

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT
THE SECOND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES
12 NOVEMBER 2002
SEOUL

1. The Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies was held in Seoul on 10-12 November 2002 under the overall theme of "Democracy: Investing for Peace and Prosperity". The Foreign Ministers and other representatives of 110 countries and international organizations from around the world attended the Conference (see the List of Participants attached as Annex I). The Conference was chaired by His Excellency Choi Sung-hong, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, host of the Conference. The government of the Republic of Korea, as Chair of the Convening Group, worked closely with the governments of the other members of the Convening Group – Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, South Africa and the United States – in the preparations for the Conference.

2. At the Opening Session, His Excellency Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea, made a special address. Congratulatory audiovisual messages by President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, President Alejandro Toledo of Peru, Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations, and Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar were presented to the Conference.

3. Participants in the Conference reaffirmed the democratic principles embraced in the Warsaw Declaration as well as the objectives and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments on human rights. On that basis, the Conference adopted by consensus the "Seoul Plan of Action" (attached as Annex II), with a view to providing specific guidelines for the promotion, consolidation and protection of democracy worldwide and fostering cooperation for the upholding of democracy against the emerging threats of the 21st century.

4. Participants denounced terrorism as a grave threat to democratic societies and indeed humanity in general and the very foundation on which democracies are built. Participants also reaffirmed that terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security. In that regard, the Conference adopted by consensus the "Community of Democracies Statement on Terrorism" (attached as Annex III) with a view to strengthening cooperation to effectively respond to the threat of terrorism.

5. The Conference engaged in extensive and substantial discussions on issues relevant to the Community of Democracies in four Ministerial Roundtables. Participants shared the view that close cooperation and coordination among democratic countries at the regional and global levels are crucial for the promotion, consolidation and protection of democracy. The results of the discussions during the Roundtables were reported by the Co-Chairs as follows:

6. Roundtable I "Consolidating Democratic Institutions" co-chaired by Dr. Paula J. Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs of the United States, and Dr. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Undersecretary of State of Poland:

Participants in Roundtable I highlighted the importance of democracy in creating secure, prosperous, and stable societies that are reflective of citizens' needs and wishes. In particular, they stressed the importance of consolidating democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and ensuring good governance. While delegations' interventions varied in scope and focus, the following ideas reflect comments made by numerous delegations.

It is imperative that strong democratic institutions, including representative political parties, an

independent judiciary, free media, and an active civil society, be grounded in the rule of law. Although democracy is crucial to long-term economic development and prosperity, some have not experienced the full economic benefits that were anticipated. In addition, many face threats from within (corruption, disruption of governmental rule, and social concerns) and from outside (terrorism); these are best countered through strong democratic institutions based on solid democratic principles and the will of the society. Increased security and economic prosperity depend on good governance based on fighting corruption, increasing transparency, and establishing accountability mechanisms; each of these is essential to building and maintaining citizen confidence in the government. Broad participation of civil society and NGOs is essential to a vibrant democratic system by providing a plurality of voices and strengthening government accountability. An essential element of democracy is broad civic education to ensure all citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities, better able to participate in and hold accountable their government, and more capable of contributing to the prosperity of their country. Finally, while the institutional form of the democratization process may differ in various countries, the numerous core principles that form the foundation of true democracy remain consistent.

Numerous countries recommended specific steps to actively support the consolidation of democratic institutions, including sharing best practices with newer consolidating democracies; strengthening civic education; increasing training for civic activists, law enforcement and other officials; creating ombudsmen to monitor development of democratic institutions and practices and advocate for adherence to democratic principles; strengthening and utilizing human rights commissions; working together as a “democracy caucus” in international organizations such as the UN; and ensuring that international and regional institutions develop and apply democratic standards for member-states.

7. Roundtable II “Regional Cooperation to Promote Democracy” co-chaired by H.E. Abdulah Mohamed Omar, Minister of Transport of South Africa, and Ms. Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi, Undersecretary for Human Rights and Democracy of Mexico:

Participants in Roundtable II engaged in a very rich and illustrative debate, as a testimony of the commitment to the promotion of democracy and its institutional arrangements. The vast majority of speakers referred to their country’s efforts towards enhancing respect for the rule of law and of human rights, as the main foundations for democratic governance. In this sense, it was considered that democracy should deliver freedom and empower self-determination.

Notwithstanding the full support of participants for the promotion of democracy through regional cooperation agreements, best democratic practices are inherently mixed and associated with domestic/local values, and as a consequence their assessment should be made accordingly. In this regard, it was mentioned that the test of quality for a democracy was given by the degree of protection a country gives to its citizens.

Participants mentioned several successful experiences of regional agreements and instruments such as the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the OAS (9/11/2002), the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) by which democratic practices have been triggered and enhanced. In that context, several criteria were put forward as prerequisites for a country to adhere to best democratic practices, such as free elections, independence of the judiciary, accountability and transparency. Particularly, election monitoring was mentioned as a successful example of regional cooperation to promote democracy.

Some participants mentioned the need for an adequate environment for democracy, such as sustainable economic growth and development, poverty alleviation, the abatement of corruption, the fight against organized crime, as well as the continuous promotion and adoption of democratic values, citizens’ skills and democratic practices.

Participants also mentioned that regional cooperation to promote democracy should be accompanied by the promotion of human rights protection through compliance with international law agreements such as the proposed Protocol against torture and the International Criminal Court.

It was also advanced that unilateral action in international affairs should be avoided, as it is a threat to international law, and that the role of multilateral institutions should be strengthened. Emphasis was put on regional cooperation as the best antidote against unilateralism.

8. Roundtable III “Media and Democracy” co-chaired by H.E. Yashwant Sinha, Minister of External Affairs of India, and Mr. Pavel Vosalik, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Relations of the Czech Republic:

Participants in Roundtable III stressed the crucial role of media in the process of building and strengthening democracy in the world and confirmed freedom of expression as one of the most important human rights fundamental for the functioning of democracy. Participants agreed that with freedom comes also the concept of responsibility to society. They recognized that freedom of expression has to be interpreted in the framework of the limits of respect for other fundamental human rights and freedoms of persons, groups or entities. Participants also pointed out the impact of globalization on the media and democracy and, in that context, expressed the need for balance between receiving information and entertainment from local, national and international sources in order to preserve national culture and identity. They confirmed and stressed unambiguously the need for the existence of free media in democracies and for democracies, with the aspect of media accountability to the community and pronounced the necessity of securing both these objectives.

9. Roundtable IV “Coordinating Democracy Assistance” co-chaired by H.E. Lassana Traore, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, and Mr. Antonio M. Lourenco dos Santos, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Portugal:

Participants in Roundtable IV addressed two main questions: how democracy assistance could be coordinated and who could coordinate democracy assistance.

In answering the first question, participants stressed the importance of regional cooperation. This modality of cooperation brings together countries that are neighbors and share the same difficulties and problems. It is also a key element for the peace process in some regions of the world. Participants also stressed the importance of ownership of democracy assistance programs by recipient countries. Emphasis was also placed on the role of NGOs. Participants considered that democracy assistance should be focused on: institution building, electoral assistance, strengthening of civil society, financing of political parties, strengthening of parliaments, legal and judiciary reforms, decentralization and good governance, promotion of democratic culture, and strengthening of the media.

To answer the second question, participants recommended the establishment of a focal point at the international level with the aim of exchanging information and experiences. They also recommended the initiation of international dialogue to define priorities for democracy assistance programs and guidelines for resources allocation. Finally, the use of a triangular assistance mechanism was suggested whereby assistance is provided by one democracy to another through funding by a third democracy.

10. In parallel with the Ministerial Conference, a Non-Governmental Forum was held under the theme of “Global Solidarity for Expanding and Strengthening Democracy”. Participants in the Non-Governmental Forum engaged in discussions in nine topical panels: Strengthening Political Party Systems, Local Government and Democracy, Gender and Democracy, Corruption and Democracy, Markets and Democratic Governance, Media and Democracy, Education for Democracy, Freedom of Association and Protection of NGOs, and Promoting Civil Society in Closed Societies. The representatives of the Non-Governmental Forum presented the results and recommendations of the Forum to the Conference. The Conference duly took note of these and expressed its appreciation for their contribution, which would be considered further for possible reflection in the Community of Democracies process.

11. Dr. Bronislaw Geremek, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, who chaired the First Ministerial Conference, presented recommendations of the Task Force on Immediate Threats to Democracy of the Council on Foreign Relations. The Conference took note of the recommendations and expressed the hope that they could be further explored in the context of the Community of Democracies process. H.E. Kolawole Idji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin, made a statement in his capacity as Chairman of the Fourth International Conference of the New or Restored Democracies (NRD). The Conference took note of his report on the recent activities involving the NRD process for the promotion of democracy.

12. Participants welcomed the proposal of H.E. Maria Soledad Alvear, Minister of Foreign Relations of Chile, to host the next Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in the first quarter of 2005. Participants took note that the government of Romania had proposed to host a Regional Conference for Europe in November 2003, as a part of follow-up measures to the Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies. Participants expressed appreciation to the Czech Republic, Chile, Mexico and the United States for their financial contributions to assist the organization of the Conference. The Conference expressed appreciation to the government of the Republic of Korea and to other governments of the Convening Group for their efforts and contributions toward making the Seoul Conference a success, as well as for their willingness to continue with follow-up measures.

Annex I. List of Participants

II. Seoul Plan of Action

III. Community of Democracies Statement on Terrorism

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List of Participants

1. Participants

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia

2. Observers

Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Haiti, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia, Ukraine, Yemen

3. Guests

Council of Europe, EU, Holy See, OAS, OSCE