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**DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL TO ORGANIZE U.S. DELEGATION
TO OBSERVE UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN**

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN – Democracy International (DI) today announced that it is organizing a U.S. election observation mission to observe the upcoming parliamentary elections in Pakistan, to be held on February 18, 2008. Former Congressman Jim Moody will lead the 39-person delegation, which will include noted experts in U.S. foreign policy, democracy assistance, election processes and Pakistani politics.

The purpose of this observation mission is to show support for the Pakistani electorate by providing an expanded international presence to observe and report on the conduct of the elections. The mission will complement ongoing efforts supported by the U.S. government and others to strengthen democratic electoral systems and processes in Pakistan to help build a more participatory, representative and accountable democracy. This delegation will draw upon the work of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), a nonpartisan coalition of Pakistani civil society organizations established to observe the election process, educate voters, and advocate for electoral and democratic reform. For the elections on February 18, FAFEN expects to deploy about 20,000 observers to monitor polling day and the vote counting process.

The delegation will convene in Islamabad to meet with electoral authorities, representatives of Pakistani political parties and civil society, and other international and domestic election observers. Before Election Day, delegation members will deploy throughout the country to meet with local representatives and observe conditions in a variety of locations. Delegates will observe the opening and closing of polling stations, the conduct of balloting throughout Election Day, and the counting and reporting of votes. Delegates will reconvene in Islamabad after Election Day to share their findings and prepare a preliminary statement. The delegation expects to hold a press conference in Islamabad in the days after the election to present its preliminary findings.

The observer mission will conduct its activities in a nonpartisan, professional manner, in accordance with the law of Pakistan and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. The mission is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Working with The Asia Foundation, Democracy International has provided technical assistance to FAFEN over the last year. For three weeks in December 2007, DI principal Glenn Cowan led a team that conducted interviews with political parties, civil society organizations, election authorities, and the international community in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

Democracy International, based in Bethesda, Maryland, designs, evaluates, implements, and provides technical assistance for democracy and governance programs worldwide. Founded by leading experts in international democracy assistance, DI offers expertise in election processes and election monitoring, political party development, legislative strengthening, local government and decentralization, civil society development, and strategic communications programming. Over the past 20 years, DI and its principals have worked with civil society and election monitoring organizations, election commissions, government agencies and others in more than 50 countries and in every region of the world. DI principal Eric Bjornlund is author of Beyond Free and Fair: Monitoring Elections and Building Democracy (Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).