



International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy
and Electoral Assistance

Office of the Permanent Observer to the United Nations

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Agenda item 12: Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to address the General Assembly today during this debate on a matter which is very close to the mandate of International IDEA, an intergovernmental organization that supports democracy worldwide.

I wish to thank also the Government of Qatar as host of the Sixth ICNRD for its continued commitment to the New or Restored Democracies process and its invaluable contribution to the success of the Doha Conference and its follow up. IDEA welcomes the establishment of the International Advisory Board of the ICNRD-6, at whose meetings had the honour to participate as an observer, and deems that its Conference Programme of Work 2007-2009 will help ensure continuity between conferences.

IDEA has a long-standing record of collaboration within the ICNRD framework. Our engagement with the New or Restored Democracy process is two-fold:

- Firstly, we provided analytical and policy-relevant contributions grounded on IDEA's democracy building knowledge base and capacity building tools, policy advice and experience in supporting democratic reforms. In Doha these contributions were summarized in two background papers on elections and conflict management; and the role of democracy assessment tools in democracy consolidation, which contributed an analytical framework for policy oriented debates among participants. The former built on extensive comparative analysis of, and work on, electoral system design, political party systems and women political representation. The latter was based on IDEA's state of democracy assessment framework, a self-assessment methodology used by interested countries for assessing the condition of democracy and progress towards democratization.
- Secondly, we provided support to the ICNRD host in the follow-up process. For example, IDEA provided technical advice to Mongolia in the follow-up to the Ulaanbaatar conference, based on specific requests from the host country focused on a self-assessment of the state of democracy in Mongolia aimed at identifying areas for action and entry points for policy reforms.

We think that the New or Restored Democracies process would further enhance its effectiveness by addressing two issues:

- The first one is the need to move beyond conferences and link them to actual democracy building efforts on the ground. In this respect, we welcome Mongolia's example, which sets a best practice for those countries interested to engage in a self assessment of the state of their democracy.
- The second issue is the 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. IDEA would be pleased to provide inputs to a more operational and targeted way of

organizing future ICNRD conferences, in line with the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action and the Doha Declaration and Plan of Action.

International IDEA welcomes the conclusions and recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on “Support by the United Nations System of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies” (A/62/296), including the need for facilitating greater coordination in the relationships between the ICNRD and the Community of Democracies.

More broadly, if we set the ICNRD process within the context of the current democracy building landscape, we have to consider the role of the UN.

Democracy is strongly linked to the three pillars of the UN mandate: peace and security, human rights, and development. Democracy as a process of expanding political choice plays a critical role in both achieving each of these goals, and reinforcing their inter-linkages. There is an increasing awareness that some fundamental objectives of UN work cannot be achieved without addressing the issue of democracy.

We stress the need for the UN to take leadership, based on its convening power, in regaining multilateral credibility for democracy building assistance. At least three dimensions are critically important in this perspective:

- The first one is the capacity to take account of the fundamentally political nature of those processes addressed through various UN mechanisms and funds, like the Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Democracy Fund. This requires a careful consideration of the widening range of actors and stakeholders engaged in democracy building. Alongside the involvement of more traditional actors (like legislatures, the civil society, the media), other types of actors (like political parties) play a critical role in democratization, including in post-conflict situations. And the work on, and with, political parties has actually emerged as one of the most challenging areas in the democracy building arena over the last years.
- The second dimension is greater consistency and integration across the board, which would enhance the effectiveness and impact of the expanded volume of initiatives carried out in different democracy building sectors and thematic areas by the UN system. This would lead to supporting policies that are long-term, comprehensive and responding to a home-grown demand.
- The last dimension is a coherent and non-prescriptive approach to democracy building based on the consideration of its links to the three pillars of UN action, and informed by the wealth of recent experiences in a large number of countries, not least in the global South. This approach could promote more diversified views on democracy and how to develop and sustain it.

We welcome the establishment of an International Day of Democracy and we stand committed to working with the UN and other partners, within the framework of our regional and country programmes, to plan for the Day so that its celebration can effectively contribute to building democracy on the ground.

In conclusion, we confirm IDEA's availability in further expanding and consolidating the strategic partnership with the UN, based on its observership status at the General Assembly.

I thank you for your attention.