

Introduction at the launch of the **Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP)**
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by
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It is a real privilege to be present at this launch today and to address you at the occasion of the launch of the first Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP) produced by the political parties in Ghana following extensive consultations in the regions with civil society organizations and the private sector. It is not only the first such a strategy in Ghana, but also the first joint democracy consolidation strategy on the African continent produced by political parties.

Six weeks ago, ministers of developing and donor countries met in Accra for the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to assess how the delivery and implementation of international assistance can be improved in order to meet the agreed UN Millennium Development Goals. One of the first paragraphs of the *Accra Agenda for Action*, in which the results of the meeting have been captured, states that – and I quote – *Aid is only one part of the development picture. Democracy – and I underline democracy – economic growth, social progress and care for the environment are the prime engines of development in all countries.* The statement echoes what the former UN Secretary General, the distinguished and much respected Kofi Anan observed two years ago: *“democracy is a universal right that does not belong to any country or region, and that participatory governance, based on the will of the people, is the best path to freedom, growth and development.*

Democracy and development are closely linked, are in fact two sides of the same coin. What makes the launch and presentation of the DCSP unique, is that it is an initiative taken by the political parties in Ghana. The *Accra Agenda for Action* rightly puts emphasis on *country ownership as the key* for effective development policies. The DCSP is an example of the political leadership of all political parties taking responsibility for the consolidation of democracy by a joint analysis of the gaps (as the DCSP refers to) in the functioning of democracy in your country, by engaging in decentralized public debate about the perceived gaps and by agreeing on joint actions to fill these gaps.

It is unique because the *Accra Agenda for Action* mentions a number of institutions that should be engaged to enhance aid effectiveness, all very relevant, but political parties are *not* mentioned in the Agenda for Action. By presenting the DCSP today, you demonstrate that this is an unfortunate and somewhat uninformed omission. After all, how can one improve the performance of democracy, needed to create the necessary conditions for sustainable development, if one leaves political parties out of the equation? Can democracy function without political parties? It are political parties which select leaders, prepare through the aggregation of citizens interests political platforms for governing and which account to their citizens in regular elections in which they seek a mandate to govern. It is important to recognize that political parties are the key link between the institutions of the state on the one hand and civil society and the private sector on the other hand.

The DCSP launched today offers a pretty comprehensive review of the state of the Ghanaian democracy as well as a roadmap on how to advance the performance of your democracy. It has been a truly standard setting undertaking. The DCSP is comprehensive in that it covers most of

the institutions that make up democracy in Ghana, from the constitution to the electoral system, to decentralization, to the position of Chiefs and traditional authorities, and to the participation of women and youth in the political process. But, allow me to highlight at this occasion three other dimensions of the DCSP that I consider of importance as well.

1. *construction democracy through dialogue*

The *first* dimension is the unique process of inter-party cooperation by your political parties that commenced about four years ago facilitated by the Institute of Economic Affairs. Political parties recognized their responsibility in making democracy work better through a process of regular dialogue at various levels of political party leadership and in undertaking regular public debates about issues relevant to the citizens of Ghana. As the DCSP recognizes, democracy is not only a noun but a verb as well, namely democratization. Through the practice of dialogue, public debates, and peaceful resolution of conflict of interests, the socialization and internalization of democracy is transformed into the culture of democracy. It is the culture of democracy that provides the necessary levels of trust among political adversaries to ensure the necessary stability for durable economic development.

2. *democracy is work in progress*

The *second* dimension is the need to continuing dialogue as key to strengthen your democracy and to keep improving its performance. The fast developments in the world and the need to adapt constantly, also require a permanent maintenance of our political systems to assure that they remain legitimate in the eyes of our populations and responsive to their needs. The current financial crises that hits the world is a wake up call to governments who may have granted too much responsibility to the markets while the final responsibility for the well-being and security of our people rests by governments. Or as Angela Merkel, the Prime Minister of Germany stated a few days ago: "*governments must redirect the markets so they serve the people, and not ruin them*". In the DCSP provisions are included for an institutionalization of the dialogue and professional capacity through the establishment of the Center for Multiparty Democracy Ghana with a mandate to facilitate the implementation of the agreed actions in the DCSP and to continue renewing the institutions and procedures of democracy.

3. *harmonizing international assistance*

The *third* dimension of the DCSP I like to recognize is the value it has for the international partners of Ghana to harmonize their assistance for democratic reforms taking the DCSP into account. The DCSP can be contextualized as the complement of the PRSP or as you call it in Ghana the GPRS, the other side of coin of the development – democracy nexus. The beauty of the DCSP is that it is fully home-grown using the knowledge, experience and brainpower of Ghanaians, It recognizes the mantra that democracy has to grow from within and not from without. I like to use this launch to call on other partners in the international community present today, to join an international support group for the implementation of the DCSP.

You know that there is on-going international debate about the value of democracy support or democracy promotion as it is often referred to. Democracy promotion, however, has been given a bad name by equating it with regime change. The cooperation of the Ghanaian political parties and the political parties in The Netherlands, as facilitated by the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, is in my experience an example of how political cooperation can be a positive force to support and encourage each other. In addition to our economic, trade, development and cultural relations through the substantial population of Ghanaian origin in The Netherlands, the *political cooperation* between our political parties has added another significant dimension to the special relationship between our two countries. That special relationship will be celebrated and undoubtedly further cemented next week when we look forward to welcome President Kufuor on his official state visit to The Netherlands.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the DCSP is the result of a successful inter-party cooperation established in your country. On behalf of my organization, NIMD, I like to congratulate the political parties and the Institute of Economic Affairs for the initiative, for the production of the DCSP and for the inclusive consultative process through which it has been prepared. It is a milestone in reasserting the primacy of politics for making democracy perform better. Yet, as we know, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

1. *peaceful and fair elections*

The first test lies in the peaceful management of the most dangerous but important institution of democracy, general elections. As one of you sometimes ago stated: *elections are the foul period in democracies*. Let me use this opportunity to share with you that your friends in Europe are not only following the American elections with great interest, but be assured that we also follow your elections with special interest. Ghana, in its 50th anniversary after its historic independence, is leading once more with the presentation of a jointly agreed DCSP. We anticipate that Ghana will also lead other young democracies in managing, once again, peaceful and fair elections. Whatever divides us as political parties, let us remind ourselves in the run up to the general elections, and in the days thereafter, that what *unites* us is the *highest* obligation in the service to our people to maintain the peace at all cost.

2. *implementation is the real challenge*

The second test lies in the joint implementation of the actions agreed in the DCSP regardless of who of you shall win the elections and form the next government in Ghana. Implementation of the actions, delivering on the expectations of the population to serve their needs, is the real test of the political commitment you demonstrate today to improve the quality of your democracy. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy is committed, hopefully joined by other friends in the international community, to continue its partnership with the political parties in Ghana and to continue building on our cooperation for the advancement of democracy and development world wide.

That cooperation is the more significant in a geo-political context that is very fluid at this point in history. The heart attack that brought the financial markets around the world temporarily to a stand-still, is affecting all our economies and the well-being of our people in ways still to unfold. The political vacuum in the United States pending the outcome of the November elections, and the rise of new power centers around the world, is setting the stage for a multi-polar or plural-polar world. A world in which we have become aware of the interdependencies of the climate changes, the financial markets, trade, crime and terrorism and many other issues effecting our lives. Yet, we have not managed yet to establish effective and democratic global governance institutions to manage these interdependencies and to ensure that the resources of this planet are harnessed fairly and responsibly for all, and I repeat, for all citizens of this globe. Therefore, in addition to the challenge of managing and improving our own democratic systems of governance, the need to build new democratic systems of global governance is a common challenge for which our political cooperation should be helpful as well.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, for the construction of democracy, inter-party dialogue is essential. I like to conclude by once again congratulating all of you involved in the DCSP process and in particular Prof Yaw Twumasi, Dr William Ahadzie en Mr Kwamena Ahwoi, the staff of the Institute of Economic Affairs and its dynamic director Mrs Jean Mensah..

I wish all of you present today very well in continuing your dialogue and with the results it has created and shall create for a more stable and prosperous Ghana.

Thank you very much for your attention!