



International IDEA

**International Conference on New or Restored
Democracies**

Statement by
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Permanent Observer

on the occasion of the

ICNRD Ministerial Meeting

United Nations Headquarters
New York, 29 September 2009

Check against delivery

Your Excellency, Dr. Khaled M. Al-Attiya, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the State of Qatar,

Your Excellency, Dr. Ali Adbussalam Treki, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the State of Qatar for its leadership of the ICNRD-6 and for fostering progress on its agenda in the period 2007-2009. International IDEA has a strong tradition of collaboration and support to the International Conference on New or Restored Democracies.

1. **The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has a non-prescriptive approach to democracy building** and does not seek a single definition of democracy. Models of democracy can vary substantially. Rather than assuming a given set of democratic institutions, IDEA considers democracy as a process involving political equality and popular control as basic characteristics as explained in IDEA's State of Democracy assessment methodology. Preconditions for democracy include basic human security, rule of law and respect for basic human rights such as freedom of expression and assembly. IDEA is concerned about making democracy sustainable, which implies, that all groups in society feel they can make their voices heard, that democratic institutions can effectively channel and mediate conflicting interests, and develop and deliver policies which protect the freedoms and livelihoods of their citizens. IDEA considers that democracy is a process which is never complete. Not only new or restored democracies, also long established democracies need to adapt their political systems to changing circumstances and new challenges, for example to enhance participation and accountability.

2. As regards **assistance to new or restored democracies**, IDEA has been established in 1995 with the aim of supporting democracy worldwide. Among its 25 Member States are new and restored democracies, and its global membership provides the organization with a wide range of experiences in democratization from all the continents. The mission of IDEA is to support sustainable democratic change through providing comparative knowledge, and assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics. The Institute undertakes work in three strategic areas:

- i. Providing comparative knowledge and experience derived from practical experience on democracy building processes from diverse contexts around the world;
- ii. Assisting political actors in reforming democratic institutions and processes, and engaging in political processes when invited to do so;
- iii. Influencing democracy building policies and providing assistance to political actors.

3. In partnership with the UN, regional organizations, election management bodies, think tanks and civil society organizations, the Institute has built a body of **knowledge resources and practitioners' networks** in key areas of democracy building, like electoral processes, political parties, constitution building, gender and democracy, and the assessment of the quality of democracy. IDEA's resources and expertise are a public good, fully accessible to any institution or individual active in the field of democracy assistance, in particular in new or restored democracies.

4. IDEA's engagement in support of the New or Restored Democracies process dates back to ICNRD-3. Its contribution to the NRD process is two-fold:

- i. *Support to the ICNRD host in the follow-up process:* IDEA provided technical advice to Mongolia in the follow-up to the ICNRD-5 Ulaanbaatar conference, based on specific requests from the host country focused on a self-assessment of the state of democracy in Mongolia to identify areas for action and reform.
- ii. *Analytical and policy-relevant contributions:* Making available to the ICNRD IDEA's democracy building knowledge base and capacity building tools, policy advice and experience in supporting democratic reforms. At ICNRD-4 in Cotonou IDEA made a presentation on its work on democracy building. At ICNRD-6 in Doha a keynote speech was given by the SG and IDEA organised and hosted two panels as part of the conference, and produced two background papers on: elections and conflict management; and the role of democracy assessment tools in democracy consolidation. The former built on IDEA's extensive work on electoral system design, constitution building, political parties and women in politics. The latter was based on International IDEA's state of democracy assessment methodology, used as a tool for dialogue and the definition of policy reforms.

5. In December 2007 IDEA participated in the **ICNRD-6 session on "Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives" organized by the State of Qatar, Chair of ICNRD-6, and held in New York**. On that occasion, IDEA stressed the strengths of the NRD process as a forum that brings together governments, parliaments and civil society, understands the diversity dimension and clearly states that there is no single model of democracy, draws on the multilateral legitimacy of the UN, is highly sensitive to the issue of the delivery dimension of democracy, and acknowledges regional efforts, such as the African peer review mechanism and other locally owned processes, including sub-regional initiatives.

IDEA's contribution at the global level

6. IDEA consolidated over the years close partnerships with the United Nations system and democracy building institutions from both the North and the global South. Such collaboration is crucial for the effectiveness and the legitimacy of **IDEA's thematic programmes at the global level**, focused on gathering and comparing codes of conduct and best practice emerging from concrete democratization processes. In addition to knowledge resources and expert networks developed by IDEA in the fields of reconciliation and democracy, constitutional reforms and political party systems, major examples in this area include:

- i. The ***Administration and the Cost of Elections (ACE) Electoral Knowledge Network***, a comprehensive online interactive resource managed and updated by IDEA with the UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UNDP, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), as well as the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico, Elections Canada, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). ACE provides information on nearly every aspect of elections, as well as a means for practitioners to share material on elections management and to support the professionalism of those engaged in electoral activities through the capacity building opportunities it offers.

- ii. The ***Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Election (BRIDGE)*** course, launched by IDEA with UNDP, the DPA EAD, the Australian Electoral Commission and IFES, which has become the leading global professional development curriculum for election administrators, improving management skills, knowledge and confidence of election officials, and others involved in the electoral process such as the media, political parties and election observers.
- iii. The ***International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics)*** is an online workspace designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics. The Network is a joint project of IDEA and UNIFEM, UNDP, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). It represents a one-stop resource centre on issues of equality among men and women in building democratic institutions and processes.
- iv. The ***State of Democracy assessment knowledge and practitioners' network*** was created to share experience with a tool intended for use by citizens to assess the quality of their democracy, and define priority areas for policy and democratic reform, based on the principles of local ownership and democratic dialogue. Since 2000, no fewer than 20 countries around the world – as different as Mongolia and Italy, Bangladesh and Kenya, Peru and Australia – have used the framework for democracy assessment to evaluate how well their democracies are working, to raise popular consciousness and to identify areas where they can be improved.
- v. The ***Network for Enhanced Electoral and Democratic Support (NEEDS)*** is funded by the European Commission, led by IDEA and implemented with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), EISA, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights-Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (IIDH-CAPEL), and Internews Europe. The Network aims at developing the capacity of election observers and finding synergy with democracy assistance.

IDEA's contribution at the regional level

7. IDEA assists local actors in the implementation of home-grown democratic reforms. For this purpose, IDEA carries out **work at the regional level** from offices located in Europe, Latin America, Africa and South Asia, and is active also in the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific. In Latin America, in addition to the partnership between IDEA and the OAS, particularly in the field of electoral processes, some countries that worked through processes to reform their electoral systems, like Mexico, turned to IDEA for expertise and advice, drawing on good practice on issues like the funding of political parties. In other countries, like Bolivia, that have been undergoing a process of constitutional development, IDEA crafted programmatic partnerships to support those driving the national processes of constitution building, by jointly implementing projects in alignment with national priorities, and providing comparative knowledge resources and tools for use by the constitution builders. A similar approach was adopted in South Asia in the case of Nepal. Political dialogue and local ownership are critically important, particularly in societies at high risk of conflict, for the resulting constitutional choices to enjoy broader and longer lasting support.

8. In Africa, IDEA and the African Union launched a Joint Activity Plan in support of the African Union Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance, focused on:

- i. Promoting democratic elections through support to the AU electoral assistance programme, including election observation and monitoring, and improving the capacity of African electoral management bodies.
- ii. Strengthening political parties by helping them to become more representative and effective agents of democratic consolidation.
- iii. Ensuring that constitutional development in AU member States works to assist democracy, elections and good governance.
- iv. Sharing African experience of effective electoral reform.
- v. Mainstreaming gender in democracy, development and governance programmes.
- vi. Using IDEA's knowledge to support conflict management and peace building processes.
- vii. Using IDEA's self-assessment methodology as a means of assessing the state of democracy at local and national levels.

IDEA's action in multilateral policy fora

9. IDEA's aims also at impacting at the **policy level**. Multilateral policy fora are key audiences for such action, and they include the United Nations, the European Union and regional organizations. An example of an effective policy advocacy role played by IDEA is the electoral cycle approach, jointly developed with the UNDP and the European Commission. This approach calls for a shift from event-driven assistance focused on the election day towards continuous electoral processes and longer term electoral support based on the principles of capacity development and institution building.

10. In 2007 the establishment of an office of the Permanent Observer for IDEA to the UN in New York allowed IDEA to **enhance policy-relevant outreach and strategic partnerships with the United Nations system, with a focus on the linkages between democracy and the three pillars of UN action**. In the last two years this work focused on democratic governance and its importance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Institute has consolidated its relations with the UN Democracy Fund, as a member of the group of friends of UNDEF) and the Peacebuilding Commission, and it has further developed its partnerships with DAP, DPKO, DESA, the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNDP. An example of this work is the international round table on "Democracy for Development/Development for Democracy" jointly organized on 12 September 2008 in New York by the DPA, UNDP and IDEA. The meeting identified areas of policy for multilateral action in the current global context – especially by the UN – in the field of democracy building and support that would enhance sustainable development processes.

11. In July 2009 IDEA submitted to the Swedish EU presidency **a report on the perception among the partners of the European Union of EU efforts in the field of democracy building**. The report calls for a more coherent EU approach to its democracy building support. A key part of the Swedish-sponsored project was to gather information about how the European Union is perceived by its partners in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South and South-East Asia and the Arab

world. This found that although the EU is seen as a source of inspiration and a good partner to work with, it is not always consistent within itself.

12. The report presents the first ever peer review of the European Union's external policies and practices on support for democracy and democracy building around the world. IDEA organized a process of multi-regional consultations in response to some failures made in recent years in the name of international democracy promotion in recent years, such as efforts to impose democratic solutions from the outside and a refusal to accept democratic outcomes from within. Key partners in the consultation process were the African Union (AU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the League of Arab States (LAS), and think tanks like the South Asia Center for Policy Studies (SACEPS) in South Asia and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in South East Asia. Four key messages came out of the consultations:

- i. Democracy is not just about elections, but how political systems allow citizens to meet their basic needs;
- ii. The EU needs to articulate its own experience and create a common long-term vision for democracy;
- iii. This must hold firm through all its actions, especially when the going gets tough; and
- iv. Partnership and dialogue is key to the future, and improved democracy will benefit both the EU and its partners.

The International Day of Democracy

13. In September 2008, **to celebrate the first-ever International Day of Democracy**, International IDEA organized a series of activities that highlight the link between *democracy, development* and *diversity*. The initiatives included:

- i. In Stockholm, on 15 September together with Riksteatern, Sweden's national touring theatre, and the UNDP Nordic Office, International IDEA blended policy-related discussions important to the Swedish and international publics with cultural performances that highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of democracy and diversity in an increasingly complex world.
- ii. In New York, IDEA organized:
 - a. On 12 September 2008 a joint UN DPA-UNDP-IDEA round table on "Democracy for Development/Development for Democracy" (see above, paragraph 13); and
 - b. On 15 September 2008, together with the Permanent Mission of Italy and the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, a Panel Discussion at the UN headquarters on "Electoral Processes and Democracy Building: Experiences from the Arab Region". The Panel, attended also by the Director of the UN EAD, launched the Arabic editions of the International IDEA Electoral System Design and Electoral Management Design handbooks.
- iii. In Addis Ababa, on 12 September 2008 International IDEA and the African Union launched a joint action plan for democracy, as a first step in the

implementation of the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (see above, paragraph 11).

- iv. On **September 15 2009**, International IDEA, UNDP Nordic Office, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, the Swedish National Touring Theatre and Stockholm University will join forces once again to celebrate **International Democracy Day** through the organization of a performance of the Vital Voices documentary/play entitled SEVEN, on the lives of seven women political leaders/ activists from around the world; the celebrations will also include a series of seminars and debates on the democracy, gender and diversity. Target audiences include government representatives, university students of international relations and gender studies, the diplomatic community, think tanks and other important actors from the Swedish cultural and social scene.

The ICNRD process: Some thoughts on the way forward

14. IDEA underlines **the need to ensure effective follow up between ICNRD conferences**; and the importance of sharing experience on democratization efforts. In terms of follow up, there is a need to move beyond conferences and link them to actual democracy building efforts on the ground. The initiative of Qatar to establish the Advisory Board of the ICNRD-6, at which IDEA is invited as observer, and the three-year ICNRD Programme of Work 2007-2009 are right steps in this direction. Another example of follow up actions is the implementation of self-assessments of the state of democracy by member states with the aim of identifying areas for action and entry points for policy reforms. The experience of Mongolia, host of ICNRD-5, is relevant in this respect: they developed nationally-owned Democratic Governance Indicators, defined a National Plan of Action to Consolidate Democracy in the country, and adopted an MDG9 specifically focused on democracy and human rights. At the request of Mongolia, International IDEA provided technical advice to such process, based on the IDEA's State of Democracy assessment methodology.

15. The second issue is the **sharing of democratization experiences**. There is a need for the ICNRD process to make better use of concrete experience sharing, including in a South-South perspective, on the challenges and successes of democratic reform processes. This could build on a more systematic articulation between the governmental, parliamentary and civil society segments of the ICNRD, based on a multi-year strategy, with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for all the actors involved in the NRD process. The celebration of the International Day of Democracy is an excellent opportunity for further fostering dialogue among national actors, thus contributing to democracy building on the ground.

16. Such an approach could facilitate strategic and operational links between periodic high-level forum, like the ICNRD, and the mainstream work of agencies engaged in democracy building. This would enhance the policy and strategic relevance of the NRD process, by taking fully into account the broader issue of how to pursue a revitalized democracy building agenda at the UN, and how to increase the effectiveness of the UN system in this respect. Effective experience-sharing could be based on the following criteria:

- i. To make use of, and capitalize, existing knowledge bases, practitioners' networks and institutional capacity building tools, particularly those that are already the result of effective partnerships among institutions engaged in the democracy building arena;

- ii. To define focused agendas for the high-level segment of the process, and make sure that action plans originated by them are shaped in clear and measurable frameworks, with responsibilities assigned to relevant actors, both within and outside of the United Nations, for funding, implementation and follow-up.

In conclusion, International IDEA stands committed to continue to provide support to the ICNRD process.

I thank you for your attention.