



*Prepared by El Salvador*

## **THEMATIC ROUNDTABLE 1**

### **Institutional and Political Environment for the Promotion of Democratic Governance**

**Chair:** Italy (Mme Brunella Borzi, Italian Ministry of foreign Affairs)

**Co- Chair and rapporteur:** El Salvador (Mr. Rene Leon, Ambassador)

**Facilitator:** UNDP (Dr. Mohammed Sall Sao)

**Participants:** Representatives from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Mexico, Philippines, the Netherlands, United States of America and Senegal  
Participated in the panel, as well as academic experts and representatives from the civil society from Chad, Ghana, Tunisia, United States, Russia, Venezuela and Zambia.

#### **Key issues and ideas discussed by the Panel**

- 1). Pre-requisites/conditions to create conducive environment which promotes and facilitate the development and maintenance of democratic governance
- 2). Key institutions for successful democratic development and maintaining democratic governance
- 3). Community of democracies role and favorable support for the establishment of an environment conducive to democratic governance

#### **1. Pre-requisites/conditions identified and analyzed by the Panel**

- It was agreed that **BALANCE AND INDEPENDENCE OF POWERS** (i.e. a system of checks and balances) are necessary conditions for democratic governance.
- Also **RESPECT AND PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS** are necessary conditions to democratic governance.
- **DEMOCRATIC ALTERNANCE/MULTIPARTISM** (i.e. elect different political parties in charge of government) was mentioned as a requirement for the consolidation of democratic governance. It was stressed that democratic alternance was particularly important for “democracies in transition” in sub-Sahara Africa and other regions of the world.
- Some countries reflected that democracy was a “necessary way of life” and that there was not a unique definition or model for democracy. Therefore governance is a multidimensional concept, that embedded tolerance, the reduction of poverty, education opportunities, and organizing and strengthening civil society organizations.
- Moreover as globalization, social participation, international migration, accountability and institutional building. Furthermore, historical and specific conditions shall not be overlooked.
- Reference was made to the similarities between promoting democracies within countries and within the international community, such as adequate representation, respect for diversity and majority rule.
- A major pre-requisite for democratic governance and legitimacy is **THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN DIGNITY** of individuals and that this pre-requisite must be a shared value of all democracies.
- Finally, the existence of **PLURALISM AND CITIZENSHIP** conscious, informed and educated with respect to democracy is a pre-condition to democratic governance.

#### **2. Key Institutions for the development and promotion of Democratic Governance**

Panelists discussed a broad range of Institutions, issues and situations that are essential for democratic governance. The representative of a participant NGO cautioned that, that, due to the fact that there could be “trickering” of institutions in some countries may have institutions to promote democratic governance but in reality they do not work, their actual and concrete actions are more important than the mere existence of formal institutions. In fact, they evaluate the “state of freedom” rather than the existence of institutions itself.

The most salient and agreed institutions that were highlighted are the following:

- **POLITICAL PARTIES** that are not ethnicity or religious based and which are open, inclusive of the youth as well as transparent and accountable are key institutions for democratic governance. Special attention was given to the fact that political parties must have clear political offers, sense of purpose, and practice internal democracy. Furthermore, the need for deepening leadership capacity of political parties, bettering the relationship of opposition and ruling parties and widening the participation of women and youth were pointed as key elements for political parties capacity building as democratic institutions. It was mentioned that relationship between **POLITICS AND RELIGION** particularly in the Arab world, as well as **POLITICAL PARTIES BASED ON ETHNICITY** in some countries in Africa, can create serious obstacles to the development of the democratic Institutions.
- **INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS**, which are credible to mediate when disputes arises from electoral results or when violations of electoral rules have been proved, (i.e. electoral bodies that are strong from an institutional point of view are key to the development of democratic governance).
- The existence of specialized judiciary institutions, institutions that monitor human rights violations and fight corruption, and the adherence to relevant **INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS** are critical for institutions to work in favour of promoting democratic governance.
- The existence and access to **FREE MEDIA** and a **VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY**, the predominance of **FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION** as well as other **POLITICAL LIBERTIES** are key institutional pillars for the foundation and development of democratic governance. Civil society organizations need to be strengthened for a better monitoring of government and for ensuring new initiatives towards democracy.
- It was pointed out that in some countries the situation is not optimistic, because there are political limitations and constraints to actual access to resources that support democratic institutions, and that there are particular groups that are interested in restricting the role of institutions to promote and develop democratic governance.

### **3. Support of the Community of Democracies for Countries Striving to Manage and Continue Democratic Practices**

An organization from the civil society expressed preoccupation for the proliferating efforts by various governments to “restrict the space in which civil society organizations. In general and democracy assistance groups in particular operate”.

Therefore, it called upon members of the Community of Democracies to pay attention to this problem, recognize its magnitude and scope, inform governments and take other democratic measures.

Against this background, the Panel concluded that:

- The Community of Democracies shall promote partnerships with civil society organizations.
- The new secretary of the Community of Democracies (to be located in Warsaw, Poland) will need to take into account the problem mentioned by the aforesaid NGO.
- Political parties, unions, Ngo’s, governments an all relevant democratic institutions and sectors must interact and cooperate in order to maintain democratic governance.
- A participant Ngo pointed out that the Community of Democracies already has a mechanism to help countries to this Ministerial Meetings. The set of criteria represents a significant mechanism that the Community of Democracies can use to foster democratic practices.

- The Community of Democracies should promote democratic governance through the protection of human rights activists and civil society, but also through education, so that people can understand the “democracy game” and participate in the democratic process.