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DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYS INITIAL PROVINCIAL OBSERVER TEAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

Kabul, Sept 8 – US-based electoral assistance organization Democracy International (DI) today (Wednesday) completed the deployment of its initial provincial observer teams to nine provinces across Afghanistan as part of a 90-person mission to observe elections for the country's Wolesi Jirga (lower house of parliament), scheduled for September 18.

Following the invitation of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC), DI established an election observation mission (EOM) in March to observe the electoral process leading up to and following the Wolesi Jirga elections. The EOM has been active since the official announcement of the beginning of the Wolesi Jirga electoral process on March 25th.

DI deployed an international observation mission to the 2009 presidential and provincial council elections. Since that time, DI has maintained its presence in Afghanistan with a primary focus on observing the electoral preparations for the September 18 Wolesi Jirga elections. DI has periodically reported on election preparations and other electoral issues, most recently expressing concern about the continuing election violence and calling on the government to provide better protection for candidates and their supporters.

This week DI deployed nine teams of Long Term Observers (LTOs) across Afghanistan. They will interview provincial electoral officers, candidates, party representatives, civil society organizations, and voters, and will follow the election preparations, political campaigns, the complaints and appeals process.

Next week DI will deploy a further 50 observers who will join the LTOs in observing all phases of Election Day, including opening procedures, voting, the closing of polling stations, and the count. DI will maintain observers in Afghanistan throughout the tabulation of results. The mission will issue a final report after the announcement of final results.

The DI mission is led by DI principal Glenn Cowan, who serves as Head of Mission, and Alessandro Parziale, DI's Chief of Party in Afghanistan. DI's mission is the largest fully international group observing the elections. DI's delegation comprises experts in Afghan politics, democracy assistance, election administration and civil society. The mission consists of 22 technical and expert staff, 18 Long Term Observers (LTOs) and 50 Short Term Observers (STOs) from 18 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary,

India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Palestine, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

For periodic updates on the DI EOM visit www.afghan2010.com and DI_Kabul on Twitter. For press interviews, please email Communications Director Jeremy Wagstaff at jwagstaff@democracyinternational.com or call +93 (0) 796923474.

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U.S.-based Democracy International provides technical assistance and analytical services and implements projects worldwide for democracy and governance programs for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other development partners. Since its founding in 2003, DI has worked in more than 40 countries. DI organized and led observation mission to elections in Pakistan in February 2008 and Afghanistan in August 2009, and has also carried out election-related projects in Albania, Djibouti, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Liberia and Sudan. For updated information on Democracy International visit www.democracyinternational.com.