

■ EDITORIAL

Democracy should not be taken for granted

Last year the UN General Assembly established an annual *International Day of Democracy* to be celebrated on 15 September. Some may ask, what can an international day of democracy accomplish? Well, not much in itself. But what is significant is that UN member states actually have agreed that democracy is worth celebrating. In the run up to this first Democracy Day, the African Union Commission and International IDEA launched a Joint Activity Plan for supporting democracy in Africa.



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By Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General

■ FOCUS: Democracy building in Africa

African Union Commission and International IDEA launch 'Joint Activity Plan' to support democracy in Africa

Posted: September 12, 2008

Efforts directed at building and consolidating democracy in Africa received an added boost through the launch of a 'Joint Activity Plan' for democracy in Africa by the African Union Commission and International IDEA on 12 September 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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□ Photo: © Margot Gould/IDEA

■ OTHER NEWS

Political process in Andean countries

Posted: September 29, 2008

Thirty years after the "third democratic wave", the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), International IDEA and *Casa de América* organized a roundtable on "Political Process in Andean Countries" on 26 September 2008, in Madrid, Spain to examine the progress and setbacks sustained by democratic governance in Andean countries together with the measures they have adopted in response.

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Democracy in development

Posted: September 15, 2008

International IDEA and the Swedish government jointly launched an initiative to strengthen the EU's democracy building agenda. The Initiative, "Democracy in Development – towards and beyond the Swedish EU Presidency 2009", is based on in-depth analysis and multi-regional consultations, providing an opportunity for actors in non-EU regions to share their perspectives on how EU could improve its democracy building support efforts.

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Training politicians in Peru

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International Day of Democracy

To celebrate the first *International Day of Democracy* on 15 September 2008, International IDEA jointly organized a series of activities that highlighted the link between democracy, development and diversity.

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Posted: September 1, 2008

Two training programmes for political leaders were organized in Lima, Peru by International IDEA and *Asociación Civil Transparencia* for political party members; the first contributing towards their knowledge on the role and responsibilities of political parties and the second, encouraging women for party leadership positions and elected office.

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International IDEA visits the Constituent Assembly of Nepal

Posted: August 15, 2008

The majority of members of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal have little or no constitution making experience. A good number are women, who constitute one third of the Assembly. To support these members, initiatives such as orientation programmes on rules of procedure and constitutional dialogue are needed. International IDEA is one of the partners invited to support these programmes.

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The challenges of electoral reform in Mexico

Posted: August 25, 2008

On 19 August 2008, International IDEA organized a seminar specifically to address the problems arising from the implementation of the most recent federal electoral reform in Mexico.

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Bolivia reflects on the referendums in Latin America and voting abroad

Posted: July 30, 2008

Voting abroad is not a new issue in Latin America, but it has become especially relevant in recent years. In an effort to analyze its characteristics, reach and limitations in the region, International IDEA and the national Electoral Court of Bolivia organized "International Workshops for Democracy: Referendums in Latin America and Voting Abroad" in La Paz, Bolivia, between 22 – 25 July 2008.

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ACE meets BRIDGE: Capacity development on a regional level

Posted: August 15, 2008

In July 2008 the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network and the BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) Project teamed up for a joint workshop in Senegal to discuss the progress of ACE's regionalization strategy.

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NEW RELEASES

New study on party politics in new democracies

Political Parties in Conflict-Prone Societies: Regulation, Engineering, and Democratic Development was launched in New York on 4 September 2008 by International IDEA, the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) and the United Nations University (UNU).

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Local pre-constituent debates

Presents the outcomes of a series of forums for analysis and discussion held in four cities located in different regions of Ecuador. The focus of the seminars was to encourage political participation, to contribute towards the development of a democratic culture, and to provide access and public understanding on the role of the Constituent Assembly.

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Andean Countries: The Politicians

Examines politicians and politics from a new perspective by presenting short biographies and interviews with the primary presidential candidates in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and other leading politicians in those countries, and how the life story of each candidate frames their politics.

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Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide

Introduces International IDEA's State of Democracy (SoD) assessment framework, developed for use by local actors in assessing the quality of their democracies and mounting reform agendas.

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