

**Statement of
The Carter Center's
First Pre-election Delegation
to Observe the 2001 Nicaraguan Elections
July 16-22, 2001**

On May 18, 2001, Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) extended an invitation to The Carter Center to observe the November 2001 national elections in which the Nicaraguan people will select a president, vice president, deputies to the legislature, and representatives to the Central American Parliament. The Carter Center accepted that invitation, and organized a pre-election delegation to visit Nicaragua July 16-22, 2001 in order to assess the political climate and preparations for elections.

The delegation met with election authorities, political party representatives, civil society groups, domestic and international observers, religious leaders, the military and members of the diplomatic community in and around the capital city of Managua. In addition, a member of the delegation traveled to the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) in order to better understand the preparations being made there for elections. We are grateful to the CSE for offering us full access to all relevant information during the entire electoral process.

The delegation was led by Dr. Shelley McConnell, Associate Director of the Center's Latin American and Caribbean Program. David Dye, the Center's representative in Managua for the 2001 elections, accompanied the delegation and provided political analysis. Dr. Luis Alberto Cordero and Argentine anthropologist Nicolas Fernandez Bravo consulted on technical preparedness and the electoral context in the RAAN. Thomas Roberts served as the delegation's assistant. The Carter Center's 2001 election mission was made possible through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

of national identity cards and voter registration. Although Nicaragua’s infrastructure has improved in many respects, substantial deficits remain, and these complicate the logistics of election organization, including distribution of materials and ballots as well as transmission of the results after the polls close.

Nicaragua still lacks a “registration culture”, and work is needed to improve the municipal records of births, marriages and deaths so that an accurate voter list can be maintained. Such obstacles can be overcome where the political will and technical competence to do so exists. The international community cares about the quality of democracy in Nicaragua and will continue to support democratic improvements.

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