



Non-Governmental  
Process for the  
Community of  
Democracies

## **PROPOSAL**

### **Civil Society Participation at the Ministerial Meeting of the Community of Democracies, Santiago 2005**

Civil society participation at the Ministerial is a milestone in a long-term process, involving both civil society and governments. The main objective for participation in this event is to develop a real and substantive dialogue with the governments of the Community of Democracies, to evaluate progress in implementing the Seoul Plan of Action and next steps toward institutionalizing the Community of Democracies process, to discuss regional priorities and to debate proposals to strengthen democracy in our countries.

The Executive Secretary considers that it is essential that civil society actors participate in the event. We view this occasion as an important opportunity for governments to have a dialogue with actors representing the diversity of issues, interests and regions involved in the Community of Democracies process.

With the aim of facilitating such an exchange, we anticipate that 70-100 representatives of civil society organizations from every region of the world will attend the meeting. Participants will be leaders from NGO's, political parties, political foundations and academic centers that have been working in the non-governmental process and that represent the diversity of actors, views and scopes of action. Special guests should include former heads of government from democratic countries (Club of Madrid), International IDEA, the heads of regional organizations (Commonwealth, OAS, AU, EU, OSCE, Council of Europe, Mercosur, etc.) and bodies of the United Nations (UNDP, UNESCO, UN High Comm'r for Human Rights, etc.).

We also suggest governments invite parliamentary representatives to take part in the delegations, as a mean to incorporate a critical element in the work of building democracy and thereby contribute to a more fruitful exchange at the Ministerial.

## **I. PROPOSALS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AT THE MINISTERIAL**

This document proposes dialogue with civil society organizations in three different moments of the Ministerial meeting:

### **1. Informal Dialogue with Ministers**

It is proposed to hold a dialogue between Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Community of Democracies and representatives of NGO's, political parties, political foundations and academic centers. The objective is to generate a discussion on the proposals on democracy that are the product of the non-governmental process. The Secretariat proposes a similar procedure to that used by the Organization of American States, OAS in its initiative of informal dialogue with civil society organizations.

### **2. Joint discussion panels**

We recommend holding five discussion panels in parallel. These panels should have a thematic orientation and involve the participation of NGO's, political parties, political foundations and academic centers from the different regions as well as other special guests. Each one should have a panelist from governments, another from civil society and with both governments and civil society representatives in the audience. Prior to the ministerial meeting itself, discussion papers should be prepared and circulated in order to focus discussion on concrete proposals in the discussion panels.

The Secretariat developed an electronic consultation with all civil society actors involved in this process, regarding thematic issues to be discussed at this event. The results are provided below.

### **3. Participation both in the opening session and in the closure**

This Secretariat considers it necessary that representatives of civil society organizations be invited to the inauguration session and the closure.

## **II. RESULTS OF ELECTRONIC CONSULTATION**

As stated before, the thematic issues presented here are the result of an electronic consultation with all non-governmental actors involved in the Community of Democracies process. It took place between June 9-22, 2004.

### **Thematic Issues**

#### **1. Community of Democracies Issues**

- Institutionalization of the Community of Democracies
- Assessment of the progress made toward implementation of Seoul Plan of Action

- The Community of Democracies and the response to threats to democracy. Defining mechanisms for responding to future threats.
- Strengthening the Democracy Caucus at the United Nations

## **2. Supra-Regional Issues**

- Roots of the so-called phenomena of terrorism and fundamentalism
- Effects and impact of the global war on terror
  - Regional Action (Latin America and Africa) examine the actions of the OAS and the African Union to promote Democracy and assess the potential for inter-regional cooperation
- Education for Democracy: coordinating democracy assistance
- Economic democracy and political democracy in third world countries
- Roles in building and consolidating democracy at the national level.
- Strengthening political party systems.

## **Regional Issues**

We recommend that working groups have time to meet on a regional basis to discuss the main priorities on the regional agendas, as outlined below.

### **1. Sub-Saharan Africa**

- Civil society engagement with the African Union (role of Ecosoc and Peace and Security Council in the region.
- Governmental transparency and international donors for African countries
- Access to information and free media in Africa
- Strengthening the role of civil society in Africa
- Civic education to promote democracy (Africa)
- Freedom of religion (Africa)
- poverty and economic development (Africa)
- The rule of law in Africa and the strengthening of African constitutions
- Civil Society role in electoral processes in Africa.
- Governance, democracy and civil society (Congo)
- Safety in frontiers (Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda)
- Dimensions of governance – executives vs. parliaments (Tanzania)
- Opportune constitutional amendments in Africa and related issues

### **2. Asia**

- Fighting Corruption to Promote Democracy in Asia
- Governance systems and accountability in Asia.
- Civil society role in monitoring public affairs at the regional level. (Asia)
- Developing democracy in Closed Societies
- Religious Freedom - or The Role of Faith-based organizations in Promoting Democracy
- International obligations, and national response in Central Asia

### **3. Latin America**<sup>1</sup>

- Relation between Democracy and Development (inequity in Latin America)
- International Dimension: (asymmetries in size and power of nations; increasing capacity of trans-national companies to influence on State's sovereignty)
- Democratic Institutions (political parties, parliaments, electoral systems, and decentralization mechanisms must be made more transparent at the intra-national level)
- Inconclusive or weak Citizenship

### **4. Europe**<sup>2</sup>

- Discrimination and Exclusion of people (gender/women, race, ethnicity, and non-citizen status)
- Corruption : lack of transparency and accountability.
- Lack of Independent Media
- Weak political parties systems and a lack of representation of public interests
- Democratic Crisis (the backslide of democracy in Russia and the NIS, the dismantling of democratic political institutions and authoritarian regimes)
- Role of European governments and NGOs in global initiatives

### **5. Middle East and North Africa**

- Working relationship between governments and civil society in the Middle East
- Laws and regulation for civil society work at the national level in the Middle East
- How to address the internationally required reforms for democratization. Role of governments and civil society in the Middle East.
- HHRR and freedoms in the Middle East
- Empowerment of Arab women
- Civil Liberties in the Middle East
- Democratic governance on the municipal level in the Middle East
- Access to information in the Middle East
- External pressure and assistance in the Middle East

### **6. North America**

- Falling voter participation in developed democracies. North America and Europe

---

<sup>1</sup> Because of the lack of input from the Latin American region, the issues presented here correspond to the democratic deficits outlined at the Lisbon meeting.

<sup>2</sup> It also corresponds to Democratic Deficits as they were discussed in Lisbon.

