Introduction at Inaugural Panel about Promoting and Strengthening Democracy at the International Level at the Final Meeting of the Non-Governmental Process of the Community of Democracies in Santiago, Chile, March 3 – 4, 2005

by

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1.   introductory remarks

I like to start by complementing the Executive Secretariat and its able staff under the guidance of ambassador Genaro Arriagada and the hosting organization Participa under the directorship of Andrea Sanhueza, for the exemplary manner in which they have managed the process leading up to this final meeting before the CoD conference at the end of April. The involvement and mobilization of the networks on the different continents has been an important contribution in following through on the Warsaw Declaration and the Seoul Plan of Action and in preparing the agenda and input for this meeting. The participatory approach followed has been fully consistent with the mission of Participa itself and the role Participa continues to play in the democratic reform process of Chile and elsewhere.

2.   the state of democracy

During the past two years we have seen some important progress with people on the march in milestone elections in Indonesia (the 2x since transition following overthrow Suharto regime), South Africa (3x since end of apartheid regime), Ghana (3x since return to multiparty democracy), Georgia, Ukraine, Palestine and Afghanistan and Iraq. Positive developments are occurring in Togo assisted by peer pressure of the ECOWAS, the regional west-African body, and very recently in Lebanon.

On the passive side of the ledger we have - amongst others - to note the backsliding of democracy in Russia, the lack of perspective for transition to democracy in Burma, and failed democracy in Zimbabwe and the deferential approach by SADC, the southern African regional body, in redressing the down-slide of living conditions of Zimbabweans by continued bad governance.

On the Latin American continent, there is serious concern in a number of countries about the stability and performance of the current democratic systems. Dictatorships belong to the past and elections are held regularly, but the democratic reform processes have not gone far enough to assure responsive governance that addresses the needs of the people. That addresses the wide-spread poverty (affecting 43.9% of the population), the widening inequality gap (with the positive exception of Mexico), the exclusion of the indigenous populations, and a more recent concern: ordinary criminality and corruption. Fortunately, the majority of people still belief in the virtues of democracy according to opinion polls, but express at the same time lack of confidence in the institutions that are the building blocs of democracy, notably the parliaments and the political parties.

We need to realize that in young democracies democracy is still very fragile and not well rooted in daily practice. Many states do not yet perform properly, yet people accept the state to deliver security, employment and basic services. In many young democracies governing politicians find themselves in the trenches and at logger heads with the opposition and civil society.   There is no constructive dialogue for assuring that the foundations of the state are well maintained in the interest of the common good of the country and its people.   As Tom Carothers aptly captured some time ago many countries have entered a grey zone of neither being fully autocratic nor fully democratic. The transitions have not yet produced transformations.   He correctly analyzed that there is nothing inherent in moving from authoritarian systems of governance to democratic systems of governance. It takes hard and dedicated work to move the reform process along the many obstacles on the road towards the consolidation of democracy.

As free elections and opinion polls continue to testify, people the world over want to live in democracies because it guarantees universally accepted values and rights. It are the political systems and those in charge of the systems that fail the expectations of the people, but, fortunately, both can be addressed.

3.   the challenges ahead

I like to share three major challenges with you.

A. Connecting the agendas:

To advance democracy and to make it work, we face the challenge of connecting three interrelated agenda's that are of foremost concern to people around the world:

- Pursue economic reform policies that reduce poverty as agreed under the MDG's, redress the increasing income gap and assure environmental sustainability;
- Pursue security reform policies that take the human security dimension into account and provide for and give access to the rule of law, both domestically and internationally;
- Pursue democratic reform policies that – amongst others - assure fair representation and participation of all population groups, that allow for alternation of power following professionally run free elections, for a diversified supply of media, that introduce rigid systems of accountability to contain corruption, that institutionalize political parties with a focus on policy debates, that apply a strict separation of powers between the different institutions that make up democracy and, finally, that encourage a professional civil service.

B. Linking the long-term with the short-term:

The problems countries have to overcome can not be underestimated. Not long ago President Toledo of Peru in a speech that I attended noted that he had done everything in the book, he had been to the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington, he had been to Wall Street and followed all their prescriptions. Nevertheless these policies

failed to convince Main Street. His rating in the polls has reportedly sank below the 10% mark. Assuming sufficient will to address the problems of the Peruvian people, and he featured prominently at the CoD in Seoul for the return to democracy in Peru, what else could he have done to address the needs of Mainstreet?

The economic, security and democratic consolidation agenda's are all by definition long-term agenda's that require consistent and dedicated efforts over a long period of time. It is one of the acknowledged difficulties within democracies that the electoral cycles of usually four years, limit the time horizons of the politicians and stand in the way of addressing the longer-term issues. To overcome this asymmetry between the short and longer-term interests, national dialogues amongst the key stakeholders can be the answer to reach substantial consensus, or national social and political compacts should be encouraged about the longer-term goals on the three interlinked agendas. The agreed objectives of these compacts can than subsequently be elaborated in short-term priorities that are in line with the agreed longer-term goals and can be achieved in between electoral cycles. Guatemala is making interesting progress in this regards. The international community should actively assist the facilitation of such longer-term compacts and its translation in short-term political reform actions.

The third challenge is the role of the international community.

4. the role of the international community

The international community can be far more effective in supporting the consolidation of democracy around the world and needs to be mobilized to this effect. What are some key issues? I have identified four issues.

A. Democracy assistance today represents a minor share within international assistance. For example, it only represents 1% of the EU € 7 bn annual assistance, although there is some disagreement what should be included under democracy assistance. Much of the assistance comes in the guise of governance programmes but that is not necessarily the same as democracy support. There is some defensiveness among stakeholders in the development assistance field fearing that democracy support will erode funding available for poverty reduction programmes. That is somewhat short sided because development and democracy are two sides of the same coin and, secondly, as OXFAM and others have recently argued, only 20% of the current international assistance reaches the poor. Much of the assistance goes to service the aid industry and does little to enhance the objectives stated. Hence, a far larger share of funding should go into democracy assistance if we are seriously interested in assisting democracy.

B. Much international assistance is still premised on the assumption that one needs economic development first before the conditions are created for democracy to take root. This runs counter to the new international realities, the latest empirical research, and the marching of people's around the world regardless of the levels of poverty in their countries. The premise, and this is a very tall order, underlying international assistance needs to change radically. Democracy has to become core business within international cooperation and the practice of democracy has to be mainstreamed as the way the international community delivers future assistance.

C. Democracy support mostly comes in the form of projects and through modalities designed for building bridges and roads. However, democracy support is not just a matter of technical support, but is a political process for which other approaches and modalities are required. The delivery itself of international assistance is thoroughly undemocratic and not transparent and needs critical review. Much of the technical support eludes the political stakeholders, is often donor driven and disempowers the political stakeholders. (Example of recent visit to Malawi and Zambia.) However, much we dislike or distrust political parties and admittedly often for good reasons, it are the political parties that select leadership that in the end of the day takes the key decisions. There is no choice but to involve them from the start and to ensure that they are driving the national agendas in ways that advance social cohesion. It is an illusion to address political challenges in technical ways only. Making democracy work requires political leadership. The primacy of politics in its broad (full spectrum government and opposition) connotations need to be recognized.

D. Streamlining international assistance today focuses on the harmonization of aid flows. That is very necessary indeed. However, it results in increased budget support for governments with questionable legitimacy among their population. What is not addressed or addressed in very superficial manners, is the issue of ownership of reform processes. National agendas that are the result of reflections, discussions and negotiations amongst all stakeholders, government and opposition, state, civil society and the private sector, should be the basis on which the international community allocates its assistance. The PRSPs go some way but essentially lack the political dimension. We need nationally prepared and driven Political Reform Strategy Papers and ideally the two should be integrated in future. International assistance should be reviewed and assessed for facilitating social cohesion in countries, for reducing exclusion and for contributing to nation and state building.

5. the Europe Union (EU)

Within the European Union, and I shall refrain from talking about Europe (because the continent is wider than the European Union and with Europe's non-existent boundaries to the East the two may never catch up) the emphasis in foreign policy is on economic cooperation (development assistance) and security cooperation (conflict prevention). Democracy itself does not currently feature prominently on the external policy agenda.

In fact, whereas democracy is the very rational for the formation of the European Union (no more war in Europe and stability to assure its people prosperity) the EU has lost track of this key fundament under its existence. We did a little analysis in how democracy has features in the succession of Treaties that have formed the European Union into what it is today and has been reflected in the new EU Convention, popularly referred to as the new European Constitution. In the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 it stated upfront that all members' *system of governance are founded on the principle of democracy and that the Union respects all fundamental human rights.* In the new EU constitution it states that *the Union is founded on the values of respect for*

human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The specific article continues to state that *these values are common to the Member States in a society of pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination.* The point I am making is that democracy has been lumped in a fruit bowl with all other goodies without recognizing that democracy is the system of governance that guarantees all these goodies. It is as it where the bowl that contains all the nice fruits. This confusion appears symptomatic for the EU still lacking a systematic and sustained approach in support of democratic reform processes. The EU needs to rediscover democracy as the core of its identity internally and externally.

The European political foundations that support democratic development generally operate in a fragmented manner still at a national level. The IMD together with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation on behalf of the German political foundations, the Jean Jaures Foundation and the Center Party Foundation on behalf of the Swedish political foundations, took the initiative last year to discuss the European profile in democracy support asking ourselves some fundamental questions about what we as Europeans (potentially) are bringing to the table in advancing democracy elsewhere. It resulted in an interesting statement – the *The Hague Statement (www.democracyagenda.org)* – that identified the following characteristics:

- There are 25 different democracies within the EU, hence it is recognized that each country needs to develop its own systems and procedures. No export of models;
- Democracy and social justice are the hallmark of the EU democracies. The need to combine democracy and development is recognized;
- Democracies within the European Union developed alongside the practice of the rule of law and adherence to human rights, both essential dimensions of democratic transformation processes;
- The European Union itself acknowledges a democratic deficit. Partnership in democracy assistance encourages debate within the European Union and can be mutually beneficial;
- The new EU member states from the former Central and Eastern Europe only recently managed peaceful transition processes to democracy. It is recognized that the process through which this was managed resulted in the successful outcome. The experience with these transformation processes can usefully be shared;

The conference was the beginning of enhanced networking and cooperation at the level of the European Union. In two weeks time on March 15th and 16th 2005, the political foundations will meet again in Brussels to discuss how to strengthen their cooperation and how more regular dialogues can be established with democracy activists or foundations at the different continents. A start has been made and we hope that it will pick up momentum during the coming years.

6.   Recommendations for the CoD process

On the basis of the aforementioned challenges, I like to introduce four specific recommendations for your consideration at this Final Meeting:

- All participating states of the CoD are requested to make democracy support *core business* in their foreign policies and harmonize their domestic values with their external values (perhaps Chile as host country can take the lead on the basis of its excellent track record of the past 15 years);

- The meetings of CoD should no longer be limited to government officials only, but should be *inclusive delegations* comprising representatives of the opposition, civil society and the private sector (multi-stakeholder approach);

- The CoD should get an *institutional body with teeth*, very much as suggested in the discussion paper of the Global Issues Group that I hope you have been able to digest;

- A genuinely independent international mechanism (independent from the UN and international donor community) needs to be established that will engage in the *certification* of national democratic reform processes contributing to social cohesion on the one hand and the delivery of international assistance by the major multi and bilateral agencies and civil society organizations on the other hand. Grading will need to provide the much needed transparency about the level of political will to meet the targets.

Thank you very much!

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