y diáfnas.

Del encuentro surgió también la advertencia de que nadie ofrezca informaciones que puedan confundir a la opinión pública nacional e internacional sobre el desarrollo del proceso que tendrá lugar en mayo venidero.

PEYNADO DECLARO que habló con Jimmy Carter sobre los Colegios Electorales Cerrados y la división que se hará entre hombres y mujeres en el proceso de las votaciones.

Indicó que coincidió con el ex mandatario norteamericano en que todo el mundo desea que las elecciones presidenciales del 16 de mayo próximo se desarrollen en forma limpia y que gane el mejor, el que

deberá contar con el apoyo de las demás organizaciones y candidatos participantes.

"El ex presidente Carter se mostró muy optimista y está prácticamente convencido de que el proceso será un éxito", subrayó.

El candidato presidencial reformista informó que Carter le prometió regresar al país una vez pasadas las votaciones de mayo próximo para observar también la segunda vuelta.

PEYNADO ESTUVO acompañado durante la visita por el presidente en funciones del PRSC, doctor Donald Reid Cabral, el secretario político Federico Antún Batlle y su asistente especial Juan José Arteaga.

La reunión tuvo lugar en la suite presidencial del hotel Sheraton, que ocupó el ex-mandatario estadounidense.