



Quarterly Report
ALBANIA: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND
PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
April 1 to June 30, 2001

I. SUMMARY

In June, Albania held parliamentary elections, the first since snap 1997 elections were called following widespread rioting due to collapsed pyramid schemes. In 1997, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) oversaw the elections, and Italian peacekeeping troops patrolled ballot stations. In 2001, the main conflicts centered on the central voters list and declaration of independent candidates. Violent political rhetoric was considerably toned down, however, and candidates began to conduct issue-based campaigns. The relatively positive climate of the 2001 election cycle demonstrates a growing acceptance of democratic norms among political parties in Albania and indicates a notable progression in the country's democratic transition.

Prior to the June elections, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) provided training for political parties through its multi-party Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP) and in separate single-party seminars as candidates and activists prepared for their respective campaigns. NDI's Civic Forum program, which seeks to engage citizens at the grassroots level in discussion on democratic principles and advocacy efforts on issues of local concern, expanded to a third site and established an innovative tool to assess program progress.

In this quarter, NDI conducted the following activities:

ZHUP

- Released a statement based on the findings of a pre-election assessment mission;
- Trained more than 450 political party candidates and activists in single-party seminars on election preparation skills;
- Trained approximately 80 Regional ZHUP participants from four cities in political party outreach, media relations and techniques of direct contact with voters;
- Recruited participants from the original ZHUP seminar to assist in the four Regional ZHUP training seminars; and
- Trained 31 participants from ZHUP I and II on assembling and managing a campaign team in advance of parliamentary elections.

Civic Forum

- Conducted a Civic Forum staff retreat and introduced a program evaluation tool in cooperation with colleagues from NDI's Kosovo Civic Forum program;
- Expanded the Civic Forum to a third discussion group site in Kavaje;
- Conducted Civic Forum discussion groups related to the parliamentary elections including "What is a democratic election" and "How to be an informed voter;"
- Conducted training on proposal writing for Civic Forum Field Coordinators; and
- Produced a Civic Forum newsletter to communicate with citizens, participants and interested parties.

NDI observed the following results this quarter:

- Eleven ZHUP participants ran for parliament;
- ZHUP II participant Saimir Dashi conducted two training seminars for women political activists in Lezha and Skodra after successfully soliciting funding from the Westminster Foundation;
- Civic Forum discussion group participants approached parliamentary candidates to present the concerns of their local communities;
- A Civic Forum group that participated in proposal writing training successfully organized and collaborated with the local government to draft a proposal that was accepted by the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) for the installation of a community electrical transformer; and
- In collaboration with NDI's NGO/Voter Education program, Civic Forum Field Coordinators involved Civic Forum participants in voter education activities, primarily the distribution of 4,350 voter education brochures and posters produced by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Albanian Helsinki Committee.

II. BACKGROUND

Preparations for Albania's June parliamentary elections took place throughout the quarter, noteworthy for an improved Central Election Commission (CEC), a mostly non-combative and issue-oriented political debate among leaders, and a nonviolent pre-election period. The CEC was noticeably more professional and transparent in its deliberations. Led by former judge Ilir Celibashi, the CEC's decision-making and planning procedures were markedly better than seen during the 2000 local elections, thus improving citizen confidence in this aspect of the democratic system.

While improved, the process was not without its flaws. Article 66 of the election law was a critical point of contention among political circles in the pre-election period. Article 66 pertains to the allocation of 40 compensatory mandates in the parliament. A mathematical formula deciding these 40 compensatory mandates is meant to be weighted in favor of smaller parties so that they have some representation if they achieve a 2.5 percent threshold of the total vote. In the months leading to the elections, various Socialist Party leaders made it known that they intended to select and support independent candidates, many of whom were closely

identified with the Socialist party or the government in some constituencies, in order to lower the official number of Socialists elected and thus increase the party's chances at more compensatory seats. With these "independents" and genuine Socialists combined, the party hoped to have at least 84 seats in parliament, giving them enough votes to elect the president in 2002. If interpreted in this way, Article 66 would have the unintended consequence of favoring large parties, like the Socialists, instead of smaller parties.

Having discovered this loophole, political parties and other actors in the election process demanded that the CEC rule on the matter. The Democratic Party claimed it would run 93 independent candidates if the Socialists did not retract their "independents." In its pre-election statement in May, NDI called upon the CEC to offer clarification on Article 66. One month later, no clarification had been offered, and the ballots were being printed listing the so-called independents. After issuing and then withdrawing its first attempt at an instruction, the CEC ruled that most of the candidates who had been registered as "independents" would be considered as Socialist or Union for Victory deputies for the purposes of calculating the 40 compensatory mandates.

Election day was generally calm throughout the country with a few reported isolated instances of violence. The Albanian Helsinki Committee, Albanian Human Rights Group, and Society for Democratic Culture, the latter in cooperation with the Belgrade-based Center for Free Elections and Democracy, deployed more than 1,000 observers on election day, complemented by 250 OSCE and Council of Europe monitors. Approximately 60 percent of eligible voters turned out on election day. In the days following the election, Zone Election Commissions (ZECs) still had not submitted their voting protocols to the CEC, due to tabulation disputes within the multiparty bodies. Faced with the threat of fines from the CEC, most of the ZECs quickly provided the results. On July 8, Albanian citizens will return to the polls to vote in areas where no candidate received more than 50 percent of the vote. The CEC declared the following results from the first round:

Single constituency results:

- 31 seats Socialist Party
- 17 seats Union for Victory (Democratic Party, Republican Party, Bali Kombetar, Legality Movement Party, and Liberal Democratic Union)
- 45 seats Run-off on July 8
- 7 seats Elections to be repeated due to irregularities in six zones and run for the first time in Lushnja

The second ballot used by voters indicated their party or coalition preference. These preliminary results are not final because of the Lushnja election and six zones where reruns will take place.

- 41.98 percent Socialist Party
- 37.07 percent Union for Victory
- 5.11 percent Democrat Party
- 3.56 percent Social Democratic Party

- 2.4 percent Human Rights Party
- 2.37 percent Democratic Alliance Party
- 2.26 percent Agrarian Party
- 1.04 percent Christian Democratic Party

NDI has helped emerging political party leaders prepare for Albania's parliamentary elections through its Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP). Since 1999, ZHUP has provided multiparty groups of emerging political party leaders with practical training on election campaign planning, media skills, and direct voter contact. The Regional ZHUP program, following two national programs (ZHUP I and ZHUP II), is designed as a series of four seminars, each of which is conducted in four regions with more than 80 activists across the country. Combined, the national and regional ZHUP programs have helped cultivate a new body of reform-minded and skilled young leaders across Albania. The program has also provided an opportunity for participants from disparate parties to develop informal relationships, thus breaking down the polarization known to characterize Albanian politics. Through NDI's Civic Forum program, many citizens who felt disconnected from their government as a result of past political and governmental controversies attend civic education discussion groups to become more involved in the democratic process in their communities.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Pre-Election Assessment Mission

Between May 9 and 14, NDI organized an international, multipartisan delegation to assess the pre-election environment in advance of the June 24 parliamentary elections. NDI conducted similar assessment missions during the 1991, 1992, 1996 parliamentary, 1996 municipal, 1997 parliamentary, and 2000 local elections. Assessment delegation members were the following: Juan Ignacio Garcia, chairman of the Chilean Central Election Commission; Dr. Shlomo Avineri, director of the Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and former director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry; Jason Steinbaum, counsel to U.S. Congressman Eliot Engel; Shari Bryan, NDI South Africa regional director; Gillian Gloyer, NDI-Albania political party resident program director; and Damian Murphy, NDI-Washington program officer for Albania. The group met with political party leaders and representatives from across the political spectrum, international and domestic NGOs conducting activities related to the parliamentary elections, and media analysts. On May 14, NDI held a press conference to release its statement to the public.

In its statement (see attached) NDI found that the Central Election Commission (CEC) had made several improvements in preparation for the 2001 parliamentary elections, but there remained some skepticism about the Commission's overall political impartiality. Confusion existed over the interpretation of Article 66 of the Electoral Code and, without clear guidance from the CEC, this confusion would ultimately undermine the spirit of the Constitution and the intent of Article 66, which was designed to provide smaller parties with adequate representation in parliament.

The delegation reported a greater consensus among political leaders on past electoral shortcomings and on the need to improve the electoral framework. Remaining challenges to the

election process noted in the report included inadequate public information about voter list verification procedures. The delegation also encouraged parties to continue political discourse in advance of elections, and encouraged citizens to verify voter lists and to participate in the electoral process.

NDI observed that freedom of expression for citizens was generally guaranteed and a variety of news sources were available. In addition, civic organizations were committed to conducting nonpartisan monitoring during the pre-election period and on election day. NDI was encouraged by the apparent freedom of the press, the relatively nonviolent pre-election environment and the strong desire expressed by the Albanians to hold the elections in accordance with international standards.

Political Party Program

Single-Party Training

In preparation for the 2001 parliamentary elections, USAID approved an addendum to NDI's workplan for additional funding to conduct single-party pre-election training. In March, NDI recruited Roy Dooney, a senior official of Ireland's Fine Gael party, to work with NDI's resident representative on conducting practical training in advance of the elections. In the previous quarter, Dooney made his initial visit to Albania and, during this reporting period, trained in Albania on two occasions.

Dooney held a round of single-party training and consultations from April 30 through May 7 with activists from seven political parties. During the course of the week, NDI conducted training with the following parties and activists:

- 40 organizational secretaries of the Socialist Party (PS) on election planning, event scheduling, volunteer management and developing a 21-point election preparation plan;
- 14 Tirana branch activists of the Democratic Alliance Party (PAD) on using volunteers, conducting voter outreach, and preparing for the election;
- 40 Christian Democratic Party branch chairpersons on transparent financing, election planning, and creating volunteer activities;
- Members of the Social Democratic Party National Council on election planning, electoral outreach and the challenges facing small parties in coalition governments;
- 25 members of the Korça branch of the Human Rights Party election team on volunteer activities, voter outreach and electoral preparation;
- 18 members of the Democratic Party, 6 representing the women's group, 6 youth members and 6 legal election experts, on voter contact strategies and developing a 21-point election planning list;

- Ridvan Peshkëpia of the Democratic Alliance on corporate and local fund-raising techniques; and
- Genc Pollo of the Democrat Party on election strategy.

In May, Dooney returned to Albania to conduct eight trainings on voter contact and election campaign teams with five political parties on election preparation, as detailed below:

- 35 Democratic Party (PD) members from Gjirokaster, one-third of whom are women;
- 12 PD branch members at party headquarters in Tirana;
- 40 members of the Democratic Alliance;
- 25 branch chairpersons of the Agrarian Party;
- 25 members of the Genc Pollo's Democrat Party, including candidates for four electoral zones around Durres;
- Six Democrat Party members in Lac; and
- Consultations with the Social Democratic Party on printed campaign literature and party message development.

In April, NDI communications expert Mark Webster from the United States conducted a training in Elbasan with 40 members of the Agrarian party on political communications. The training included segments on fundraising and campaign planning.

Regional ZHUP Training

NDI conducted Regional ZHUP training in Elbasan, Tirana, Lezha and Pogradec on political party outreach with 80 political party activists in a multiparty setting. This seminar sought to develop participants' knowledge of media relations and techniques of direct voter contact. In all four sessions, graduates of the first ZHUP program co-trained with NDI's resident representative, thus building their positions as trainers within their respective parties.

ZHUP I and II Election Preparation Training

In April, NDI held a seminar for graduates of the ZHUP I and II programs focused on communications and the assembling and managing of a campaign communications team. Mark Webster trained participants in message development and campaign literature design. Thirty-one of the 54 original ZHUP participants attended and received training on building teams, identifying decision-making styles, and integrating team management and message development. Attendees also participated in an exercise in which teams representing fictitious political parties were instructed to first develop a message strategy based on Webster's training, and then match election tasks to team members based on the skills and experience of each person.

Civic Forum

Civic Forum Retreat and Evaluation

In June, NDI conducted a retreat in Tirana for 29 Civic Forum field coordinators (FCs) and staff in Albania and Kosovo. In developing the agenda for the retreat (see attached), FCs and staff were encouraged to reference the strategic plans drafted in 2000 and the following objectives for the retreat were established:

- To share experiences and identify best practices for the continued work of both programs;
- To provide training for program staff to enhance skills in areas related to the program mission;
- To develop regional relationships to benefit and strengthen the programs in both locations; and
- To provide a forum for program staff to use acquired skills, build confidence and highlight successes.

During the retreat, NDI introduced a new initiative to better evaluate Civic Forum programs in Albania and Kosovo. Cooperating with Dr. William Millsap, a U.S. consultant who worked with USAID/Tirana to develop its R4 strategy, NDI devised a framework to assess Civic Forum throughout its duration to measure progress and identify areas for improvement. This tool will measure changes in Civic Forum participants' knowledge of and attitudes toward democracy and changes in participants' civic behavior. This evaluation tool will take the form of periodic questionnaires and focus groups administered by FCs. During the retreat, Dr. Milsap led the FCs and staff through the questionnaire exercise and the methodology behind gathering and quantifying the questionnaire results (see attached questionnaire).

The retreat, attended by USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka, accomplished its objectives and provided FCs an opportunity to interact with their colleagues from Kosovo for the first time as a complete group. Participants were able to exchange information and training experiences, increase their skills and enhance their ability to conduct and analyze the respective programs.

Site Expansion to Kavaje

Based on the level of existing civic activity in the community, proximity to established Civic Forum groups, and requests from citizens for Civic Forum, NDI identified a third site in which to conduct Civic Forum discussion groups in addition to Durres and Tirana. In June, NDI opened its first expansion site in Kavaje. NDI chose this site due to the viability of the community and the likelihood of its participation in the program and its proximity to the existing sites. NDI hired four new field coordinators to facilitate the discussion groups and resulting advocacy initiatives. The senior FCs played a significant role in the orientation process for the four new members.

Election-related Activities

During this quarter, NDI Civic Forum discussion groups met to discuss “What is a democratic election” and “How to be an informed voter.” NDI adapted the modules used during the 2000 local elections for the 2001 discussion groups. Several group participants used the knowledge gained during these discussion groups to approach parliamentary candidates, present the concerns of the local community and gather the views of the candidate.

NDI Civic Forum participants were active during the pre-election period. Four citizens met with NDI’s Pre Election Assessment mission team to share opinions on the environment before the June elections. Civic Forum participants also took part in a live television broadcast on the importance of transparency for elected representatives. Finally, the FCs distributed 4,350 voter education posters and brochures produced by IFES and the Albanian Helsinki Committee.

Proposal Writing Training

Through the discussion groups, NDI has worked with citizens to identify issues of local concern. As most of the local issues are infrastructure development projects, it is difficult for FCs to help the citizens identify issues for public policy advocacy. Responding to this dynamic, NDI conducted trainings on proposal writing so that participants could approach funders in cooperation with local government officials. In order to give FCs a greater knowledge of proposal writing that would help them guide citizen groups in applying for grants, an FC with extensive experience in proposal writing conducted a training on the topic for her FC colleagues.

Advocacy Exercise

The FCs undertook an initiative to practice and develop their advocacy skills in advance of undertaking advocacy exercises with citizens. The group decided to approach the State Social Insurance Agency in order to get the documentation needed for medical visits and prescriptions, papers, which the Agency is legally obliged to provide because the FCs makes social insurance payments. To date, none of the FCs had this necessary documentation, published in the form of a booklet. The team assembled an advocacy strategy, outlining its planning process, potential allies and resources. Before their advocacy efforts were completed the FCs received booklets from the agency that had been tardy in delivering them, but as a result of their advocacy efforts, the insurance agency staff informed them that individuals from doctor’s offices, pharmaceutical associations and medical unions (who the FCs had identified as allies and met with about the issue) had also contacted the insurance agency in search of information regarding the booklets.

Inter-regional Cooperation

In April, NDI’s resident representative and two FCs traveled to Kosovo to conduct training for new staff in NDI’s Kosovo Civic Forum program. The training included segments on discussion group facilitation, democratic education and team-building.

Collaboration with World Learning

In April, 13 Civic Forum participants traveled to Bulgaria under the auspices of World Learning to participate in a series of community development training sessions. Upon their return, participants organized meetings with members of their respective communities to develop project proposals on issues of local concern to be funded by World Learning.

Civic Forum Newsletter

In May, NDI released its first in a series of Civic Forum newsletters (see attached) for distribution to participants, NGOs, political parties, the international community and potential funders for citizens' development projects. The newsletter was primarily written by the FCs and included several contributions from Civic Forum participants. This communication tool is useful in educating the Albanian public about the efforts of Civic Forum and provides different discussion groups with information on the efforts of their colleagues.

VI. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the period, NDI saw significant progress toward accomplishing the following program objectives as set out in its 2001 workplan:

Pre-Election Assessment Mission

Objective: NDI's pre-election assessment makes public substantive and realistic recommendations on redressing any deficiencies in the electoral process.

- In accordance with NDI's recommendations, the Central Election Commission issued guidance on the controversial Article 66, regarding the declaration of independent candidates.
- NDI distributed its statement and informed Albanian election authorities, Albanian political parties, journalists, U.S. congressional members and interested parties worldwide.

ZHUP

Objective: Approximately 120 emerging political party leaders and activists acquire party building and election preparation skills that favor their development as future political leaders.

- Three participants from ZHUP I and II and eight from Regional ZHUP were selected to run as candidates in the June parliamentary elections.
- A candidate in Gjirokastër ran a well-planned campaign and used many voter contact techniques learned in NDI trainings.

- Two ZHUP participants were selected for PS shortlists in Tirana, a significant achievement considering the intense competition for standing in the capital.
- At least two participants of Regional ZHUP were selected to the PS shortlists in their constituencies.
- ZHUP I and II participants trained Regional ZHUP program participants, thus strengthening their respective roles within their parties.

Civic Forum

Objective: Citizens understand and engage in the political process.

- Civic Forum discussion group participants approached parliamentary candidates to present the concerns of the local community and to gather views on issues from candidates.
- A citizen group from Tirana received a grant from SNV to install an electrical transformer after organizing and collaborating with the local government to draft a proposal.
- In collaboration with NDI's NGO/Voter Education program, Civic Forum Field Coordinators involved Civic Forum participants in voter education activities, primarily the distribution of 4,350 voter education brochures and posters produced by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Albanian Helsinki Committee.
- Citizens participating in the World Learning training in Bulgaria submitted proposals upon their return that were approved by World Learning. The communities began working on the projects, and Civic Forum worked with citizens to develop transparency committees to monitor the funding and process.

V. EVALUATION

Pre-Election Assessment

As outlined in NDI's 2001 workplan addendum, NDI conducted a pre-election assessment mission and distributed the results to relevant actors engaged in Albanian's election process. Several recommendations made in NDI's pre-election assessment statement were acknowledged by the Central Election Commission, including NDI's recommendation that the CEC clarify the provisions of Article 66 of the Election Law, which sets guidelines for running campaigns for independent candidates. After several false starts, the CEC on June 23 ruled that most of the candidates nominally running as independents were in fact supported by political parties. While an earlier clarification of Article 66 would have been preferable, the ruling did help to reduce confusion in advance of June's elections.

ZHUP

During the period, NDI conducted the training seminars as envisioned in its workplan. Utilizing the skills of NDI's resident representative and a U.S. public relations expert, the Institute conducted advanced skills training with ZHUP I and II participants. Unfortunately, attendance for the Regional ZHUP seminars has been lower than seen at ZHUP I and II seminars, perhaps due to the prestigious nature of the selection process in those earlier stages of the program. NDI will see more results of the training during debriefing sessions at the conclusion of the election season.

In response to a request from the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, NDI conducted single-party seminars with several parties in preparations for elections. The seminars were successful in meeting program objectives and complemented ZHUP training by providing party leadership and more senior party members with elections-related skills for parliamentary election campaigns.

Civic Forum

NDI is meeting its objective of helping citizens at the grassroots level to understand and engage in the political process. Discussion groups continued to meet on a bi-weekly basis, and many groups are moving into the advocacy phase of the program. As planned in NDI's workplan, discussion groups in the second quarter of 2001 have continued the public advocacy phase of the program, in which citizens are beginning to organize around issues and lobby government officials for change. Several community groups have cooperated with their local government to approach international donors for resources. NDI expanded its program after a delay last quarter to include a third site in Kavaje. NDI hired field coordinators for this site who will begin to facilitate discussion after their orientation process is complete.

NDI also conducted discussion groups on topics related to the elections and conducted a retreat with colleagues from Kosovo. Finally, NDI produced and distributed its first newsletter according to the workplan.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- Regional ZHUP will conduct seminars on the politics of compromise and politics between elections;
- Follow-up with ZHUP I and II participants on their respective projects;
- Follow-up sessions with single parties on lessons learned during their parliamentary election campaigns;
- Commence Civic Forum discussion groups in Kavaje; and
- Continue to engage with discussion groups on advocacy and organizing techniques.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

1. NDI Pre Election Statement, May 2001
2. Civic Forum Retreat Agenda, June 2001
3. Civic Forum Evaluation Questionnaire
4. NDI Civic Forum Newsletter, 2001



**NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Rruga Myslym Shyri, Pall.23, Sh.1, Ap. 3, Tirana, Albania
Tel: +355 4 242609 Fax: +355 4 247201 E-mail: ndialb@albnet.net

**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI)
INTERNATIONAL PRE-ELECTION DELEGATION TO ALBANIA**

Tirana, May 14, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

This statement is offered by an international pre-election delegation organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in advance of Albania's June 24, 2001 parliamentary elections. The delegation visited Albania from May 9 through May 14.

The purposes of this international delegation were to express interest in and support for a democratic election process in Albania, to assess the electoral conditions and political environment in which the upcoming parliamentary elections are being held, and to offer an accurate and impartial report on the pre-election situation. The delegation conducted its activities according to international standards for nonpartisan election observation and Albanian law. The Institute does not seek to interfere in the election process and recognizes that, ultimately, it will be the people of Albania who will determine the credibility and validity of the elections and resulting composition of the Parliament.

II. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

After 10 years of multi-party democracy, the 2001 parliamentary elections present a critical opportunity for Albania to make significant progress in its democratic development. While Albania has made substantial progress in the area of electoral preparation, particularly in comparison to past elections, there remains a harsh polarization between parties and personalities, and skepticism among voters that could affect Albania's continuing transition to democracy. Government and political leaders must work together where possible in order to ensure public confidence in the democratic electoral process.

The delegation noted several important and positive factors in the electoral process which include the following:

- There appears to be an admission among political leaders of past electoral problems and a general recognition of the need for improvements in the current electoral framework. These improvements are necessary in order to create a better democratic process through which the public will become confident that the contest for political power will be resolved through credible elections.

- The Central Election Commission (CEC) has made several improvements in preparation for the 2001 parliamentary elections. These include: conducting proceedings in a more professional, timely and transparent manner; working with political parties to develop multi-partisan Local Government Election Commissions (LGECS); and posting voter lists throughout the country in a timely manner, thereby providing a 40 day verification period for voters to review the lists.
- Opposition parties have agreed to name their members to the Local Government Election Commissions (LGECS) and through their participation the parties have contributed to the establishment of multi-partisan LGECS throughout the country.
- Freedom of expression for citizens is generally guaranteed and there are a variety of news sources.
- Civic organizations are committed to conducting non-partisan monitoring during the pre-election period and on election day.

These positive aspects notwithstanding, the delegation noted a few significant challenges to the election process.

- Although public confidence in the CEC's technical capabilities has increased since the 2000 local elections, there still remains some skepticism about the Commission's overall political impartiality.
- Despite the efforts by the CEC to publicly post voter lists and to provide a review period of 40 days during which citizens can verify their names, concern was expressed to the delegation that many citizens may not yet be fully aware of the verification procedures and some may ultimately be unable to exercise their right to vote.
- Newly created constituency boundaries that were drafted by the Boundary Commission, debated at length in parliamentary committee and passed by Parliament on the legal deadline of February 28, have themselves become a source of political controversy.
- Confusion exists over the interpretation of Article 66 of the Electoral Code, "Allocation of Compensatory Mandates," which sets forth the guidelines for distributing the 40 proportionally assigned seats in the 140-member Parliament. Without clear guidance from the CEC, this confusion might ultimately undermine the spirit of the Constitution and the intent of Article 66, which is designed to provide smaller parties with adequate representation in Parliament.

The delegation was encouraged by the strong desire expressed by Albanians to hold the upcoming parliamentary elections in accordance with international standards, and therefore a series of recommendations is offered at the end of this statement.

III. THE DELEGATION AND ITS WORK

NDI began its activities in Albania in 1991 and monitored the country's 1991, 1992, 1996 parliamentary, 1996 municipal, and 1997 parliamentary elections and offered a pre-election assessment of the 2000 municipal elections. The Institute provided assistance to the Society for Democratic Culture, a non-partisan Albanian civic organization, throughout the 1990's. NDI also carries out programs in Albania supporting political party development through the Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP), grassroots civic education through Civic Forum, and voter education through its NGO coordination program. NDI has maintained a staff presence in the country since 1993. NDI's programs in Albania are funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

NDI has conducted more than 45 international election observations and more than 60 pre-election missions around the world, including many in Central and Eastern Europe. This pre-election delegation includes election and political experts who have participated in numerous election assessments and international election observer missions around the world. The members of the delegation are: Juan Ignacio Garcia, Chairman of the Chilean Central Election Commission; Dr. Shlomo Avineri, Director of the Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and former Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry; Jason Steinbaum, Counsel to U.S. Congressman Eliot Engel; and Shari Bryan, NDI Regional Director. The delegation was joined by Gillian Gloyer, Resident Political Party Program Director for Albania and Damian Murphy, NDI Washington Program Officer for Albania.

The delegation made its observations and findings based upon: analysis of the legal framework for the elections; review of materials on Albania's election process produced by other international organizations, Albanian and international press and impartial Albanian election monitoring organizations; and analysis of information presented during the delegations' meetings in the country. While the role of the delegation was distinct from NDI's other programs in Albania, it was informed by the activities of NDI staff in the country over the past 10 years and the findings of the Institute's prior pre-election missions to Albania.

The delegation met with Prime Minister Ilir Meta; the Speaker of Parliament, Skender Gjinushi; the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC), Ilir Celibashi and Gasper Kokaj; leaders of government and opposition political parties (including among others, Socialist Party President Fatos Nano, and Democratic Party President Sali Berisha); media analysts; leaders of civic organizations, including the Society for Democratic Culture and Albanian Helsinki Committee; residents of the districts of Tirana and Durres; members of the diplomatic community and representatives of international organizations, including the Presence in Albania of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Council of Europe and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES); the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); and others concerned with election processes. The delegation would like to express its gratitude to everyone with whom it has met for sharing their time and their views.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

An accurate and complete assessment of any election must take into account all aspects of the election process. These include: 1) conditions set up by the legal framework for elections; 2) the pre-election period before and during the campaign; 3) the voting process; 4) the counting process; 5) the tabulation of results; 6) the investigation and resolution of complaints; and 7) conditions surrounding the implementation of results. This delegation therefore does not pre-judge the overall election process. At the same time, no election can be viewed in isolation of the political process in which it takes place. The pre-election period, including electoral preparations, the political environment, and the degree of participation by all actors, must therefore be given considerable weight when evaluating the democratic nature of elections.

A. The Overall Election Environment

The delegation noted widespread consensus among political leaders of past electoral shortcomings and the need to improve the current electoral framework. Likewise, a genuine commitment seemed to exist by many to ensure that the upcoming parliamentary elections will reflect a new and more promising phase in Albania's democratic development. Many recommendations made by Albanian authorities, domestic monitors and international observers have been accepted and implemented. The delegation noted a general consensus that marked improvements had been achieved as some amendments had been made to the Electoral Code, the CEC had taken a more professional and transparent approach to its work, and cooperation between the political parties resulted in the February 28 agreement which led to the establishment of the parliamentary committee on voter lists.

B. The Central Election Commission

Political leaders from all parties (including the opposition), Albanian citizens and members of the international community informed the delegation that the CEC had substantially improved its work and was seen as a more transparent and professional body. It was noted that information was more easily obtained from the Commission, and press conferences and interviews of Commission members were routine. These improvements have been attributed in part to the reconstitution of the CEC, following the resignation and replacement of three controversial members, and the appointment of a new Chairman.

Despite these significant improvements since the local elections, a perceived lack of political impartiality of the Commission remains a concern. The resignation of three former members presented a positive opportunity to address this concern since these individuals had been particularly criticized for political bias by opposition parties. However, this opportunity was missed when the opposition failed to propose names to replace the three vacant seats and the government institutions appointed candidates without ensuring that they would be acceptable to all sides of the political spectrum. As a result, criticism and suggestion that the CEC remains in the hands of the majority party tends, in public perception, to cast a shadow over the Commission's independence. Extra-ordinary steps need to be taken by the Commission to ensure that its actions in the remaining period before the elections are seen by the Albanian people as credible, non-partisan and of the highest integrity.

C. *Article 66*

Article 66 of the Albanian Electoral Code sets forth the guidelines for distributing the 40 compensatory seats in Parliament, which are allocated under a proportional representation formula stipulated by the Code. The purpose of Article 66 is to carry out a principle embodied in the Albanian Constitution that provides smaller parties with an opportunity to achieve adequate representation in Parliament.

The Code contains a mathematical formula that, unfortunately, is subject to different interpretations. The allocation of seats according to this calculation depends on the way coalitions are treated and how independent candidates are defined. Several smaller parties have expressed concern that under a certain interpretation of the formula, larger parties could use it to increase their representation in Parliament.

The delegation found that this problematic aspect of the electoral system, unless legitimately clarified, carries the risk of confusion; this may also undermine the original intention of ensuring the representation of smaller parties in Parliament and may result in having the opposite effect. It is therefore critical that the CEC issue instructions as soon as possible on the proper interpretation of this aspect of the Code, and set out clear guidelines as to how the Code impacts the treatment of coalitions and independent candidates.

D. *Voter Lists*

The accuracy of the voter lists became a central point of contention during preparations for the 2000 municipal elections and continues to be a concern for several opposition parties. After a massive effort to compile Albania's first national voter registry last year, leaders in the opposition asserted that many of their supporters had been intentionally excluded from the lists and that it was the responsibility of the authorities to develop accurate lists based on Albania's civil registries. While there were several allegations made by some in the opposition, the delegation found no proof of voter list manipulation.

Election authorities have made several attempts to assuage the concerns of those in the opposition regarding the voter lists. For the 2001 parliamentary elections, citizens have 40 days to check their names on the voter lists posted throughout the country. In the event that citizens find errors or omissions on the list, they may go directly to the LGEC and make the necessary corrections. In addition to this process there are also three-person verification teams, consisting of representatives of the two largest parties and a local authority official, which work with the local civil registry office to identify voters who are missing from the list. An additional measure is the provision that citizens may apply to courts up to one day before the election, if they find that their names are not on the list.

In spite of these efforts to ensure that safeguards are in place so that every citizen has the opportunity to verify whether his or her name is properly placed on the voter registry, many political leaders and citizens suggested that there are still flaws in the process. It was argued that some citizens may have been confused by the recent census teams which came door to door to verify population numbers, while others asserted that citizens had not been sufficiently informed about the location of voter lists or about remedies available to prospective voters, should they

find that their names are not included on the list. As such, the CEC and LGECs should therefore take extra precautions to ensure that the public is notified of the verification process in an ongoing effort to encourage citizen participation in the upcoming elections.

E. Constituency Boundaries

In compliance with the 1998 Constitution, the Parliament was charged with reducing the number of electoral zones from 115 to 100. The Electoral Code stipulates that the approximate number of voters in each zone is determined by dividing the total number of voters in Albania by 100, but permits a tolerance of +/- 5% in any zone. It also allows for further adjustments based on a number of considerations enumerated in the Code. In March 2001, Parliament held a vote on redistricting that was boycotted by several opposition MPs, many of whom have alleged that several districts were gerrymandered in the Socialist Party's favor and that many violate the +/- 5% margin of error suggested by the Code. Several in the opposition dispute the electoral zones because the boundaries were based on controversial voter lists developed for the 2000 local elections.

The delimitation of election boundaries is complicated and difficult to free from partisan political considerations. The delegation understands that there is concern over the composition of several of these electoral zones. Electoral zone 22, a geographically non-contiguous area, was mentioned to the delegation as particularly questionable. However, even if these concerns are justified, the principle of proportionality now embodied in Albanian electoral legislation should mitigate most of the effects of any deviations.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The delegation appreciated the desire for credible elections expressed by public officials, political and civic leaders and Albanian citizens generally. While a significant number of improvements in the election process have been achieved, important challenges still lie ahead. In recognition of these factors and in the spirit of international cooperation, the delegation respectfully offers the following recommendations.

1) Continuing Political Discourse. Political parties should build on their February agreement in order to achieve a genuine election and a resulting government that will thereby benefit from a clear democratic mandate. The political leaders should take advantage of the opportunities to meet with members of the CEC on important electoral issues that are still to be resolved. Such dialogue is essential to promoting pluralism and to encouraging public confidence in the political process.

2) Encouraging Citizens to Verify Voter lists. The delegation strongly encourages all citizens to verify that their entries on the voter lists are correct. The Central Election Commission should increase voter education efforts in this respect, and political parties should take additional steps to encourage their supporters to check their names on the voter lists.

3) Encouraging Central Election Commission Instructions and Impartiality. Despite the significant steps that have been taken by the CEC in recent months to improve the transparency and professionalism of the Commission, many important issues are yet to be resolved and should

not be delayed. In particular, the CEC should take expeditious action to issue clear guidance on Article 66, the formation of coalitions and the registration of independent candidates. If this crucial electoral provision is not clarified, criticism and confusion can only increase in the remaining period before the election.

Likewise, as doubts about the CEC's political partisanship continue, confidence building measures should be taken by the Commission to ensure that all future decisions taken are viewed as impartial, non-partisan and conducted in an open and transparent manner. For example, the CEC should respond quickly to all electoral complaints regardless of political considerations.

4) Ensuring Election Day Preparedness. The national government should ensure that all appropriate authorities, including the CEC, local government organs and the courts be provided with sufficient financial and administrative resources to ensure that election day activities are conducted in an efficient manner. In addition, every effort should be taken to ensure that local courts are adequately equipped and prepared to address last minute petitions for voter registration.

5) Using Complaint Mechanisms. The delegation received reports that the procedures for resolving electoral disputes were not implemented satisfactorily in the aftermath of the October 2000 local elections. It also learned that, this year, training is being provided to the judiciary to assist it in this task. This is a welcome development. The delegation encourages political parties to raise any complaints they may have about the electoral process through the appropriate channels.

6) Encouraging Broad Citizen Participation in the Election Process. Every citizen has the right to participate in public affairs, and achieving genuine democratic elections requires broad citizen participation. Citizens should take up this responsibility to build and safeguard the democratic process by participating as voters, election officials at the polling stations and elsewhere, political party pollwatchers and domestic election monitors. In order to encourage citizen participation, the CEC should issue credentials to domestic election monitors in a timely manner.

Conclusion. The delegation was encouraged by positive developments in Albania's election system, and hopes that the recommendations offered above will contribute to the efforts of those who are working to consolidate, broaden and deepen democracy in Albania. The Albanian people have demonstrated a strong desire for advancing a more democratic culture; the delegation trusts that the country's political leaders will respect this desire by continuing to adhere to the principles of electoral participation. NDI will continue to monitor the process and through its programs will offer continuing support to those working to strengthen democracy in Albania.

NDI Civic Forum Albania and Kosovo Joint Staff Retreat
Shalom Center, Tirana
June 14-18, 2001

AGENDA

Objectives:

- *Share experiences and identify best practices for the continued work of both programs*
- *Provide training for program staff to enhance skills in areas related to the program mission*
- *Develop regional relationships to benefit and strengthen the programs in both locations*
- *Provide a forum for program staff to use acquired skills, build confidence and highlight successes*

Thursday, June 14

18:30 Introductions/Information Packet Distribution
 Review Retreat Objectives and Agenda

19:45 Dinner

Friday, June 15

7:30-8:45 Breakfast

9:00-9:30 Opening Comments from Howard Sumka, USAID Mission Director

9:30-11:00 Panel Discussion, “*The Relationship between Civil Society and Politics in the Development of Democratic Culture in Albania and Kosovo*”
Invited Guests: Fadil Pacrami and Artur Zheji

11:00-11:20 Break

11:20-13:00 Civic Forum Program Presentations, 50 minutes each program

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 Introduction to Evaluation with Dr. William Millsap, Civic Forum Evaluation Designer

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-18:15 Field Coordinators Share their Experiences

18:15-18:30 Debrief

20:00 Dinner

Saturday, June 16

7:30-8:45 Breakfast

	9:00-9:30	Warm-up Activity
	9:30-11:30	Workshops Introduction to Leadership, Shpresa Halimi, ANTTARC Learning about Interpersonal Communication, Alken Myftiu, REC
11:30-11:45	Break	
11:45-13:45	Workshops	Introduction to Leadership, Shpresa Halimi, ANTTARC Learning about Interpersonal Communication, Alken Myftiu, REC
13:45-15:00	Lunch	
15:00-16:30	Evaluation-Focus Groups	
16:30-16:45	Break	
16:45-17:45	Focus Groups continued	
17:45-18:00	Debrief	

Free Evening

Sunday, June 18

8:15-9:30	Breakfast
9:30-11:15	Workshops Comparative Analysis of Different Citizen Groups Democracy Discussion (new staff)
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30-14:00	Evaluation-Survey Administration
14:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-16:30	Coalitions for All
16:30-16:45	Debrief
19:45	Closing Dinner

Monday, June 18

7:30-8:45	Breakfast
9:00-11:00	Complete Retreat Evaluation Closing comments



NDI CIVIC FORUM ALBANIA

CITIZEN GROUP OPINION SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE OVERVIEW

This questionnaire is part of an assessment being conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) for the purpose of measuring the effects of the Civic Forum program on its participants.

We are particularly interested in your candid views about Civic Forum; the views you have about citizen participation, the information you have received in Citizen Groups, how it has improved your understanding of democracy, and how this knowledge is likely to be applied in your local community. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and no individual will be identified in any report resulting from this survey. We are seeking answers to three general questions.

- What attitudes have changed or are changing about democratic processes among Civic Forum participants?
- Have Civic Forum participants gained knowledge that enhances their understanding of the country's and local community's political processes?
- To what extent have Civic Forum participants increased their willingness to participate in and initiate local community activities?

The questions below should take approximately 30-35 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation in this survey

Your Field Coordinator will provide you with the information to complete the following six items.

- 1. Discussion Group ID: _____ 2. Discussion Group Size: _____
- 3. Discussion Group Location: _____
- 4. Administrative Unit: 1) Municipality 2) Komuna 3) Village
- 5. Estimated population: 1) 0-500 2) 501-1000 3) 1001-2000 4) 2001-5000 5) over 5000
- 6. Date Questionnaire Administered (dd/mm/yy): _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the questions below as accurately as you can by circling the response that best fits your situation or by completing the question.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

- 7. Sex : 1) Male 2) Female
- 8. Age: _____
- 9. Are you married 1) Yes 2) No
- 10. If you have children, how many children do you have? _____
- 11. How many years of formal schooling have you completed?
(Circle the highest grade achieved)
 - None1
 - Elementary School (Grades 1-8).2
 - Some High School (Grades 9-11)3
 - Completed High School (Grade 12)4
 - Some College/University Schooling (13-15) 5
 - Completed College or University (16) 6
 - Vocational or Trade School (13-15)7
- 12. What do you consider your native language? 1) Albanian
 - 2) Turkish
 - 3) Roma
 - 4) Greek
 - 5) Macedonian
 - 6) Other:_____
- 13. What is your current employment status? **(Circle all items that apply)**
 - a) Employed-full time
 - b) Employed -part time

- c) Unemployed
- e) Retired
- g) Other (specify) _____
- d) Student
- f) Raising a family

14. If you are employed, what is your current position? _____

I. YOUR DISCUSSION GROUP

15. Have you previously been or are you now a member of a local community group (i.e. NGO, Parent-Teacher Association, Municipal Council etc.) **1) Yes** **2) No**

16. **IF YES**, please list the type of group: _____

17. Is this your first Civic Forum Meeting? **1) Yes** **2) No**

18. **IF NO**, how many Civic Forum meetings you have attended before today? _____

19. How frequently does your Citizen Discussion group meet? (**Circle only one item**)

- More than once a week..... 1
- Weekly 2
- Biweekly..... 3
- Monthly 4
- Every six weeks or more 5

20. What is your primary interest in participating in the Civic Forum program?
(Circle all items that apply)

- a) To gain participatory skills..... a
- b) To cooperate with people holding different political views..... b
- c) To understand how democracy works in a community..... c
- d) To contribute to improvements in my community..... d
- e) Other (specify) _____ . e

21. How were you recruited to the Civic Forum program?
 (Circle **all items** that apply)

- a. Referred by a friend a
- b. Referral from other community groups b
- c. Word-of-mouth/general communication c
- d. By local NDI Field Coordinator d
- e. An organization you belong to is participating e
- f. Other (specify) _____ . f

ATTITUDES ABOUT DEMOCRACY

22. Please respond to the following statements using the scale below. Put the number of your response on the line at the end of each statement.

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-Neutral
4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree	

- a) The democratic process in Albania is effective. _____
- b) The national government works for the people. _____
- c) The articles of the Albanian Constitution directly affect my life. _____
- d) Municipal/Komuna governments play more important roles in the lives of citizens than the national government. _____
- e) Citizens should know who their elected representatives are. _____
- f) The only responsibility a citizen has in a democracy is to vote. _____
- g) Citizens should understand the role of elected representatives. _____
- h) Citizens in a democracy should work together for the common good. _____
- i) Citizens should know the structures and functions of government. _____
- j) I feel the benefits of democracy in my daily life. _____
- k) I can improve my community by participating in the democratic process. _____

23. Do you believe that it is important that elected representatives are directly accountable to the people for their decisions? (Circle **only one item**)

- Always 1
- In Most Situations 2
- Sometimes 3
- Never 4
- No opinion..... 5

24. Working with your neighbors, do you believe that many community problems can be solved through community action? (**Circle only one item**)

- Always 1
- In Most Situations 2
- Sometimes 3
- Never 4
- No opinion 5

25. What do you feel are the important personal attributes that members of community groups should possess in order to carry out community projects? (**Circle all items that apply**)

- Willingness to listen to others a
- Tolerance of other opinions..... b
- Personal connections with local officials c
- Self-motivation..... d
- Commitment to their community e
- Can make decisions all alone f
- Desire to make positive changes g
- Ability to lead others h
- Can pressure group members to agree with his/her opinions..... i
- Can cooperate and work together with others j
- Can reach agreement with others k
- Don't know..... l
- No opinion..... m
- Other:..... n

26. Do you believe that acquiring knowledge is fundamental to promoting your participation in the democratic process? (**Circle only one item**)

- No influence 1
- Minor influence 2
- Moderate influence..... 3
- Major influence 4
- No opinion..... 5

KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

27. For the following statements, choose one item below which best fits your understanding of the democratic process and place that number on the line at the end of each statement.

1--Yes 2--No 3--Not sure
 4--Don't know 5--No opinion

- a) The basic principle of any democracy is that it is a government of the people, by the people, for the people, with the people choosing those who govern. _____
- b)** In democratic societies, wealth tends to be more equally shared between all economic sectors of the society. _____
- c) The phrase, "One person, one vote" means that all votes (men and women, rich or poor, different ethnic groups) are equal in a democratic election. _____
- d) Regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs, every representative group should have the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. _____

28. Democracies claiming to be "free and open societies" usually permit the following freedoms: (**choose all items that apply**)

- a) Speech a
- b) Assembly b
- c) Religious worship c
- d) Media (Press, television, etc.) d
- e) Right to vote e
- f) Participate in the political process f

29. Please respond to the following statements using the scale below; place the number of your response on the line at the end of each statement.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral
 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

- a) A nation's Constitution establishes the supreme law of the country. _____
- b) The Rule of Law is a fundamental principle in any viable democracy _____

- c) Judges should be free of political influence to assure the independence of a society's legal system. _____
- d) In a democracy, the rights of the individual are guaranteed by law. _____
- e) An independent media is an essential element of a viable democracy. _____
- f) All persons are "equal" in the eyes of the law in a democracy. _____

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

30. Did you vote in the local elections held last year?

- Yes..... 1
- No..... 2

31. Did you vote in the national elections?

- Yes.....1
- No..... 2

32. Are you active politically? List the activities in which you participate in your local community. (**Circle all items that apply**)

- a) Member of a political party..... a
- b) Talk to friends about politics..... b
- c) Volunteer your time to a political party c
- d) Serve as a poll watcher for a political party d
- e) Attend political party functions..... e
- f) Willing to run for a local political office..... f

33. In your opinion, how likely are individuals who have participated in Civic Forum to become more involved in improving their communities? (**Circle only one item**)

- Not Likely 1
- Somewhat Unlikely 2
- Neutral/cannot rate 3
- Somewhat Likely..... 4
- Most Likely 5

34. If you have participated in Civic Forum, are you interested in becoming more involved the activities of your community? (**Circle only one item**)

- Yes 1
- No..... 2
- Not sure 3
- Not at this time..... 4
- No opinion 5

35. What community activities have you participated in or are you participating in now?
(Circle all items that apply)

- Participating in local NGO activities a
- Participating in domestic monitoring efforts..... b
- Attending commune/municipal council meetings..... c
- Serving on community committees..... d
- Participating in an agricultural organization e
- Participating in the parent/teacher association..... f
- Talking to local politicians/officials..... g
- Writing to local politicians/officials..... h
- Other: _____..... i

36. If you have participated in Civic Forum, ESTIMATE how many persons you have talked with about the Civic Forum program and/or shared information or materials with:

_____ **(enter an estimated number)**

37. In your opinion, how many persons will become directly involved in some type of community activity in your community as a result of your participation in Civic Forum?

(Circle only one item)

- None 1
- 1-5 persons 2
- 6-15 Persons 3
- 16-30..... 4
- Greater than 30 persons.....5
- Have no idea..... 6

38. List the up to two benefits your community has received from the Civic Forum program.

a. _____
(Most beneficial)

b. _____
(2nd most beneficial)

39. What local issues do you think your community should work on?

a. _____
(Issue of greatest interest to you)

b. _____
(Issue of lesser interest to you)