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Reflections on the Background Document

This paper offers initial reflections on the pertinent and timely questions raised by the Conference background document. It is based on the awareness that the topic, though increasingly studied and discussed in academic and political circles alike, has not led to date to clear and indubitable conclusions. Both democracy and development can be understood in a narrow and in a very broad sense. While the former seems to be preferred by those still attempting to quantify and measure their mutual influences, the latter seems to better reflects social realities in which both categories transcend the realm of technicalities to become eminently political.

Part I: The relationship between democracy and development

1. <u>What do we mean by democracy and democratic politics</u>?

In answering this as well as most of the following questions, we should try to imagine ourselves in the position those who invest themselves in the struggle for democracy, often incurring high personal risk as is the case today with the citizens of Burma; those who are keen to consolidate their initial democratic achievements as the people of Egypt, or else, whose who are loosing confidence in democratic institutions as the latter fail to produce noticeable change in their daily lives and to provide shelter from poverty and insecurity.

This perspective is most likely to lead us towards the conclusion that democracy is both a matter of institutions and effective political practice. Yes, regular free and fair elections are indispensable as they are the instrument to exercise choice and choice is the other word for freedom and for a dignified and rewarding life. But, the ultimate questions will always be: do we really have a choice? Will our voice and our vote make a difference? Can we indeed change our lives by exercising our civic rights? And how can we make our voice heard between elections?

Political practice and the perception that citizens have of that practice, appear to be as important as the institutional architecture of democracy. A positive perception is not necessarily based only on the delivery of "material outputs". It may also be based on the system's transparency and ability to bring to the forefront of the political stage office holders generally perceived as honest, responsive and concerned more about their fellow-citizens' well-being than about their own permanence in power. The "outcomes" of democracy - and for that matter, of any system of governance that aspires to sustainability, are

both "material" and "immaterial"… as the human needs that drive political processes also have such a double nature. The deficit on one side can temporarily be compensated by abundance on the other. But, for how long can such "compensations last? Honest democratic practice that doesn't free people from poverty will soon be challenged; likewise material, abundance alone, will only temporarily tranquilize claims for freedom - which continue boiling under the surface.

This relationship is very rightfully emphasized in the Conference background paper that states: *"Popular demand for more representative government means that authoritarian governments must either survive by exerting unlimited levels of repression, or through high levels of delivery and effectiveness."* Asia, as today's most dynamic continent, offers the best examples of both situations.

The ideal is, of course, a system that delivers both freedom of choice – **democracy** and freedom from want – **development**. It is also, we are convinced, the only sustainable solution in the long term.

Going back to the initial question - what do we mean by democracy - we are bound to note that experience and research caution against lengthy and comprehensive definitions. Ingredients of democracy are too numerous and models and patterns too varied to be covered by a comprehensive definition. Free and fair elections are essential but should go hand in hand with viable constitutions, active political parties, free media, a vibrant civil society, a shared culture of democracy etc. Attempts to define a universally applicable mix of these ingredients will inevitably be perceived as attempts to project on the entire planet Western and Northern governance paradigms. If we are genuinely convinced that democracy has a universal value and appeal, we need to explore beyond European and North American models. Luckily, the terrain to be explored is expanding rapidly.

For practical purposes only and without pretending to close the debate, International IDEA has adopted a simple "working definition" that sees democracy as a system of governance in which:

a) Control over government is exercised by citizens;
b) Citizens are treated as equals in the exercise of that control.

2. <u>What is the relationship between democracy and development</u>?

Academic literature about the linkages between democracy and development is both abundant and inconclusive. This is really not surprising if we consider that both development and democracy are understood in so many different ways. In a nutshell, some scholars have claimed that there was a causal link. Others refuted its existence arguing that evidence was contradictory and that there were plenty of examples to substantiate different, if not opposed views. Finally, some scholars recognise that the link exists but is not direct and causal but somewhat more complex.

The complexity of the relationship is also exemplified by the semantic evolution of the two terms - democracy and development - over the last couple of decades.

Development used to be understood as the synonym of economic growth. Today, it still includes growth, but is also broadly understood as a process leading to a continuous improvement of the quality of life of the majority of the people, particularly the poor. It also incorporates the dimension of human rights – including civic and political rights and should ideally lead to the reduction of disparities in the distribution of income.

The way we use the term democracy has also undergone important changes: from liberal democracy - concerned essentially with individual freedoms, electoral mechanisms and the non-interference of the state in the economy - towards participatory democracy and some would say also – towards social democracy, not in the sense of the programme implemented by a specific political party, but as a system of governance expected to deliver on social and economic rights and development in the broadest sense.

In spite of the empirically ambiguous and not very conclusive findings on the impact of democracy on economic growth and vice versa, there is a growing consensus – almost a universal acceptance - of three points:

- o <u>First</u>, that both development and democracy are desirable – are values to be pursued in themselves;

- o <u>Second</u>, that development is more that economic growth

- o <u>Third</u>, that democracy is more than the institutions and the mechanics of democracy i.e. that democracy is also expected to deliver in terms of a better quality of life.

Thus, we may say that there has been a converging evolution of the two terms towards each other: democracy is more and more meant to include development and development is more and more meant to include the realisation of the basic human rights, including, of course, civic and political rights.

3. <u>How has the perceived relationship between democracy and development influenced the type of democracy support programmes funded by outsiders</u>?

A) <u>As far as development support in general</u> is concerned, the international community has gone a long way since the eighties and early nineties. Under the structural adjustment policies, developing countries were basically advised to open their markets, abolish import duties and let their currencies flow freely. The market alone was expected to balance their economies, produce incentives for economic growth; and growth, once re-established, would produce wealth which, in turn would "trickle down" and benefit the broadest strata of the population.

This recipe, as we know today, did not help achieving the desired results and the approach of the international community gradually evolved from advocating "a minimum of government" towards advocating "accountability and responsiveness" of government – in other terms "good governance".

The emphasis today is on sound public policies, accountability, poverty reduction and, above all, national ownership of development policies. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), as a common platform around which assistance is provided to post-conflict and developing countries reflect an important conceptual advance. Yet, the advances of democracy – in Africa in particular – are pointing today to some limits and even potential adverse effects of the PRSPs themselves or rather, of the ways in which they are being implemented.

Though negotiated domestically through what should be a participatory and nationally owned process, PRSPs are ultimately assessed by bilateral and multilateral actors in international policy fora, and aid flows are influenced by their approval. Thus, paradoxically, the very recognition of the link between democracy and development, has also led to the establishment of instruments and channels to verify the compliance with criteria and priorities determined by the donors rather than those established by the citizens of the developing countries concerned.

In a way, responding to criteria established by donors (not necessarily wrong in economic terms) has limited the internal democratic debate on development and taken precedence over it.

International partners place a strong focus on executives and civil society organisations. While the role of such actors is certainly important, an excessive emphasis on it undermines the functions of other actors in political systems, like Parliaments and political parties. Focusing on the executive only, effectively means that the principle of ownership is applied to the government, often through the ministries of finance or planning. In polarised societies, not least in post-conflict situations, such approaches by international actors risk exacerbating the polarisation. If in the eyes of the political opposition, the international community cares for the government party only, it will be hard to avoid a "winner takes all" political culture in which being in government means access to big resources while being in opposition means trying to block whatever effort the government makes, and trying to reap the benefits of office at the next elections. The space for nationally owned, broad-based visions for development is thus hard to achieve, and the international community may be part of the reason why.

On the other hand, among political parties in many developing countries, there is a growing concern that these international constraints leave little space for competitive politics. Leaders in political parties in Africa have, for example, expressed that developing political platforms is not all that important, because that responsibility is taken care of by the PRSP process.

These undesired effects of the PRSPs are coming into contradiction with the notion of national ownership. The problem has been identified on both sides of the North/South divide and there are debates on how to overcome it.

B) The need and scope for different approaches also exist with regard to the focus, content and time-frames of specific democracy support programmes:
The most pressing need is towards developing more holistic and integrated approaches, and moving from supporting single events and single institutions towards supporting processes. Concrete suggestions in that respect are offered in **Part IV** of this paper.

Part II: The challenge of deepening and sustaining democracy in developing countries

1. Why has there been an increase in the number of democratic states in recent years, and what is likely to sustain them?

A major "historical distance" is probably needed to assess the reasons of the indeed impressive increase in the number of democratic states over the last couple of decades. Historical "drivers" of democratic transitions should probably be sought in a combination of factors:

- On the one hand, at some point in time, the basic human quest for freedom and dignity is articulated collectively by an organised political force and acquires an almost irresistible strength. To quote Victor Hugo: "No army can stop an idea whose time has come!"

- On the other hand, the authoritarian regime faces its own incapacity to manage increasingly complex social realities, looses energy and implodes or, in other cases, is obliged to resort to violence, faces international ostracism and eventually, makes such concessions that change its authoritarian nature.

Transitions have some common patterns, but also, so many individual characteristics that all lessons learned need to be applied very cautiously and with a deep understanding of the local context.

Obviously, the geo-political reshuffling of the planet after the end of the Cold war has played a major role in the Global South, particularly in Africa, as political developments on the Continent became less constrained by external influences. Democracy being highly contagious, the removal of ideological and geo-political barriers finally made it "the only game in town". Yet, the rules of the game were still to be learned and appropriated by all players, the playing fields had to be cleared, levelled and adjusted to local needs and circumstances. This process has been long and laborious and is still going on. It can be called "the building of democracy" as democracy indeed needs to be built and is not the "natural" state of society. It is not achieved just by removing authoritarian rule.

Roughly, more than a hundred countries have undergone democratic transitions since the 1970s and some 40 countries since the 1990s. Statistics, of course, can be misleading as they say little about the quality of these transitions. Many of these new democracies are still "democracies with adjectives": "**controlled democracies**", "**oligarchic democracies**", "**ethnic democracies**", "**male democracies**" (the last group is no doubt, the largest one and not only among so called "young democracies").

"**Full**", "**hybrid**" and "**fragile**" are also adjectives frequently used to depict some democracies. One should be cautious in using "**full**" as it conveys the idea of a goal definitely attained and irreversible. Irreversibility should never be taken for granted.

"**Hybridity**" is used to define systems of governance that are "half-way" between authoritarian rule and democracy and carry features of both. The threat of a relapse into authoritarianism poses a real challenge and requires constant attention. Opportunities to influence the course of events may exist but they are to be assessed on a case by case basis and support activities carefully calibrated. The danger of backlashes to more prescriptive or intrusive "democracy promotion" is particularly high. Some relevant questions to be considered: Is it a resource-rich country? To what extent is the government dependent on international support and keen to improve its democratic image? How polarised is the domestic political landscape? Is there a charismatic leader with a populist policy to "buy-in" the electorate? Who are the "drivers of change"? What is the strength and impact of nationalism? The latter lends itself easily as a platform for pro-regime popular mobilisation and anti-democratic manipulation. We saw it from the Balkans in the nineties to the Arab world and Central Asia today.

"**Fragility**" may have multiple causes from the legacy of protracted conflict to institutional weakness, mass poverty and deep inequalities in the distribution of income, exclusion of significant parts of the population (real or perceived) often on ethnic or religious grounds, mass unemployment, particularly of youth etc. Usually, the causes have accumulated over years. They may have generated vicious circles whereby one of the components has aggravated the effects of the other. If, for example, the lack of employment opportunities affects (or is perceived to affect) particularly one clearly identified segment of society (an ethnic, religious or linguistic group), the ensuing ethnic and political divide may hamper the search for sound solutions to improve governance and institutional delivery. Governance problems will tend to be read through group identity lenses, deepening communalism and ethnic divides and further increasing levels of fragility and propensity to violence.

In addressing the lack of inclusiveness as a potential cause of fragility, all concrete manifestations should be looked at: inclusiveness of citizenship and political institutions (of the three branches of power), inclusiveness of education, effective minority protection, language policies, religious freedoms etc. The analysis should go beyond constitutional and legal provisions and focus also on current governance practices. A failure to manage social and ethnic diversity through an inclusive and democratic dialogue has triggered

situations of fragility in a number of developing countries (from Côte d'Ivoire to Sri Lanka).

In post-conflict countries, it may be pertinent to consider to what extent situations of social exclusion tend to combine with former or residual conflict fault lines since the latter may point to failures or inadequacies of reintegration programmes or other problems in the transition from armed conflict to peace: e.g. too early a disengagement of the international community or inadequate efforts to switch from a "peace-keeping" to a longer-term and more diversified "peace-building" approach.

In a number of post-conflict countries, the so called "structural" (poverty and inequality induced) violence has replaced the politically motivated one. An obvious case in point is Haiti.

Besides a careful analysis of the root causes of fragility, such situations usually require a sustained, long term engagement, which may represent too heavy a burden for a single donor or a small group of donors. It is important, in such situations, to have a firm commitment of an important group of donor countries to stay engaged. We have noticed and can only welcome the position of the European Union (expressed in recent documents) to "remain engaged even in the most difficult situations to prevent the emergence of failed states".

As a rule emphasis in resource allocation should be placed on sustainable and long-term reduction of fragility levels, e.g. through the strengthening of democratic governance institutions, empowerment and capacity building of national policy actors such as parliaments, political parties and civil society organisations, improving their conflict-management skills etc. Measures to strengthen governance should be accompanied by those aimed at strengthening the government's capacity to deliver. Among the latter programmes geared towards increasing employment opportunities for the youth are particularly important.

2. <u>What are the key lessons for development emerging from new democracies</u>?

Universally applicable lessons are difficult to extract as "new democracies" represent an extremely diverse group of countries. Furthermore, processes of political transition have exposed new democracies to broader processes of economic globalisation". The two have combined and their respective specific effects on national development are not easy to separate. Also, the initial capacities of countries to undergo simultaneously a political overhaul and to face the challenges of globalisation were very different at the outset.

Thus the new EU members like Slovenia, the Czech Republic or Poland took only a bit longer than a decade to adjust their economies to the international market and recover development rates. Some of the countries which did not have the privilege of being candidates for EU accession had the "mixed

blessing" of being resource-rich, an asset that appeared to be a booster of development, not always a chance for democracy.

Russia is the disturbing example that processes of democratisation and development not necessarily go hand in hand. The past decade was one of democratisation, economic chaos and misery. The current one is one of reclaimed development and national pride… and democratic uncertainty to say the least.

Africa is a continent with much diversity in democratic and socio-economic development. The trend is clearly the move towards electoral democracy in the majority of countries. A number of significant transitional elections have been held in recent times including the transition elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Burundi, and Sierra Leone. On the economic front development remains elusive with Africa being the only region in the world where the Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved. Thus the nexus between poverty and democracy continues to be crucial.

The specific case of South Africa is also revealing a complex picture: An exemplary process of democratisation of major historical significance gave birth, after a decade, to a successful, boosting economy; however, very serious problems of "delivery" to the poor persist to date.

In Latin America, studies have revealed a high level of correlation between social disparities in the distribution of income and the trust in democratic institutions: the deeper the disparities, the lower the trust. Indeed, in some of these countries, we may say that democracy, for decades, has been hijacked by elites and (as pointed out in the Conference background paper) that accountability mechanisms have remained shallow.

If we are to draw a single conclusion from this mosaic of situations, we could certainly say that "delivery" remains a key issue. Paradoxically, it can be an issue in two different ways: lack of delivery may induce lack of trust in institutions and erode citizens' support to democracy; but the abundance of economic delivery may also help authoritarian leaders buy popular support and delay the emergence or the "deepening" of democracy.

Clearly, in poverty-stricken countries that, in addition, lack natural resources and have been exposed to other causes of fragility, boosting the delivery capacity of democratic institutions is essential. Quick impact projects may, in situations of crisis, help alleviating the hardship of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, but lasting and sustainable developmental outcomes are more likely to result from a longer term engagement of the international community.

The relationship between democracy-building and state-building is a subject increasingly discussed. The two processes are sometimes seen as complementary, sometimes as competing with each other or even contradicting each other. Again, choices and priorities need to be made from

the perspective of the "end-users". Sustainable governance is democratic governance. However, democratisation, as an eminently political process, often messy, turbulent and involving changes in the power structure, may also induce conflict and economic instability. In fact, this is what most often happens. How to minimise the conflict-inducing and destabilising ingredients of democratisation processes and to maximise the conflict-management capacity of democracy is to be carefully assessed in each individual situation.

Obviously, major democratisation events such as elections can hardly take place without a minimum level of security and a minimum local institutional capacity. On the other hand, legitimacy is a key pillar of institutional effectiveness and accountability. Therefore, processes that generate legitimacy such as constitution-building or elections cannot be delayed for too long. Yet, as if undergoing a surgery, society may feel worse before it gets better. However, the medical metaphor is not fully appropriate: in the case of democracy-building, the surgeon and the patient are the same person. No "external actors" can do the job – they can only help, and there is no anaesthesia!

In any case, the appropriate blend and sequencing of state-building and democracy-building will always be country-specific and never a universally applicable blueprint.

3. <u>What role do internal actors and institutions play</u>?

Internal actors are the drivers and beneficiaries of all sustainable change. The international community can support them, it can never replace them.

How and when the country's political forces will induce democratic change is a matter of complex historical chemistry. Events likely to trigger change are not easy to predict and their outcome is always uncertain as recently shown by the outburst of popular demand for democracy in Burma.

Democracy is sometimes seen as resulting from the claims of a "critical mass" of middle class people who need the rule of law to protect their property and are sufficiently powerful to challenge authoritarian rule. While certainly relevant for the emergence and growth of democracy in Europe, this paradigm may have become too narrow and Eurocentric today to explain the widespread demand for democracy, much beyond societies that feature the said critical mass of "middle-class" people. Demands for voice and participation stem today from the broadest strata including the most dispossessed and marginalised as the Dalits in Nepal.

Essentially, internal actors will focus on democracy and development or "the delivery of democracy" when energised by the vital necessity for a life "free from fear and from want" – in other terms, when they perceive the present state of affairs as unjust, discriminatory and exploitative against themselves or the constituency they represent.

Those already well-off and economically sheltered may be less motivated to demand radical change in the government's capacity or willingness to deliver on development. However, they too are no doubt, interested in political stability and predictability of the economic environment. They may, but don't always realise their own long term interest in ensuring a better access to education, public health and services for all.

In that respect the classical vicious circle often encountered is that the government needs to assume a certain re-distributive role and responsibility – through the tax system in order to ensure effective service delivery. It can hardly assume such a role without a minimum level of trust by all internal political forces. Yet, its low delivery capacity and accountability levels prevent it from building such trust, which in turn, perpetuates tax evasion, capital flight, poorly equipped government and low delivery levels.

Oligarchic elites often prefer to remain sceptical about the capacity of government to exit this vicious circle. Thus in a number of poor and fragile countries both security and education are fully privatized, the former taken care of by private security companies and the latter by foreign funded NGOs and churches. The government, on its part, remains under-resourced and incapable of assuming seriously its responsibilities in delivering such essential services as security, justice, basic education and basic public health.

International IDEA has endeavoured to address this situation by facilitating dialogues with internal political actors and, in particular, with political parties in the Andean region, on the necessity to engage in the attainment of the UN Millennium Development Goals. Some level of consensus and general commitment has been achieved, but the long term effects remain to be seen.

A major incentive in the debate would obviously be the perception of national actors – political parties in particular, that their own political relevance and ultimately, their electoral success, will depend on their ability to define and stand behind convincing policy proposals on developmental issues.

That is why we pay so much attention to the role and participation of parliaments and political parties in negotiating developmental priorities – including with donor countries - an issue addressed in several sections of this paper.

Part III: How is democracy experienced?

<u>Why do poor people value democratic politics? What do they expect to achieve from it</u>? <u>Under what circumstances can poor and politically marginalised people begin to demand participation and political voice, and be heard</u>?

There is no universally valid response. Democracy is most valued by those who feel it as a vital necessity, in other terms, by those who lack it and strive for it. For them democracy is a promise of freedom, of change and new opportunities: from Burma to Zimbabwe. As a system of governance,

democracy has the hardest task of living up to its promises: the task of bringing about a real possibility of choice and real opportunities for a more dignified life. The extent to which trust in democracy continues to motivate people – poor and less poor, will basically depend on how confident they are that democracy is indeed able to deliver both material and immaterial outputs.

A partial but real indicator of trust in democracy is voter turnout. Though disaggregated statistical data are not always available, patterns of voting of poor people are clearly different from country to country. The difference most frequently mentioned is the propensity of poor people to vote in India against lower levels of poor people participation in the US and, to some extent, in Western Europe. This would mean that poverty and social status are not necessarily decisive elements that determine people's attitudes towards democracy.

<u>What role do different actors (elites, business, marginalised etc) play in deepening democracy for development</u>?

Ideally different social groups will play their role through functioning mechanisms of both representative and participatory democracy. Political parties, in particular, have a key role in articulating group claims and translating them into policy proposals to be approved by the Parliament and implemented through appropriate regulatory legislation and international agreements.

This ideal situation is rarely found in new and particularly in post-conflict and fragile democracies where some of these mechanisms (if not all) will be too weak or will lack legitimacy or capacity, or both. Hence different social groups may be inclined or compelled to seek other ways for the realisation of their objectives: the marginalised may be constrained to "take politics to the streets"; the elites may be inspired to seek alliances with the security forces; the business community may try to protect its assets through capital flight rather than through local investments and support to national development.

The international community, driven inter alia by accountability concerns towards its own (developed countries' tax payers) may chose to continue acting through channels it considers more reliable and upon which it can exercise some level of control - foreign-financed NGOs in tandem with closely monitored actors from the government's executive branch. This choice is understandable but, as already mentioned above, can have the side effect of delaying the building of genuine and nationally owned accountability mechanisms – vertical and horizontal.

Part IV: Better supporting democratic processes

1. <u>Why and how are foreign governments and donors interested in pursuing democratic politics</u>?

Based on their own historical experience, governments of most developed countries rightly see democracy as the ultimate tool to manage social conflicts

in a lasting and sustainable way. Hence their prime motivation lies probably in a shared and legitimate concern for regional and global peace and stability, for a stable international order based on shared values and principles. This concern is no doubt, coupled with other interests whose intensity varies on a case by case basis. These may include national trade and economic interests, energy security concerns, humanitarian concerns etc. Making these motivations and interests as transparent as possible and acknowledging the concerns of partner countries usually leads to successful negotiations and win-win agreements. The ensuing exchange of knowledge and experiences on democracy building will thus be mutually advantageous and not felt by one side as an imposed conditionality.

2. <u>Based on practical examples, how have southern actors experienced efforts by donors and others to support democratic politics</u>?

We should understand an unfortunate reality: the way in which the concept of democracy promotion has been used during the last couple of years, particularly in the framework of the so called American "freedom agenda" and the association of democracy promotion with military invasion and occupation, has generated deep mistrust in the global South, based on the perception that democracy is only the façade for a new kind of interventionism. This situation is best reflected in today's increased polarisation in the United Nations between the Group of 77 and the developed countries as well as in the difficulties encountered by the UN – and within the UNDP in particular to find a place for democracy-building on its agendas and programmes.

The first priority for foreign governments at this stage should be to rebuild the lost confidence and trust. This will take time but should not be impossible.

3. <u>How responsive are donors to priorities defined in country, and how coordinated are their actions</u>?

Donor coordination has evolved towards the definition of complex sets of principles and rules of engagement. These principles focus on poverty reduction; they deal in particular with complex situations of fragility. They are generally inspired by positive and legitimate objectives such as making aid more effective and more sustainable, and aid policies better coordinated so as to avoid gaps or the setting of divergent priorities.

However, as already indicated above, making aid truly responsive to development priorities set by developing countries requires also the recognition and acceptance of the fact that development is a political process and that the national development agenda needs to be shaped and defined through an internal democratic debate even if this requires longer time frames and when local mechanisms of representative democracy are less than perfect.

4. <u>What lessons have been learnt from donors' activities to date? What can we say about impact, positive and negative</u>?

Donors have also elaborated different mechanisms to assess the impact of aid and to enhance its effectiveness. What remains to be assessed is the extent to which complex monitoring mechanisms, benchmarks and performance-based allocations constrain the developing countries' political process in the definition of developmental priorities. As increasingly pointed out by civil society organisations and other actors, country ownership of development programmes should be understood not simply as government ownership but democratic ownership involving legitimate actors of representative democracy – political parties and parliaments in the first place.

5. <u>What should foreign governments and donors do differently? How can the democracy support community focus its own efforts on the nexus between democracy and development</u>?

The first priority should be to re-establish the confidence lost with regard to the objectives and the very "raison d'être of democracy support. Several lines of action may be rewarding in that respect. They are already part of International IDEA's strategy. They include:

- Supporting more decisively South-South cooperation and exchanges of experience and knowledge in democracy-building in order to help overcoming the misperception that democracy is a Northern/Western concept;

- Promoting democracy self-assessment processes and peer review mechanisms (at national and local level) rather that assessments by external actors, in order to generate domestic, multi-stake holder dialogues and identification of priorities for reform;

- Exploring better the terrain of informal democratic processes in some developing countries and the ways in which they can complement and support formal mechanisms of representative democracy

These "confidence building" emphases should, in our view, feed into two broader, strategic changes that appear to be necessary today to strengthen the relevance, the effectiveness and the sustainability of international support to democracy.

- <u>The first strategic change</u> is about moving more decisively:

    A. <u>From supporting events to supporting processes and policies</u>. The situation in the field of elections is a case in point. Traditionally, the bulk of international support to electoral processes was in the form of electoral observation. While necessary and often decisive to ensure free and fair elections, international observation does not carry any guarantee of sustainability in the sense of strengthening the country's domestic capacities to organise and manage elections. International IDEA is now encouraging a re-orientation of bilateral donors, multilateral agencies and regional organisations

to move beyond observation towards the establishment of sustainable national electoral frameworks.

B. <u>From supporting individual areas to supporting harmonised, democratically defined and tailor-made combinations of policies</u>, running over a longer term while complementing and reinforcing each other. Elections have tended in the past to attract the bulk of financial allocations. Assistance needs to cover a more diversified and, of course, nationally driven "bouquet" of areas – including support to constitution-building processes, internal and external regulation of political parties, citizen-driven democracy self-assessments, building a culture of democracy etc. Some "cross-cutting" or "horizontal" objectives should never be overlooked, in any combination of areas. These are essentially the dimensions of inclusiveness (gender inclusiveness in the first place) and conflict-prevention and management.

- <u>The second strategic change needed is about addressing more forcefully the democracy-development nexus</u>. In that respect, two lines of action are equally important:

A. <u>Sensitizing national political actors </u>(parliaments and parties in the first place) and building their capacity to engage in the definition of national development priorities and the shaping of policy proposals;

B. <u>Opening-up international development cooperation dialogues to such political actors</u> in order to give a real democratic content to the concept of national ownership. We have called this issue: "room for politics!