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“Building Inclusive Democracy, Peace and Social Progress”

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Your Excellency the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,
Honourable ministers,
Friends from the UN system,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to join others in congratulating the Government of Qatar and thank you, Mr Minister, for the impressive organisation of this conference and for your government's leadership in pursuing reforms.

Democracy is widely accepted and widely supported. Nevertheless the process of building inclusive democracy is not a linear process of continuous improvement. Democratic transition is a difficult process, which can suffer setbacks and even trigger conflict. Democracy and democratic transitions are about power, and changes to power relations can cause controversy and conflict even in long-established democracies. We are witnessing this today in all parts of the world, in particular in societies with a high degree of polarisation, segregation and exclusion.

This is a reason why the way democracy works can be a controversial issue within societies. It is also a reason why democratisation can become controversial and polarising globally.

Regrettably over the last years democratisation and democracy building has become a more polarised issue globally, as it has come to be seen as an expression of at times ideological and at times rather aggressive policies. We need to work hard to counter that tendency. We need to work hard to replace polarization with dialogue. The ICNRD is an important process in order to reduce polarisation and enhance dialogue.



As an intergovernmental institute with member states from all continents International IDEA derives its legitimacy from the democratic track records of its member states. We find that democracy can vary greatly, it finds expression in all kinds of environments. And hence the learning from various countries, the experiences that you as governments possess, from very different environments and from different reform efforts, are highly valuable.

One of the most impressive expressions this year of home-grown demand for inclusive democracy is the case of Nepal. Earlier this year ordinary people, impoverished people, marginalised people took to the streets in a peaceful way to demand democracy. They defied academic theories that Nepalese culture or Nepalese religious traditions were not conducive to democracy. They defied the claims that democratisation was an agenda of foreigners and they gathered across political lines and across regional dividing lines. They are using peaceful dialogue as a means for advancing democracy. And they have agreed on a process to restructure the state through the making of new constitution.

Inclusive democratic processes, inclusive dialogue, inclusive processes to rebuild constitutions are seen over the world now as a very important trend and an expression of the desire to make states more democratic.

Inclusive process is not only a matter of words; inclusive democracy is hard work. It is, again, about transforming power relations. It is about ensuring the engagement of minorities; this is today a challenge for democracies in Europe. It can also be about including majorities that have been excluded: in Bolivia this year the majority has found itself at the peak of power for the first time.

Inclusion is of course also about women. Women are not a minority in society, but they are today a minority in political organs. It is not a law of nature that women should be a minority in democratic institutions.



We can do better and we should do better.

It has become a truism that democracy must grow from within societies that it can not be imported or exported. We all agree with this to the extent that one could wonder: is there any role of international organisations and for international conferences in supporting democracy building? How can we support inclusive and home-grown democracy without being intrusive?

His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mongolia referred to the impressive process that his government had been leading, developing an agenda for democratic change. The State of Democracy methodology that he referred to has been developed by IDEA and used by our UN partners in support of this process which has been led by the government of Mongolia. We are of course more than happy to work with more governments in support of home grown democracy using the state of democracy assessment methodology.

We need a lot more of dialogue and a lot less of polarization at global levels and in countries striving to build and sustain democracy. Political actors are important, you are key players in this change. But you cannot do this alone. Civil society and the various movements inside civil society need to articulate the plurality of views and values that need to meet and to strike compromises among one another. The three parallel conferences here in Doha is an expression of this very useful approach

The Government of Qatar deserves much of praise I am looking forward to the substantive discussions of this meeting seeing it moving from Ulan Bator to Doha and beyond.

Thank you for your kind attention.