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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES (ISC/CD) ON THE OBSERVATION OF COMING EGYPTIAN ELECTIONS 25 OCTOBER 2010

President Mubarak has recently announced the dates for Egypt's next round of elections. On Sunday, November 28, 2010, Egyptian voters are scheduled to cast their ballots for 444 seats in the People's Assembly (*Majlis Al-Sha'b*), the lower house of the country's two-chamber Parliament. A second round of voting for the Assembly will follow one week later, on December 5. Elections for President are scheduled to take place at the end of September, 2011. In light of the fact that President Mubarak is now 82 and has held the office since the assassination of President Anwar As-Sadat just over 29 years ago, it is not unreasonable to anticipate that these next rounds of voting stand to be fundamental landmarks on the country's road to stable democracy. For that reason their importance cannot be overstated.

A fundamental element of any democratic transition is widespread confidence in the fairness of the elections that are held -- confidence at the national level, on the part of its citizens and political parties, and confidence on the international level, on the part of the country's diplomatic and commercial partners in the region and around the world. Experience has shown that public and international confidence is best fostered by organized, systematic electoral observation by impartial domestic and multilateral organizations. These organizations, once duly accredited by the appropriate national authorities, should be provided unimpeded access to observe all important stages of the electoral process, including verification of the voter's register free of intimidation; timely distribution of voter cards to duly registered electors; organization, recruitment and training of polling station officials; secure distribution of electoral materials; opening, voting and closing procedures at polling stations on Election Day; as well as honest, transparent counting, tabulation and reporting of verified voting results at local, district, and national levels. Numerous organizations have developed methodologies to carry out such observation, either directly or by training local civil society groups to do so according to well-developed standards and procedures recognized at the international level.

The International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies strongly believes that elections that are widely perceived as free, fair and democratic in the most populous country of the Arab World could mark a

International Steering Committee



The Nongovernmental Process of the Community of Democracies

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major turning point for democratic aspirations through the Middle East and Africa. Allowing observation of these elections will contribute significantly to achieving this landmark.

Egypt was an original adherent to the Warsaw Declaration in June 2000. As such, it committed itself to the standards of the Community of Democracies, including “regular, free and fair elections with universal and equal suffrage, open to multiple parties, conducted by secret ballot, monitored by independent electoral authorities, and free of fear and intimidation.” Egypt must live up to the letter and spirit of that commitment. In addition, Egypt has been a Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights since 1982. Article 25 of the ICCPR clearly states that “Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity...without unreasonable restrictions: (a) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives (b) to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the voters...”

As a Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Egypt already has the opportunity to participate in electoral observation carried out in the OSCE region, and the proposal that OSCE observe the early 2005 Presidential Elections for the Palestinian Authority was first raised at a Mediterranean Partner’s meeting in Sharm el Sheikh. We believe it makes great sense, therefore, for Egypt’s authorities promptly to invite and welcome experienced organizations, specifically including the OSCE, to observe the legislative and presidential voting. The ISC/CD calls upon Egypt and its friends around the world to work together to this end without delay.